# RESEARCH STUDY ON LINKING EDUCATION AND WORK: PROVIDER, EMPLOYER AND LEARNER PERCEPTIONS OF PREPARATION FOR AND THROUGH WORK

FINAL REPORT



18 MARCH 2022





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## LINKING EDUCATION AND WORK: PROVIDER, EMPLOYER AND LEARNER PERCEPTIONS OF PREPARATION FOR AND THROUGH WORK.

18 March 2022

## **Research Study for:**



**Skills Development for Economic Growth** 

Prepared By:



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#### List of Acronyms

| Acronym  | Stands for   |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| CET  | Community Education and Training                     |  |  |
| DHET   | Department of Higher Education and Training          |  |  |
| ERRP   | Economic Recovery and Reconstruction Plan            |  |  |
| HEQSF  | Higher Education and Qualification Sub-Framework)    |  |  |
| NDP  | National Development Plan                            |  |  |
| NP-PSET  | National Plan for Post-school Education and Training |  |  |
| NQF  | National Qualifications Framework                    |  |  |
| NSDP   | National Skills Development Plan                     |  |  |
| PIVOTAL  | Professional, Vocational, Technical and Academic     |  |  |
|  | Learning   |  |  |
| PSET   | Post-school Education and Training                   |  |  |
| QCTO   | Quality Council of Trades and Occupations            |  |  |
| SAQA   | South African Qualifications Association             |  |  |
| SARS   | South African Revenue Services                       |  |  |
| SETA   | Sector Education and Training Authority              |  |  |
| STATS SA   | Statistics South Africa                              |  |  |
| TVET   | Technical Vocational Education and Training          |  |  |
| W&R  | Wholesale and Retail                                 |  |  |
| W&RSETA  | Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training   |  |  |
| Authority  |  |  |  |
| WBL  | Work-based Learning                                  |  |  |
| WP-PSET White Paper for Post-school Education and Training |  |  |  |

#### EXEUTIVE SUMMARY

#### 1. Document Purpose

This research study was commissioned by W&RSETA with the strategic intent to improve labour market data, to inform the W&RSETA Strategy, and inform all related strategic documents, which include the Sector Skills Plan (SSP), Strategic Plan (SP), and Annual Performance Plan (APP). The main purpose of the study is to explore education for and through work, with specific reference to the W&R sector. This study sought to better understand the possibilities, challenges and opportunities that education-forand-through work present to the W&R sector. This provides a good background to improve the sector's ability to link education and the workplaces.

#### 2. Research Objectives

Guided by W&RSETA research agenda on linking education and work, the specific objectives of this study include to:

- Understand the current and future economic and labour context and trend dynamics.
- Investigate how education providers, employers, and learners interpret and experience education for and through work (barriers, opportunities and examples of good practice).
- Draw on findings to propose recommendations on how W&RSETA can enhance its learning through and for work support and offerings.
- Develop a working paper to reflect on how theoretical discourse and concepts of learning for and through work correlate with the project's findings.
- Investigate the role of experiential training in preparing / up-skilling graduates for the retail industry.
- Facilitate priority skills development and occupation for a resilient wholesale and retail food sector in South Africa.

#### 3. Research Methodology

The nature of the project demanded that it involves both desktop (secondary) and primary research and employed primarily qualitative and quantitative methods. Desktop research included a thorough literature review. Primary research focused on gathering data from targeted stakeholders through semi structured survey and telephone interviews. The response rate was impressive though there were challenges encountered as presented under research challenges. Lessons learnt and suggested recommendations are provided in the ensuing section.

## 4. Summary Findings and Recommendations

#### 4.1 W&RSETA areas of intervention

The two main areas of disconnect that came out from the study are the disconnect between what students learn at tertiary institutions and how they are expected to perform at tertiary institutions. Also, the difficulties learners face in securing work-based learning. To address this, there is a need for collaborated efforts from employers, W&RSETA and other stakeholders. Specifically, W&RSETA is recommended to consider the following:

1. W&RSETA can assist with funding for simulation equipment. It must be recognised that TVET Colleges do not have the capacity to procure state-of-the-art

equipment for use in practicals. The more outdated the equipment they have, the more challenges students experience in transiting from theory to the world of work. However, the Seta does not have to shoulder this burden on its own. This is where creating solid partnerships will come in handy. If partnerships are created with other stakeholders, it will be easier to identify and procure the required equipment for simulated learning.

- 2. The Seta already has a program of funding TVET College lectures so they get attached to the industry for them to gain exposure on best practices. We recommend that more resources be expended on this initiative as it assists in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Once lecturers are adequately exposed to what employers are looking for, they will assist mentor/coach students even before WIL exposure.
- 3. The Seta can also consider creating a fund to subsidise experienced executives to be engaged as mentors and coaches at TVET Colleges. TVET Colleges cannot on their own afford such costs and yet these engagements would play a crucial role in bridging the gap between theory and practice.
- 4. One of the challenges with current TVET education relates to outdated learning material. Again, this can be an opportunity for the Seta to engage relevant stakeholders and ensure updated learning material is used at colleges (material that will integrate theory and practice)
- 5. Where possible, the Seta should consider promoting more exchange programmes for lecturers and administrators to visit colleges in some of the countries we identified as leading in integrating theory and practice, for example, Germany, Sweden, Netherlands etc. They may start by identifying specific colleges and using these as pilot centres of specialised learning. If the model works, then it can be rolled out to the rest of the country.

#### 4.2 Strategies to produce job ready graduates

The following were identified as some of the strategies to help learners to be ready for the workplace.

1. Traditional Apprenticeship

Traditional apprenticeship arrangements provide the more relevant model for African countries seeking to improve learners' transition from education to work. There is, however, a need to develop pathways that respond flexibly to young people's desire to access tertiary education, and at the same time provide them with occupational qualifications that are relevant for the labour market. Depending on the occupational structures and the readiness of enterprises to provide training in each industry, such pathways may encompass many types of early contact with the labour market, ranging from formal apprenticeships to internships and student projects. Such initiatives ease the transition of learners from education to workplaces.

2. Work Integrated Learning and Simulation training

The PSET system has not been able to produce the right number and quality of workready individuals, and work-based learning initiatives remain at the forefront to bridge the gap. There are several success stories of qualifications that use the Work-Integrated Learning model, a good example being the mining-related qualifications offered by UJ, UP, Wits and UNISA where learner placements on work during learning is mandatory and forms part of the curriculum. This prepares the learner for and through work and the transition from education to work is relatively easy.

WBL and WIL will remain important for years to come, as the literature has indicated, and because practice is part of education for professional qualifications. In an unequal society such as South Africa, WIL can be used to bring about equity and excellence in the workplace. Simulation-based training that mimics the working environment and learning factories have also proved to be able to link the progression of learners from training to the workplace.

#### 4.3 Recommended skills focus areas

Employers provide a platform on which skills are traded in exchange for wages and salaries. In the context of linking education and the world of work, employers inform the market of the skills that they need. The education system must then ensure that its systems emphasise these skills to produce an employable graduate. In line with these, the following skills were recommended as prerequisites for entry-level positions and upskilling, respectively.

The following were identified as entry-level skills required in the wholesale and retail sector:

- Basic information communication technology;
- Interpersonal skills
- Mathematical skills
- Stock control;
- Purchasing;
- Marketing skills;
- Problem-solving skills;
- Time management;
- Financial skills; and
- Communication skills.

It was also recommended that those already on the job need to keep upskilling in line with trends in the wholesale and retail sector. The following were identified as some of the skills to be incorporated in upskilling courses:

- Business management;
- Human resources management;
- Supply chain management;
- Customer service;
- Data analysis;
- Online marketing;
- Warehousing; and
- Value chain optimisation.

#### 4.4 Overall lessons and recommendations

The training being provided especially that targeted at the wholesale and retail sector appears to have some issues that have been noted throughout this document and summarised in the table below. The following table also details practices that have been working well and should continue going forward. Implementing the recommendations below is expected to embed positive practices and address issues noted; thus, assisting W&RSETA in improving sector performance through productive, skilled and knowledgeable personnel.

| OBJECTIVE  | KEY LESSONS LEARNT   | SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATION   |
|--|--|--|
| Understanding the current and<br>future economic and labour<br>context and trend dynamics  | <ul> <li>Most learners find it difficult to penetrate the job market after graduation (more than 26.0 percent) of the graduates who participated in the study are unemployed.</li> <li>All the current learners and graduates who participated in the study are blacks with most of them being females.</li> </ul>   | <ul> <li>Foster partnerships with industry to align their skills needs and tertiary training as it enhances one's employability if they are equipped with the right skills and knowledge;</li> <li>Also, encourage entrepreneurship training as part as part of all courses to encourage learner to venture into business after graduation rather than leaning on the expectation of being employed only.</li> <li>The aspect of having more females and blacks in training augurs well with the national strategy of addressing poverty and inequality especially among previously disadvantaged groups hence it must be upheld.</li> </ul> |
| <ul> <li>Investigating how education<br/>providers, employers and<br/>learners interpret and<br/>experience education for and<br/>through work (barriers,<br/>opportunities, examples of<br/>good practice)</li> </ul> | <ul> <li>All stakeholders who participated in this research study do agree that there is a link between training and workplace skills requirements, the training is somewhat adequate and can be better with some adjustments and additions to the programmes.</li> <li>Some learners find it difficult to secure work-based learning which will be a component of their studies.</li> </ul> | <ul> <li>Facilitate interchanges among<br/>all stakeholders especially<br/>trainers, employers and<br/>learners' representatives to<br/>foster dialogue on enhancing<br/>the training by tertiary<br/>institutions and to provide<br/>input in the development of<br/>training materials so that in the<br/>end the training system<br/>produces better output which<br/>gives improved outcome and<br/>has a more positive impact.</li> <li>Facilitate work-based learning<br/>placement to ensure that<br/>learners complete the requisite<br/>practical learning on time.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul> <li>Investigating the role of<br/>experiential training in<br/>preparing / upskilling<br/>graduates for the retail<br/>industry</li> </ul>  | <ul> <li>All the interviewed<br/>stakeholders agreed that<br/>experiential learning is a very<br/>important component of the<br/>training programmes as it<br/>gives real life experience of<br/>what happens in the industry;</li> </ul>  | <ul> <li>Set a mandatory experiential<br/>and theory ratio for all courses<br/>and have an implementation<br/>mechanism which is supported<br/>by strict monitoring framework<br/>to ensure that it is adhered to<br/>religiously;</li> <li>In as much as experiential<br/>learning is important, it does</li> </ul>   |

Table 1: Key lessons learnt and recommendations

| OBJECTIVE   | KEY LESSONS LEARNT   | SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATION  |
|---|--|---|
|   | <ul> <li>Experiential learning also prepares learners better for the world of work;</li> <li>It forms part of productivity at a workplace and productivity translates to profitability;</li> <li>Furthermore, it reduces training and development expenses at the workplace – both monetary expenses and production time lost whilst training.</li> </ul>  | not discount the importance of<br>theory. Therefore, the setting<br>up of experiential and<br>theoretical ratios must be<br>considered on a course-by-<br>course basis and must be<br>informed by industry experts,<br>academic experts and other key<br>stakeholders to minimise the<br>risk of an umbrella ratio which<br>may be detrimental to the end<br>goal of producing a graduate<br>who is well prepared to the<br>workplace.  |
| Priority skills development<br>and occupation pathways for<br>a resilient wholesale and retail<br>food sector in South Africa | <ul> <li>The wholesale and retail sector is a very volatile sector with ever evolving skills needs, more so in this digital era;</li> <li>Practical experience is a very vital component for an employee to be more effective and productive at a workplace however, because of the costly nature of experiential learning vis-à-vis the limited budget of most training providers, the consequence usually is that most trainers end up resorting to concentrate more on theory with minimal experiential learning;</li> <li>The wholesale and retail sector is an interactive sector with a lot of query handling and resolution especially from unsatisfied customers.</li> </ul> | <ul> <li>Implement flexible short<br/>courses that can accommodate<br/>those who are already<br/>employed to enhance their<br/>skills through further education<br/>and training.</li> <li>Foster financial partnerships<br/>with trainers and support them<br/>in monetary or material terms<br/>so that they balance the ratios<br/>of experiential and theory<br/>learning especially for some<br/>courses that are supposed to<br/>be conducted on a ratio of 70<br/>percent experiential / 30<br/>percent theory.</li> <li>Enforce the teaching of soft<br/>skills like interpersonal skills,<br/>dispute resolution, customer<br/>service, team building,<br/>communication and<br/>presentation skills. These<br/>should be part of the training<br/>over and above other business<br/>courses like finance, business<br/>management, human<br/>resources and purchasing,<br/>among others.</li> </ul> |

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Introduction and Background

Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) are entities of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). There are 21 SETAs; each servicing a specific economic sector of the country. The Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and

Training Authority (W&RSETA) was established in 2000 in terms of the Skills Development Act (as amended). The public entity aims to facilitate the skills development needs of the Wholesale and Retail (W&R) Sector through the implementation of learning programmes, disbursement of grants and monitoring of education and training as outlined in the National Skills Development Plan (NSDP).

The W&RSETA has the responsibility of conducting research, impact, and tracer studies which should inform the strategic orientation of the organisation in terms of skills planning, sector priorities, learning interventions, and management thereof, to continuously improve upon skills development across the wholesale and retail sector. In light of this, the W&RSETA has been tasked with the responsibility of researching to develop efficient and effective reports outlining key outcomes, findings, and recommendations, whilst gaining deeper insight for the SETA to be better positioned as an authoritative institution for labour market intelligence. In pursuit of its research agenda, the W&RSETA commissioned research on linking education and work. The specific objectives of which are detailed below:

#### 1.2. Study Objectives

Guided by W&RSETA research agenda on linking education and work, the specific objectives of this study include to:

- Understand the current and future economic and labour context and trend dynamics.
- Investigate how education providers, employers, and learners interpret and experience education for and through work (barriers, opportunities and examples of good practice).
- Draw on findings to propose recommendations on how W&RSETA can enhance its learning through and for work support and offerings.
- Develop a working paper to reflect on how theoretical discourse and concepts of learning for and through work correlate with the project's findings.
- Investigate the role of experiential training in preparing / up-skilling graduates for the retail industry.
- Facilitate priority skills development and occupation for a resilient wholesale and retail food sector in South Africa.

#### 1.3. Structure of the Report

This report is structured as follows;

- Chapter 1 provides the introduction and background of the study and details the research scope and objectives;
- Chapter 2 highlights the research methodology and approach used in the collection and analysis of data;
- Chapter 3 summarises the literature review, where the theoretical and empirical insights into education for and through work are explored;
- Chapter 4 analyses and presents the research findings in accordance with the objectives and primary reference required for the study; and
- Chapter 5 concludes the study and presents recommendations based on the research findings.

#### 2. METHODOLOGY AND STUDY DESIGN

#### 2.1. Introduction

The strategic intent of this study was to contribute to improve labour market data, to inform the W&RSETA Strategy, and inform all related strategic documents, which include the Sector Skills Plan (SSP), Strategic Plan (SP), and Annual Performance Plan (APP). The main purpose of the study is to explore education for and through work, with specific reference to the W&R sector. This study sought to better understand the possibilities, challenges and opportunities that education-for-and-through work present to the W&R sector. This provides a good background to improve the sector's ability to link education and the workplaces. This section discusses the methods used achieve the research objectives of the study. These include the research design and approach, literature review method, data collection plan and sampling issues.

#### 2.2. Research Design

This study was mainly exploratory and the appropriate way to gather information was deemed to be through a qualitative research approach centred on in-depth interviews with;

- i. W&R sector employers:
- ii. Education and training providers.
- iii. W&R sector graduates.
- iv. W&R sector
- v. Current learners.

#### 2.3. Research Approach

The nature of the project demanded that it involves both desktop (secondary) and primary research and employed primarily qualitative and quantitative methods. Desktop research included a thorough literature review. Literature review is an organised critical account of information that has been published on a specific topic and provides an organised synthesis of the information, ideas and knowledge. Paré, *et al.* (2015) highlighted that a literature review is essential for:

- i. Identifying what has been written on a subject or topic;
- ii. determining the extent to which a specific research area reveals any interpretable trends or patterns;
- iii. aggregating empirical findings related to a narrow research question to support evidence-based practice;
- iv. generating new frameworks and theories; and
- v. identifying topics or questions requiring more investigation.

**Primary research** included the whole process of collecting data from relevant stakeholders through survey and in-depth interviews and capturing and analysing the information in-order to achieve the objectives of the study.

**Qualitative research** refers to any data collection technique (such as in-depth interviews) or data analysis procedure (such as categorising data) that generates or uses non-numerical data. Qualitative Research is fundamentally exploratory. It was used to obtain an understanding of underlying opinions of relevant stakeholders which included the training providers, employers, graduates and current students on education for and through work and how the current systems link with the workplace. It provided insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research.

Qualitative Research was also used to uncover trends in thoughts and opinions, and dive deeper into the assessment of challenges and opportunities that education for and through work present, the link between the education systems and the workplace and the easy with which it is for transition of learners through the education system to the workplaces in the W&R sector.

#### 2.4. Literature Review Method

The purpose of this literature review is to gain understanding of the existing research terrain pertaining to the relationship between education and work. To this extent, the literature review provides a useful and critical context to answering the research question. To meet the aims of literature review, the following areas were areas of concern:

- i. Review of the sector/ sector analysis
- ii. Review of the policy framework
- iii. Theoretical framework
- iv. Empirical framework

In this study, literature review provided the legislative and policy context of the study with a view to understanding key framing documents and their influence on skills development practices. For insight on critical issues relating to sectoral skills development, literature review also discussed W&RSETA contextual issues relating to the education and training and labour issues. The theoretical framework identifies work-based learning models and typologies. The empirical literature focused insights from other countries and sectors and also centred on the characterisation of education/ training to workplace pathways models that are utilised by different countries.

#### 2.5. Sample Size and Population

Sampling is the process of selecting a representative group from the population under study and involves the two main strategies, namely non-probability and probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is used where the odds of any member being selected for a sample cannot be calculated, whereas probability sampling allows an equal chance of the population subject to be selected.

For this study, a non- probability sampling was done, where the respondent was identified and interviewed based on convenience, his/her reception to the researchers, and willingness to participate in the interview. The total sample size for this study was informed by the W&RSETA database. The envisaged sample sizes for this study and the responses received for the research study are indicated in the table below:

| Respondent         | Target | Emailed | Responses | Response rate |
|--------------------|--------|---------|-----------|---------------|
| Employers          | 40     | 210     | 42        | 105%          |
| Learners           | 40     | 55      | 40        | 100%          |
| Graduates          | 60     | 230     | 65        | 108%          |
| Training Providers | 40     | 50      | 33        | 83%           |

#### Table 2: Sample size and responses

#### 2.6. Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the model used to provide answers to the research problem under study. Sample sizes and sample population in terms of the scope of the study were also highlighted. Lastly, the actual samples, data capturing and analysis, and challenges encountered during the data collection process were presented. The study made use of primary data collected by way semi-structured questionnaires. The target population skills development facilitators for W&R sector companies, education and training providers were drawn from all the sub-sectors through convenience sampling and willingness to participate.

#### **3.** LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 3.1. Introduction

This section contains the following subsections

- i. Review of the sector/ sector analysis
- ii. Review of the policy framework
- iii. Theoretical framework
- iv. Empirical framework

The purposes of this section include providing the W&R sector background and contextual issues relating to the education, training and labour issues, the legislative and policy context of the study aimed at understanding the policy environment and their influence on skills development practices. The theoretical framework identifies work-based learning models and typologies. The empirical literature focused insights from other countries and sectors and also centred on the characterisation of education/ training to workplace pathways models that are utilised by different countries. Issues. Lastly, conclusions are made with respect to all the above constructs.

#### 3.2. Review of the Policy and Legislative Framework

#### 3.2.1 Introduction

The Skills Development Act, White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (WP-PSET), the National Skill Development Plan (NSDP) 2030, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), Quality Council of Trades and Occupations (QCTO) policy and the National and DHET Economic Recovery and Reconstruction Plan (ERRP) form the basis of the legislative, policy and institutional framework that frame the work of the SETAs. Furthermore, the Workplace-Based Learning (WBL) programmes are the largest part of the SETAs suite of interventions, over and above grants and bursaries. To gain a proper understanding of the policy framework, this section delves into these key areas of the SETA's policy environment and assesses their implications on education and the workplace.

#### 3.2.2 The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998

This Skills Development Act allows for diverse models of learning as it accommodates both traditional learning methods and work-based learning which strives to prepare learners for and through work. It aims to expand the knowledge and competencies of the labour force in order to improve productivity and employment at the workplace. This aligns with the aims of skills interventions programmes by SETAs including LGSETA. The promulgation of this act also established the National Skills Authority on 12 April 1999 and the act sought to:

- Provide an institutional framework to devise and implement national, sector and workplace strategies to develop and improve the skills of the South African work force;
- Integrate those strategies within the National Qualifications Framework contemplated in the South African Qualifications Authority Act of 1995;
- Provide for Learnerships that lead to recognised occupational qualifications;
- Provide for the financing of skills development by means of a levy-grant scheme and a National Skills Fund; and
- Provide for and regulate employment services.

These objectives were to be achieved through the establishment of an institutional and financial framework comprising the National Skills Authority, the National Skills Fund; a skills development levy-financing scheme as contemplated in the Skills Development Levies Act, SETAs, accredited trade test centres, skills development institutes, the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations; a skills development forum for each province and a national artisan moderation body. The act also sought to achieve its objectives by harmonizing and encouraging cooperation amongst all the players in the institutional framework. The establishment of these structures made it easier to institute recognised and credible training across all the trades.

The SDA provides for a framework of certification and quality control institutions that oversee the certification process such as SAQA and QCTO. It also acknowledges occupational and part qualifications associated with trade, occupation and profession resulting from work-based learning. Occupational and part qualifications are designed to include practical skills and work experience which constitutes the volume of learning required. This allows NQF recognised credits to be assigned and these credit follows the SAQA rule of 1 credit is equal to 10 notional hours.

#### 3.2.3 The Skills Development Levies Act, 1999

The Skills Development Levies Act (No. 9 of 1999) (SDLA) established a compulsory levy scheme for the purpose of funding education and training as envisaged in the Skills Development Act (No 97 of 1998) (SDA). This act regulates a compulsory levy scheme to fund education and training in businesses within various sectors in South Africa. It aims to expand the knowledge and competencies of the labour force and in so doing increase the supply of skilled labour, providing for greater productivity and employability at the workplace. The levy grant scheme, legislated through the Skills Development Levies Act, 1999, serves to fund the skills development initiative in the country. Levies are payable to the South African Revenue Service (SARS), which acts as a collecting agency for the applicable SETA. The Skills Development Levy (SDL) plays a vital role in the functioning of SETAs. SETAs fund their training programs through the payment of these levies. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in conjunction with the various SETAs, are responsible for administering the Act. The SETAs grant regulation is summarised by the diagram below:

Figure 1: SETA's Grant Regulation Guidelines



Source: Adapted from (DHET, 2012) and revised as per the 2019 court ruling<sup>1</sup>

The mandatory grants are a fixed amount of 50%. This is to be paid to the employer if they submits their skills report to the SETA and if they comply with the eligibility criteria. Additionally, a discretionary amount of up to 19.5% is also given. The discretionary grant is given if the SETA feels that the training that is done by the company is in line with the SETA's objectives and requirements.

Mandatory grants are paid by the SETA if the company fulfils grants requirements while discretionary grants are paid at the SETA's discretion in line with its scarce skills framework. Mandatory grants fund pivotal programs2 whilst the discretionary grant funds both pivotal and non-pivotal programs. Pivotal grants are paid for training which leads to credits or qualification recognised by the NQF while non-pivotal grants are paid to fund learnership programs, skills programs, work integrated and/ or internships

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In 2016, Regulation 4(4) was promulgated and added to the Skills Development Act, stating that mandatory grants would now be only 20% whilst the discretionary grant was now up to 49.5% instead. The Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) contested the change and, originally, the court ruling went in favour of BUSA. The Minister initially took steps to appeal against the Labour Court judgement and order; however, the Minister then instead re-promulgated the ousted regulation in identical terms, prior to the order coming into effect. BUSA appealed the 2018 Labour Court ruling and the Labour dismissed the review application with costs, stating that the decision to reduce the mandatory grant from 50% to 20% is rational. In October 2019, BUSA won a court case against the department's decision to decrease the mandatory grant allocation from 50% to 20% in terms of section 4(4) of the SETA grant regulations and the department's promulgation was set aside hence the allocation 50% mandatory grant, 19.5% discretionary grant was reinstated.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> PIVOTAL programmes refer to Professional, Vocational, Technical and Academic Learning programmes leading to qualifications or part qualifications.

which do not lead to a qualification recognised by the NQF. Nonetheless, non-pivotal training is equally important.

The discretionary grant is divided as: 80% to pivotal programmes and 20% to nonpivotal programmes. The grant system targets levy payers (LPs), non-levy payers (NLPs), small and medium-size enterprises, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade unions, community-based organisations/ cooperatives, higher education institutions (HEIs) and government departments.

Other pieces of legislation that shape the training landscape, promulgated to promote and monitor the National Skills Strategy include the National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008, the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 and the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act 58 of 2001. The regulation of post-school education in South Africa is governed by an array of legislation and statutory bodies. The levy-grant institutions regulate funding that comes from employers, and that is used for the training needs of the employer's own staff as well as to support national training imperatives. These institutions also plan the skills needs of their respective economic sectors. Quality Councils oversee qualifications, standards, assessment and certification systems across the education and training system in which all regulation happens. However, Jansen and Walters (2018) argue that the PSET system has been blamed for duplication, overlap, incoherence, and inconsistency in the functioning of these institutions. Further, it is still blamed for producing half-baked graduates and professional who are not work ready (Jansen and Walters, 2018). Therefore, it remains to be seen, through studies of this nature, if indeed there is a link between these trainings and skills requirements at workplaces. The research study, therefore, becomes relevant to elucidate these complexities on the link between education at tertiary institutions and workplace skills requirements.

#### 3.2.4 The NSDP 2030

THE NSDP 2030 seeks to ensure that South Africa has adequate, appropriate and highquality skills that contribute towards economic growth, employment creation and social development. It derives from the broader plan, the National Development Plan (NDP). The National Skills Development Plan 2030 (NSDP) was developed to respond to the policy goals of the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (WP-PSET) to improve both the integration of the post-school education and training system (PSET), and the interface between PSET institutions and the world.

In this dispensation, the role of the SETAs was streamlined and re-focussed in order to strengthen their ability to successfully contribute towards the achievement of the NSDP outcomes. From the NSDP 2030, the expectations of the SETA's are summarised as:

- Quality Assurance The SETA quality assurance functions as well as those carried out by the National Artisan Moderating Body will now be integrated into the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO);
- Dedicated (Workplace and Education) Relationship Building Central to the role of the SETAs will be their ability to strengthen and build relationships between the workplace and education and training institutions in order to facilitate the achievement NSDP outcomes;
- Linking Demand with Supply The levy-grant system must be utilised to its fullest in order to elicit detailed and accurate information from employers regarding labour market demands as well as predicted future trends. The SETAs must

promote and co-ordinate workplace-based learning opportunities so as to ensure sufficient workplace-based learning to facilitate the achievement of the outcomes of the NSDP;

- Increased Training of Employed Workers SETAs must expand training opportunities for employed workers through the Mandatory and Discretionary Grant system to support increased productivity levels;
- Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges (TVET) The strengthening of the TVET system is a high priority for the government in order to support the growth of middle level skills and artisan development. The SETAs must identify the middle level skills required in their sectors through the Sector Skills Plans (SSPs) and partner with industry and colleges using the skills levy system to link demand with supply ensuring sufficient work integrated learning opportunities;
- Community Education and Training Colleges (CET) The CET colleges will cater for the knowledge and skills needs of the large numbers of adults and youth requiring education and training opportunities, unemployed people, and those employed but in low or semi-skilled occupations. The CET colleges link directly with the work of public programmes to provide appropriate skills and knowledge. The SETAs have an important role to play in building partnerships between CET colleges and work-integrated learning opportunities;
- Entrepreneurs and Cooperatives Through their skills planning research, SETAs must identify the skills development needs of entrepreneurs and cooperatives within their sectors and actively support appropriate initiatives with particular focus on the unemployed, youth, women and people with disabilities;
- Worker-Initiated Training Programmes SETAs must work closely with Trade unions to support and encourage training initiatives and programmes within their sector in order to equip workers with the knowledge and skills to understand the challenges faced in the workplace and the broader South African economy; and
- Career Development The ability of all workers to be able to achieve their full potential through actively developing their career is a key component of the NSDP. The SETAs must support enhanced career and vocational guidance initiatives within their sectors.

The National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS 2030) is informed by the overarching NDP and its implementing agencies, the SETAs, and is no longer seen as separate from the colleges and universities as was the case in the past. The National Skills Authority (NSA) continues to play a crucial role of ensuring stakeholders and constituency participation in the development of the SETA landscape.

#### 3.2.5 The WP-PSET

This is a policy instrument which defines the priorities of the DHET and Training for building and strengthening the PSET system. The policy profiles a vision for growth and directs the Department to elaborate a concrete development plan for the period up to 2030.

The White Paper for Post School Education and Training (WP-PSET) enunciates:

"National economic development has been prioritised, and the role of education and training as a contributor to development has begun to receive much attention. This is not to devalue the intrinsic importance of education. Quality education is an important right, which plays a vital role in relation to a person's health, quality of life, self-esteem, and the ability of citizens to be actively engaged and empowered. However, few can argue with the need to improve the performance of the economy, to expand employment and to equip people to achieve sustainable livelihoods. This means improving partnerships, developing effective and well-understood vocational learning and occupational pathways, and improving the quality of the learning and work experiences along those pathways" [WP: 56/8].

The notion of an expanded and integrated post school system as outlined by the WP-PSET represents a fundamental shift that ensures the fast-tracked production of the requisite skills to propel economic growth. The department aligned PSET legislative frameworks to support the integration of education and training. It advocates and promote effective partnerships between institutions of learning and work places to facilitate the intake of graduates for internships and experiential learning, hence also easing their transition from education to work and up-'skilling those already on the workplace.

#### The White Paper also states:

"In the future, SETAs will be given a clearer and to some extent narrower and more focused role. The aim will be to locate certain functions (such as skills planning, funding and quality assurance) in well-resourced central institutions, thus enabling sector structures to focus on engaging with stakeholders in the workplace, establishing their needs and agreeing on the best way of addressing them, facilitating access to relevant programmes and ensuring that providers have the capacity to delivery programmes that have a genuine impact. [WP: 57/8].

The DHET developed a draft strategy for turning the public sector into a training space. Clear targets for graduate work placement were set and to ensure a strong bias to dedicated workplace-based learning. In this regard, the SETAs are seen as complementary institutions, enabling learners at learning institutions to seamlessly progress to workplaces and enabling workers to return to institutions of learning in ways that enhance economic growth and social development of the country.

The NSDP 2030 places TVET colleges, CETs and the SETAs at the centre of the national skills development. This is evident in the NSDP 2030 objectives which include:

- i. Identify and increase production of occupations in high demand: The primary aim of determining occupations in high demand is to improve the responsiveness of the post school education and training system to the needs of the economy. The national list of occupations in high demand will be compiled and reviewed for every two years, to support planning processes in the post-school education and training sector, particularly in relation to enrolment planning, decision making on the prioritisation of resource allocation, qualification development, and career information and advice;
- ii. Linking education and the workplace: Improving the relationship between education and training and work is a key policy goal of the WP-PSET. This recognises the importance of workplace-based learning in achieving the policy objectives of the post school education and training system. The WP-PSET is unequivocal that the main purpose of TVET is to prepare students for the world of work, a position that is in line with international practice. Workplacebased learning is important for the employment prospects of students in the

system. Workplace based learning is explicitly supported and promoted in the SETA Workplace-based Learning Programme Agreements Regulations and the draft DHET Workplace-Based Learning Policy.

- iii. The alignment of planning and funding cycles of skills levy institutions will allow for much greater coherence between workplaces and education and training institutions in offering workplace learning opportunities to students in PSET, and industry experience. The role of SETAs as intermediary bodies is posited as a key factor in linking the world of work and education;
- iv. Improving the level of skills in the South African workforce: South Africa is challenged by low productivity in the workplace, as well as slow transformation of the labour market and a lack of mobility of the workforce, largely as a result of inadequate, quality assured training for those already in the labour market. The NSDP calls for increased workplace training of workers already in employment. To address this, SETAs get a budget allocation required to support employed workers. SETAs must support the training of employed workers and encourage employers to expand such training in order to improve the overall productivity of the economy, achieve transformation and address skills imbalances in workforce in particular and the labour market in general; and
- v. Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges: The WP-PSET describes TVET colleges as the cornerstone of the post-school education and training system for South Africa and proposes an expansion of this institutional type to absorb the largest enrolment growth in the post-school system. The NDP also situates TVET colleges as critical pillars of the emerging post-school system and vital for social and economic development. The growth of stronger TVET colleges will expand the provision of mid-level technical and occupational qualifications. These will articulate directly into the world of work for the growing numbers of young people leaving the schooling system. A significantly expanded TVET institutional type will also relieve the higher education institutional type which is already under strain from high demand driven by student aspirations for post-school education and a lack of alternative and attractive opportunities elsewhere in the PSET system.

#### 3.2.6 The NP-PSET

The NP-PSET is an instrument that is central to the achievement of outcome 5 of the White Paper: "A skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path". It elaborates on the vision for PSET articulated in the National Development Plan (NDP). The purpose of the NP-PSET is to translate the policy directions outlined in the WP-PSET into concrete actions. The NP-PSET is a roadmap for the development and strengthening of post-school education and training (PSET) from 2019- 2030. The NP-PSET outlines the overall guiding plan for the Department for the next 10-year period. The NP-PSET operationalizes the vision and principles of the WP-PSET and provides a blueprint for growing an effective and integrated PSET system.

The Plan identifies the goals, objectives and outcomes for PSET. It describes the implementation strategies, targets, and responsibilities for achieving the White Paper vision of an expanded, effective, and integrated PSET system. The Plan formalises work already in progress towards the goals of the White Paper, including the National Skills Development Plan (NSDP) which is fully integrated into the NP-PSET.

Given the problem of the skills mismatch that is characteristic of the South African labour market, there is a real danger that as the use of technology grows, many semi and unskilled workers will be left behind. This is being done in collaboration with industry and the tertiary education sector. Workplace and industry training will also be leveraged on to support the drive to build and strengthen the required skills base. The skills strategy is reoriented to be more demand led and responsive to the changing nature of work as well as to, in the immediate term, focus SETA skills training on addressing the impact of Covid-19. The reconstruction and recovery plan require investment in human capital. Learning in various sectors of the economy will be rolled out. In particular, 100 000 learners will be placed in these programmes in 2021. To support the building of a sustained skills pipeline, it will be a requirement that all infrastructure projects contribute towards the creation of new skilled artisans.

#### 3.2.7 National Economic Recovery and Reconstruction Plan (ERRP)

The Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan maps the all-inclusive measures that government has adopted, after consultation with stakeholders to resuscitate the South African economy following the devastating effect of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The economic reconstruction and recovery plan place skills development at the centre of driving South African economy on a recovery trajectory. The COVID-19 crisis has had profound implications for the world of work. Working remotely has grown in application and in significance. The use of technology has taken centre stage in all economic sectors. COVID-19 has also laid bare the frailties in the labour market; with certain jobs less secure than others.

The plan is three-pronged, firstly, a comprehensive health response to the pandemic, secondly, social and economic relief to the worst affected and now, economic recovery stage. The combined effect of the measures taken by government and its social partners has been to preserve the country's economic capacity and lay the foundation for a more rapid recovery. Despite these vital interventions, however, the damage caused by the pandemic to an already weak economy, to employment, to livelihoods, to public finances and to state-owned companies has been colossal (President Ramaphosa, Parliament, Thursday, 15 October 2020).

Among the interventions outlined in the plan include reversing the decline of the local sectors and promoting reindustrialisation. Furthermore, the fourth key intervention is a drive for industrial growth. The government seeks to support a massive growth in local production and make South African exports more competitive and place the economy on a new trajectory. Employment, skills development and innovation form part of the priority interventions.

#### 3.2.8 DHET Response Strategies

In response to the national ERRP, the Department came up with ERRP response strategies. The department call for SETAs to assist in preventing further job losses through skills development, reskill workers to enable them access to jobs, upskills workers to enable them to remain in their jobs, ensure skills can be transferred across sectors, align to the Skills Strategy in response to the national ERRP and pay special attention to training the youth, women and vulnerable groups. Furthermore, the DHET ERRP strategy stresses the need for SETAs to adopt interventions that promotes the skills and innovation strategy to foster youth involvement in innovation through workplacebased interventions such as apprenticeships, learnerships and internships.

The DHET Skills Strategy to support ERRP identifies the skills implications of national ERRP and outlines the ways in which the PSET system will ensure skills required to implement

this plan are available. It focuses on new labour market entrants to access opportunities and re-training of employees to prevent job losses. The skills for key sectors are organized along 10 interventions to ensure the correct skills to support the plan are produced, six of these interventions are to do with immediate delivery linked to sectoral strategies and four interventions are linked to systemic issues including mechanisms for refining and adding to skills and qualifications needed for fast responsiveness as the economy changes with the ERRP interventions. These interventions are centred on:

- i. Access to targeted skills programmes with a priority of digital skills;
- ii. Technical and Vocational Education Programmes to be updated or amended with a priority on the auto-sector and medical equipment;
- iii. Access to workplace experience;
- iv. Increased access to programmes resulting in qualifications in priority;
- v. Artisan development- trades have been identified in the National Development Plan, Strategic Infrastructure Projects and Economic Reconstruction Recovery Plan;
- vi. Supporting entrepreneurship and innovation- Supporting skills required for entrepreneurship to enable entry level entrepreneurial activities (private and social) through to higher end enterprises that rely on innovative research and development;
- vii. On-going focused engagement to determine, on a regular basis, skills required for growth and/or recovery;
- viii. National Pathway Management Network- Adoption of and strengthening of the pathway management network to support transition from 'learning to earning;
- ix. Strengthening the PSET system- Systemic actions required in the short term to enable the immediate interventions, as well as to ensure the system is strengthened to meet medium and long-term demand
- x. SETAs are crucial and need to be more responsiveness in how they fund a range of urgent interventions.

There is emphasis in the ERRP on the digital economy and the circular economy -, therefore, partnerships with the DSI and industry will be key to assist with rapid skills development in areas aligned to all sectors. Analysis of the skills and interventions highlighted in the 10 DHET interventions.

#### 3.2.9 NQF, Sub-frameworks and QCTO policy

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is a strategy created in response to the need to create a national education and training system that provides quality learning, responsive to the ever-changing influences of the external environment and also promote the development of the nation that is committed to life-long learning. It provides a framework within which the South African qualifications system is constructed, representing a national effort at integrating education and training. The NQF is the set of principles and guidelines by which records of learner achievement are registered to enable national recognition of acquired skills and knowledge, thereby ensuring an integrated system that encourages life-long learning.

The objectives of the NQF as outlined in the NQF Act No 67 of 2008 are to:

- create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements;
- facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths; and

• enhance the quality of education and training.

Т

| he framework and its sub-frameworks are summarised in table 3.1 below: |
|--|
| Table 3.1: The National Qualification Framework                        |

| NQF Sub-<br>Framework/                 | NQF   | NQF Sub-Fran   | NQF Sub-<br>Framework/                      |                                      |
|--|-------|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| Quality Council                        | 20101 | Quancanon type   | Quality Council                             |                                      |
| Iework (E)                             | 10    | Doctoral Degree<br>Doctoral Degree<br>(Professional)                           |   |                                      |
| iub-Fram<br>ion (CHI                   | 9     | Master's Degree<br>Master's Degree<br>(Professional)                           |   | Occup<br>Qualific                    |
| Qualification S<br>f Higher Educat     | 8     | Bachelor Honours<br>Degree<br>Post Graduate<br>Diploma<br>Bachelor's<br>Degree | Specialised<br>Occupational<br>Diploma      | ational Qualific<br>cation Council o |
| cation<br>ouncil o                     | 7     | Bachelor's<br>Degree   | Advanced<br>Occupational<br>Diploma         | ation Su<br>of Trade                 |
| Edu<br>=)/ Cc                          | 6     | Diploma  | Occupational<br>Diploma                     | ub-fra<br>and                        |
| Higher<br>(HEQSI                       | 5     | Higher Certificate   | Higher<br>Occupational<br>Certificate       | Occupc                               |
| Further<br>raining<br>nework           | 4     | National<br>Certificate  | National<br>Occupational<br>Certificate     | (OQSF)<br>stions (G                  |
| nd T<br>Ind T<br>Talusi                | 3     | Intermediate<br>Certificate  | Intermediate<br>Occupational<br>Certificate | )<br>2CTO)                           |
| al a<br>tion c<br>cation S<br>SFJ/ Urr | 2     | Elementary<br>Certificate  | Elementary<br>Occupational<br>Certificate   |                                      |
| Gener<br>Educa<br>Qualific<br>(GFETG   | 1     | General<br>Certificate   | General<br>Occupational<br>Certificate      |                                      |

Source: https://www.skillsportal.co.za

The NQF is a single integrated system which comprises of 3 co-ordinated qualifications sub-frameworks, namely the:

- i. General and Further Education and Training Sub-Framework (GFETQSF),
- ii. Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF), and
- iii. Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF).

The sub-frameworks have qualifications registered at the following NQF levels:

- i. GFETQSF levels 1 to 4;
- ii. HEQSF levels 5 to 10;

iii. OQSF - levels 1 to 6. For NQF levels 7 and 8 the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations can motivate for a qualification only in collaboration with a recognised professional body and the Council on Higher Education, in a process co-ordinated by SAQA.

There are 3 Quality Councils (QCs), namely:

- i. UMALUSI,
- ii. Quality Council for Trades & Occupations (QCTO), and
- iii. Council on Higher Education South Africa (CHE).

The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) is mandated by the National Qualifications Framework Act (2008) (as amended) to oversee the development and maintenance of the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The Skills Development Act (2008) as amended, enabled the establishment of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), also provides for the establishment and maintenance of occupational standards and qualifications. The SDA also mandates the QCTO to provide quality assurance for qualifications on the OQSF and registered on the NQF, therefore, the QCTO therefore responsible for the macro framework. It is also responsible for issuing occupational and trade certificates to learners who have achieved these qualifications.

To support the education national imperatives, the QCTO was tasked to Implement and expand the occupational qualifications, part qualification and skills programmes by accredited skills development providers in the PSET sector. The NDP target of 30,000 artisans to be produced annually by 2030 is an indication that South Africa's intermediate skills base is too low to support the country's socio-economic development goals. The workforce is also not keeping pace with the skills required to remain competitive in an increasingly knowledge-based economy. To address this, the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations has developed new occupational qualifications which are offered in TVET colleges and CET colleges.

The new occupational qualifications require some work experience for certification. Although there might be some flexibility in the design of different qualifications, there is no doubt that the system requires better and more systemic arrangements for workplace-based learning in order for the programmes to inspire confidence among employers and to improve employment outcomes for students. Skills levy institutions through their funding will play an important role in supporting the increased production of occupationally directed programmes which address the workplace skills needs.

#### 3.2.10 The Workplace-Based Learning Policy

The Department of Higher Education and Training promulgated the SETA workplacebased learning programme agreement regulations on 16 November 2018 in the Government Gazette (No 42037). This was meant to repeal the Learnership Agreement. Workplace-based learning (WBL) is an occupational directed educational approach through which a person internalises knowledge, gains insights and acquires skills and competencies through exposure to a work- place to achieve specific outcomes applicable to employment. It ensures a strong bias to dedicated workplace-based learning. In this regard, the SETAs should be seen as complementary institutions, enabling learners at learning institutions to seamlessly progress to workplaces and enabling workers to return to institutions of learning in ways that enhance economic growth and social development of the country (National Skills Authority, 2015).

WBL has been a central element of higher education programmes – medicine, engineering and teacher education etc. It has been associated with various types of employer-education partnerships for vocationally oriented qualifications. WBL has been a requirement of professional councils for professional designations, which serves as a license for a graduate to practice as a professional.

Recent education, training and economic policies emphasised the need for WBL with specific reference to the White Paper for the Post school education and training (PSET) system. The conceptual frame of WBL is an educational approach that aligns academic and workplace practices for the mutual benefit of students and workplaces, a concept dubbed education for and through work. The three dimensions namely: learning for work – induction of new entrants to the profession/vocation; learning at work – the integration of knowledge and competencies through experience; and learning through work – work-related tasks as part of the curriculum, all encourage the integrative aspects of learning and work. WBLs are structured learning to a qualification registered on the NQF. The WBL programmes are outcomes-based and not time-based and allows for recognition of prior learning. The table below shows the WBL programmes as envisaged by the department (DHET).

| Workplace Based Learning Programmes  |   |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|--|--|
| Apprenticeship                       | Means a period of workplace-based learning culminating in an  |  |  |  |  |
|                                      | occupational  |  |  |  |  |
| Learnership                          | Means a period of workplace-based learning culminating in an  |  |  |  |  |
|                                      | occupational  |  |  |  |  |
| Internship for the<br>"N" Diploma    | Means a period of workplace-based learning undertaken as part of the requirement for the "N" Diploma.   |  |  |  |  |
| Candidacy                            | Means a period of workplace-based learning undertaken<br>by a graduate as part of the requirement for registration as<br>a professional in the required professional designation as<br>stipulated by a professional body                |  |  |  |  |
| Student<br>internship:<br>Category A | Means a period of workplace-based learning undertaken as<br>part of the requirement for the Diploma, National Diploma,<br>Higher Certificate as a vocational qualification stipulated in<br>the Higher Education Sub-Framework (HEQSF). |  |  |  |  |
| Student<br>internship:<br>Category B | Means a period of workplace-based learning undertaken as<br>part of the requirement   |  |  |  |  |
| Student<br>internship:<br>Category C | Means a period of workplace-based learning undertaken as<br>part of the requirement Qualification Council of Trades and<br>Occupations (QCTO).  |  |  |  |  |
| Student<br>internship                | Means a period of workplace-based learning for a person<br>who is enrolled at any training college and may include<br>vacation work.  |  |  |  |  |

#### Table 3.2: Workplace-Based Learning Programmes

| Graduate   | Means a period of workplace-based learning for the purposes |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------------|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| internship | of allowing a person to gain experience or exposure to      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|            | enhance competency and/or employability.                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Source: https://wwvw.dhet.gov.za The role players for WBL are:

- government (DHET and SETAs) who are responsible for policy, incentives, funding, reporting;
- institutions (CET, TVET colleges, universities) who are responsible for curriculum development, implementation of the WBL, manage and monitor, assess, qualification assessment arrangements, support students, staff and employers;
- employers who offer workplace opportunities, safe environment for learning, mentor, monitor and feedback; and
- learners and employees who learn, adhere to workplace rules as learnerworkers, complete workplace related tasks and submit logbook.

A WBL agreement is signed between the learner and employer, and the agreement is signed between the employer, provider and learner (tripartite agreement). Shortterm employment contract is signed between the employer and the learner if the learner is unemployed. The learning programme and process is discussed and agreed to with the provider. Employer funds the learnership, through grants obtained from the W&RSETA. Employer and provider provide relevant learning and experience, working closely to manage the learnership process. Learners are provided with support through mentoring and feedback and are assessed by a qualified assessor (formative and summative assessments). The SETA Quality Assuror is called to undertake moderation of the assessment and internal moderation must be undertaken by the provider. On successful completion of the learnership, a national qualification is awarded to the learner. Learners receive a statement of results for unit standards achieved if learnership is not successfully completed. Once the learnership is completed, the employer can decide whether to sign the learner on for a new learnership, employ the learner or release the learner for future employment by another organization, if he/she was originally unemployed.

#### 3.3. Review of the Sector/ Sector Analysis

#### 3.3.1 Sector trends and Status quo

The mission of the Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority (W&RSETA) is to develop a skilled, capable, competent and professional workforce to transform the Wholesale and Retail Sector. W&RSETA's strategic goals are to: produce a skilled, capable and professional workforce in the wholesale and retail sector; be an effective and efficient organisation; undertake effective stakeholder engagement and strategic partnerships; develop a skilled, vibrant SMME and cooperatives sector; and produce responsive and empowered training providers who can effectively meet the training needs of the wholesale and retail sector3. This section briefly reviews the retail and wholesale sector in terms of distribution of employers, demographic characteristics of employees, occupation and skills supply and demand analysis.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented changes in consumer buying habits, the way business is conducted and how consumers and retailers respond to these changes is different (Dube, 2021). This has significant implications on the W&R sector such as loss in employment, the health and safety of customers, employees,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> https://www.wrseta.org.za/about-us/vision

and partners has become of paramount importance. The epidemic has resulted in a slowdown in business activity and a decline in revenue (Ede, Masuku and Jili, 2021). Consequently, the new business environment has promoted prioritisation of reskilling and retraining to minimise job losses. Implicitly, these developments have impacted on the relationship between education and the world of work and will be explored in this research.

The highest number of levy paying companies was in Gauteng (8895), followed by Western Cape (4690) and Kwa-Zulu Natal (3205) (W&RSETA, 2020a). This is due to the higher concentration of companies in these regions. Furthermore, the majority of levy paying organisations are classified as small companies. This also has implications to the effect that training initiatives should also fully accommodate small organisation and make sure they get a fair share in grants allocations. Further, training initiatives should also reflect imperatives and the nature of small companies.

According to the WSP data for 2020, the employee profile shows that the majority of employees in 2020 were female (54%) and African (72%). Furthermore, Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu Natal provinces had disproportionately high employment shares in 2020, this may be attributed to the concentration of employers in these provinces as it depicts the same trend. Black African continues to be underrepresented in top management jobs while the Whites dominate employment the higher post (W&RSETA, 2021-SSP 2020-2025). The age group 35-44 years and 25-34 years represent the largest number of employees in the W&R sector in 2020. It is imperative that these demographic characteristics be reflected also in the awarding of educational and training opportunities, bursaries and grants.

The wholesale and retail (W&R) sector employment trend highlights that there was a huge decline in employment from 2014 to 2015. However, from 2015 to 2020, there was a steady increase in employment in the W&R sector, with small fluctuations (W&RSETA, 2021. The fortunes of the sector are obviously tied to the overall performance of the economy. The wholesale and retail sector employed 3.249 million people in 2019, which is 21% of the total active labour force. In 2014, there were 3.186 million employees compared to 3.320 million employees in 2020. This represents an increase of 134000 (4%) of employees in this period (StatsSA, 2020). This statistic shows the increasing demand for skills in the W&R sector and therefore, W&RSETA should step up training and education efforts to produce work-ready learners and meet the increasing skills demand in the sector.

#### 3.3.2 Sector Skills demand and supply overview

The labour market and skill trends are ever-changing. W&RSETA (2021) identified the following key factors as change drivers influencing skills supply and demand and with serious implications on sector skills development:

#### 3.3.1.1. COVID-19

In 2020, the W&RSETA carried out a survey to determine the implications of COVID-19 on the sector performance, skills supply and demand and the future of the work dynamics on the sector. The COVID-19 Survey presented the following key findings:

• 69,08% of respondents indicated that their sales have decreased due to COVID-19 and social distancing, while only 4.35% indicated a growth in sales. This is also reflected in the 93,69% that indicated that their turnover was below the normal range.

- Safety, Health, Environmental & Quality (SHE&Q) Training was indicated by 50,25% of respondents as interventions that should be prioritised by W&RSETA to mitigate against COVID-19 (this corresponds with the occupations identified in the HTFV list). New delivery models for training, such as blended learning and e-learning, were indicated by 24,63% of respondents to be priority interventions by W&R SETA.
- As a response to lower sales and turnover, businesses are to putting measures in place to avoid retrenchments. Business restructuring was indicated by 48,77% of respondents as a measure taken to avoid retrenchments.

The implications of COVID-19 for skills planning include slowing down of business activity, decline in revenue, increased demand for e-commerce, prioritising reskilling and retraining to minimise job losses, and higher health and safety risk for customers, employers, employees and partners. The strategic priority skills areas therefore include Safety, Health, Environmental and Quality (SHEQ), training in ICT literacy, skills programmes for unemployed youth and supporting vulnerable sub-sectors of the economy (SMMEs, informal traders, cooperatives, NGOs and youth). This calls for W&RSETA to step up education/training throughput in these key areas. For this research, it will be imperative to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant shifts in learning delivery have impacted on the relationship between education and work.

#### 3.3.1.2. Retail Chain Moving into Townships

Supermarkets are saturating townships and peri-urban areas causing a strain on small retailers (W&RSETA, 2020a). There are several implications of this movement for skills planning in the sector. It brings about changes in the way business is conducted and how consumers and retailers respond to these changes. The infiltration of large retail chains into townships is beneficial to consumers as it provides access to a wide range of products at lower prices. Small and independent retailers may be affected negatively because they cannot compete with bigger stores on price, quality and range of products. The occupational needs in the sector include tellers, packagers, cleaners, securities, sales managers, buyers, merchandisers, sales assistants, bakers and butchers. Such changes in occupational skill demands invariably impact the relationship between education and work. The extent of this impact and its significance on sectoral skills development efforts will be explored in this research.

#### 3.3.3 Technology Advancements and Access to Information

The wholesale and retail industry is rapidly changing due to technological advancements. These advancements offer wholesalers and retailers opportunity to increase their efficiency and revise their business models. However, these advancements have significant implications on skills demand of the sector. The sector needs technology-savvy workforce now more than ever. The extent to which this kind of skills are being produced by education-for-and-through-work initiatives have to be explored in this study.

#### 3.3.4 Employer consultations survey

The W&RSETA carried out a consultation survey in 2020 and the following were the skills supply and demand major findings per sub-sector:

- i. Wholesale and Commissions Trade sub-sector
- Skills development is a priority intervention.

- Change management, logistics and supply chain, labour law, emotional intelligence, COVID-19 Safety, computer literacy, sales and financial management were identified as possible future and current skills gaps.
- Product training, work-integrated learning, digital training and COVID-19 safety training were identified as priority training and education interventions.

#### ii. Retail sub-sector

- The retail sub-sector revealed that skills development will be a priority intervention.
- Skills such as emotional intelligence, leadership skills, customer service skills, digital literacy, and technical skills and people management were identified as possible future and current skills gaps.
- Priority learning and education interventions included wellbeing programmes, leadership development, soft skills development and work-integrated learning.

#### iii. Education sub-sector

- The education sub-sector revealed that skills development will be a priority intervention.
- Leadership skills, project management, mechanical skills, electrical skills, computer skills, as well as data analysis and management skills were identified as possible future and current skills gaps.
- Interventions on priority education and training included leadership and change management training, teaching through technology and computer skills training.

#### iv. Accounting sub-sector

- Skills development is a priority in this sub-sector, as employees are occupying new positions and constantly require up-skilling and/or reskilling.
- Future skills gaps were foreseen in technical skills and in cost-effective project management.
- The priority education and training areas included technical skills, resilience and change management.

#### v. The Hardware sub-sector

- The hardware sub-sector revealed that skills development will be a priority intervention to enhance delivery and customer service.
- Current and future skills gaps were identified as financial analysis and performance management, team management, customer service, sales and operational skills.
- Priority education and training will be directed towards sales skills and customer service skills.

#### 3.3.5 Skills shortages and HTFVs

For 2020, WSP/ATR data and the HTFV survey identifies the following as major occupational skills shortages and HTFVs, along with the reasons for shortages that have been provided by the stakeholders.

| Occupation (2020)        | OFO Code | Vacancies | Reasons                 |  |  |
|--------------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------------|--|--|
| Butcher                  | 681103   | 108       | Lack of qualifications; |  |  |
|                          |          |           | Lack of experience      |  |  |
| Bricklayer and Plasterer | 641201-9 | 500       | Lack of qualifications  |  |  |

#### Table 3.3: 2020 Occupational shortages

| Occupation (2020)  | OFO Code | Vacancies | Reasons  |
|--|----------|-----------|--|
| Confectionery Baker  | 681201   | 236       | Lack of qualifications;<br>Lack of experience                              |
| Cosmetic Sales Assistant   | 522301-3 | 70        | Lack of experience   |
| Diesel Mechanic  | 653306   | 98        | Lack of experience; Lack of qualifications                                 |
| Electrician  | 671101   | 500       | Lack of qualifications;<br>Lack of experience                              |
| Fitter and Turner  | 652302   | 92        | Lack of experience   |
| Retail Buyer   | 332301   | 102       | Lack of experience; Lack<br>of qualifications; Travel<br>long<br>Distances |
| Retail General Manager   | 142103   | 559       | Lack of experience; Lack of qualifications                                 |
| Retail Store Manager   | 142103-3 |           | Lack of experience; Lack<br>of qualifications; Travel<br>long<br>Distances |
| Retail Supervisor  | 522201   | 182       | Lack of experience; Lack<br>of qualifications; Poor<br>pay                 |
| Safety, Health,<br>Environment and Quality<br>(SHE&Q) Practitioner | 226302   | 508       | Lack of experience; Lack of qualifications                                 |
| Sales Assistant (General)  | 522301   | 397       | Lack of experience; Poor   |

Source: WSP/ATR data 2020, HTFV Survey data 2020, COVID-19 Survey 2020

The table below shows the HTFVs reasons by sub-sector.

Table 3.4: HTFV reasons by sub-sector

| Sub-Sector                  | Reasons   |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Clothing                    | There is a skills gap in HR and Labour Law assistance, as well as<br>a need for COVID-19 safety measure training for employees.<br>Additionally, business management training is needed for team<br>leaders.  |  |  |  |
| Hardware and<br>Merchandise | There is a growing need for stress management training and<br>strategic planning for SME due to COVID-19 disruptions.<br>Additionally, there is a skills gap in time management, online<br>skills and supply chain management. The sub-sector<br>indicated technical support<br>officers as an emerging HTFV. |  |  |  |
| Wholesale                   | There is a lack of technical skills. There is also a difficulty filling vacancies for sales engineers and health and safety / COVID-<br>19 safety officers.   |  |  |  |
| Retail                      | Health and safety officers, store managers, merchandise<br>planners and merchandise buyers were identified as HTFVs for<br>the retail sub-sector. These are accompanied by a lack of<br>customer service skills, emotional intelligence and soft skills.  |  |  |  |

Source: WSP/ATR 2020, Employer Interviews 2020

The table below also shows the skills gap prevalent in the W&R sector in 2020 by occupational category.

Table 3.5: Skills Gaps by Major Occupation Group

| # | Skills Gap                      | Managers   | Professional   | Technician &<br>Associate<br>Professionals   | Clerical<br>Support<br>Workers   | Service &<br>SalesWorkers   | Craft &<br>Related<br>Trades<br>Workers   | Plant &<br>Machine<br>Operators      | Elementary<br>Occupations                                      |
|---|---------------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Product<br>Knowledge            | -Retail Manager<br>-Enterprise /<br>Organisation<br>Director<br>-Sales Manager | Industrial,<br>Products, Sales<br>Representative,<br>Medical and<br>Pharmaceutic<br>al Products<br>Sales<br>Representative | Commercial<br>Sales<br>Representative<br>-Office<br>Administrator<br>-Retail Buyer       | -General Clerk<br>-Accounts<br>Clerk<br>-Dispatching<br>and<br>Receiving<br>Clerk /<br>Officer | -Sales Assistant<br>(General)<br>-Sales Clerk<br>-Checkout<br>Operator                  | -Computer<br>Engineering<br>Mechanic /<br>Service Person<br>-Quality<br>Controller<br>(Manufacturin<br>g) | -Delivery Driver<br>-Forklift Driver | -Store Person<br>-Packer                                       |
| 2 | Customer<br>Service             | -Retail General<br>Manager<br>-Retail Store<br>Manager<br>-Sales Manager       | -Industrial<br>Products Sales<br>Representative<br>-Marketing<br>Consultant  | -Sales<br>Representative<br>-Personal<br>Assistant                                       | -General Clerk<br>-Receptionist<br>-Accounts<br>Clerk  | -Checkout<br>Operator<br>-Sales Assistant<br>(General)<br>-Service Station<br>Attendant |   | -Delivery Driver<br>-Forklift Driver | -Store Person<br>-Packer<br>-Cleaner<br>(No<br>n-<br>Domestic) |
| 3 | COVID-19 in<br>the<br>workplace | -Retail<br>General<br>Manager  |  | -Food &<br>Beverage<br>Technician<br>-Sales<br>Representative<br>-Visual<br>Merchandiser | -General Clerk   | -Checkout<br>Operator<br>-Sales Assistant<br>(General)<br>-Cashier                      | -Confectionery<br>Baker   | -Delivery Driver<br>-Forklift Driver | -Store Person<br>-Packer<br>-Commercial<br>Cleaner             |
| 4 | Health<br>and<br>Safety         | -Retail General<br>Manager   | -Health and<br>Safety Officer<br>/<br>Coordinator/<br>Professional   | -Production /<br>Operations<br>Supervisor<br>-Office<br>Administrator                    | -General Clerk   | -Service Station<br>Manager<br>-Retail<br>Supervisor                                    | -Butcher<br>-Electrician<br>-Automotive<br>Motor<br>Mechanic  | -Forklift Driver<br>-Delivery Driver | -Store Person<br>-Shelf Filler<br>-Packer                      |

| 5 | Time<br>Manageme<br>nt | -Sales Manager<br>Managers   | -General<br>Accountant<br>-Marketing<br>Specialist<br>Professional | -Procurement<br>Administrator<br>Coordinator /<br>-Office<br>Administrator<br>Technician&<br>Associate<br>Professionals | -Admissions<br>Clerk<br>-Debtors Clerk<br>Clerical<br>Support<br>Workers                          | -Internal<br>Salesperson<br>Service & Sales<br>Workers                 | Craft &<br>Related Trades<br>Workers             | -Delivery Driver<br>Plant &<br>Machine<br>Operators |   |
|---|------------------------|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| 6 | Labour<br>Relations    | -Finance<br>Manager<br>-Human<br>Resource<br>Manager<br>-Office<br>Manager                     | -Human<br>Resource<br>Advisor                                      |   | -Human<br>Resources<br>Clerk<br>-Accounts<br>Clerk  | -Retail<br>Supervisor  |  |   |   |
| 7 | Manageme<br>nt         | -Retail Manager<br>-Sales Manager<br>-Corporate<br>General<br>Manager                          | General<br>Accountant,<br>Retail<br>Pharmacist                     | -Office<br>Administrat<br>or<br>-Production<br>/Operations<br>Supervisor  | -Accounts<br>Clerk<br>-Stock Clerk /<br>Officer<br>General Clerk                                  | -Retail<br>Supervisor<br>-Sales<br>Assistant<br>(General)<br>/ Officer | Confectio<br>nery Baker<br>Quality<br>Controller | -Delivery<br>Driver                                 | Store Person<br>wareho<br>use<br>Assistant  |
| 8 | Manageme               | -Refail General<br>Manager<br>-Shop Manager  | Auditor  | BOOKKEEDEL  | Clerk   | -Cashier   |  | -Delivery<br>Driver                                 |   |
| 9 | Digital/41R<br>Skills  | -Enterprise /<br>Organisation<br>Director<br>-Retail General<br>Manager<br>-Finance<br>Manager | -ICT<br>Custo<br>mer Support<br>Officer                            | -Marketing<br>Coordinator   | -Administration<br>Clerk<br>-Filing / Registry<br>Clerk<br>Communicatio<br>n Clerk /<br>Assistant | -Sales<br>Officer<br>Clerk   | -<br>Printer<br>s'<br>Electri<br>cian            |   | -Wood<br>Timber<br>Worker<br>and<br>Process |

Source: WSP/ATR 2020, COVID-19 Impact survey 2020, Employer interviews 2020
There remain occupational shortages in the W&R sector and the sector still faces hardto-fill vacancies. These are positions where organisations may fail to get the right candidate, hence they remain vacant or some less qualified skill is placed instead. Lack of qualifications, lack of experience and the impact of COVID-19 are the main reasons for the occupational shortages (W&RSETA, 2020b).

While the DHET and W&RSETA continue to promulgate education-for-and-through work initiatives to ameliorate the skills shortages and fund a number of programmes through bursaries and grants, and employers continue to place learners on WBL programmes (internships and learnerships), it is to be established as to whether all these initiatives are effective in producing work-ready learners who can easily take up posts in the W&R sector. This is to be achieved through seeking the perceptions of education providers, learners and employers on education-for-and-through-work initiatives such as WBL, i.e., learnerships and internships.

A deeper dive into this investigation will help explain the causes of occupational shortages and the existence of HTVs. It will reveal if these challenges are a result of misalignment between education at tertiary institutions and skills requirements at workplaces. This will also provide recommendations to improve on these initiatives. This shows the relevance of this research study as the findings will help answer some of the challenges being encountered in industry.

## 3.4. Theoretical Framework

### 3.4.1 Introduction

There has been so much discourse about the variance between what South African educational institutions produce and what employers want. There is growing consensus that the PSET system is not doing an effective job-in preparing students for the changing workplace. The transition from school-to-work has not been so easy for most youths and learners (Kenny, 2019). The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (WPPSET), for example, notes that learners exiting universities, TVET colleges and programmes funded by SETAs are generally not finding work easily<sup>4</sup>. According to the WPPSET, employers generally view such employees as lacking practical work experience. Significantly, the WPPSET also recognises the importance of viewing workplace learning as an integral part of qualification and programme design. This section briefly explains the new understanding of education and then previews the work-based learning related theories which provide the link between education and the workplace.

### 3.4.2 New Understanding of Learning and Education

Social economic factors and technology are driving the change in education meaning and perspective. Gone are the days in which education and work were separated. This is not to say that the traditional view of education is obsolete, but that the relative importance of workforce preparation has increased (Griffin, Care and McGaw, 2012). The WPPSET recognises that ensuring expanded access to education and training, through promoting training at both education institutions and workplaces, is in line with the National Skills Accord signed at NEDLAC in 2011<sup>5</sup>. Internationally, there is increased recognition of the symbiotic relationship between

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> White Paper on Post School Education and Training, 2013

education and the workplace leading to increased collaboration and consultation between education institutions and industry. The degree to which education imperatives align with the industry's skill expectations influences successful transition of learners from education to the workplace (Dougherty and Lombardi, 2016). Learners must have accurate labour market and program information to make appropriate occupational decisions. In this context, the outcomes and quality of learning are being redefined to reflect industry and employer imperatives. In the new understanding of education, the role of work-related learning cannot be overemphasised (Brodie and Irving, 2007).

Locally, Taylor and Govender (2013) posit that work readiness is a function of effective Work Integrated Learning (WIL). The researchers contend that education institutions, students and industry all share a responsibility in making a more effective transition from an education institution to the workplace. For Pop and Barkhuizen, (2010) research evidence in South Africa indicates that tertiary qualifications do not necessarily prepare students for the workplace. As a result, employers are not able to use new graduates to fill their skill requirements because they lack practical skills and experience.

### 3.4.3 Work-based learning

The DHET defines Workplace-based learning (WBL) as an educational approach through which a person internalises knowledge, gains insights and acquires skills and competencies through exposure to a work- place to achieve specific outcomes applicable to employment (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2017). Lester and Costley (2010) define WBL as an educational strategy that provides students with real-life work experiences where they can apply academic and technical skills and develop their employability. It is a series of educational courses which integrate the school or university curriculum with the workplace to create a different learning paradigm. Work-based learning deliberately merges theory with practice and acknowledges the intersection of explicit and tacit forms of knowing.

Most WBL programs are generally university accredited courses, aiming at a win-win situation where the learner's needs and the industry requirement for skilled and talented employees both are met. WBL programs are targeted to bridge the gap between the learning and the doing. Work-based learning strategies provide career awareness, career exploration opportunities, career planning activities and help students attain competencies such as positive work attitudes and other employable skills (Helyer, 2015).

Work-based learning encompasses a diversity of <u>formal</u> and <u>informal</u> arrangements including apprenticeships, work placement and informal learning on the job. The key driver is the need for active policies to secure learning that meets the need of the workplace.

The Department of Higher Education and Training promulgated the SETA workplacebased learning programme agreement regulations on 16 November 2018 in the Government Gazette (No 42037). This was meant to repeal the Learnership Agreement. It is worth noting that WBL has been a central element of some higher education programmes such as medicine, engineering, and teacher education etc. It has been associated with various types of employer-education partnerships for vocationally oriented qualifications. WBL is an indispensable component of artisan training and has for many decades served as the key site for the development of the right skills-learning for work. It also has been a requirement of professional councils for professional designation, which serves as a license for a graduate to practice as a professional.

Recent education, training and economic policies have emphasised the need for WBL with specific reference to the White Paper for the Post School Education and Training (PSET) system. The conceptual frame of WBL is an educational approach that aligns academic and workplace practices for the mutual benefit of students and workplaces. The three dimensions of this approach are namely:

- i. Learning for work -induction of new entrants to the profession/vocation;
- ii. Learning at work the integration of knowledge and competencies through experience; and
- iii. Learning through work work-related tasks as part of the curriculum, all encourage the integrative aspects of learning and work.

WBLs are structured learning process for gaining theoretical knowledge and practical skills in the workplace leading to a qualification registered on the NQF. The WBL programmes are outcomes-based and not time-based and allows for recognition of prior learning. The table below shows the WBL programmes as envisaged by the department (DHET).

| workplace Based Learning Programmes  |   |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Apprenticeship                       | Means a period of workplace-based learning culminating in an occupational   |  |  |  |
| Learnership                          | Means a period of workplace-based learning culminating in an occupational   |  |  |  |
| Internship for<br>the "N"<br>Diploma | Means a period of workplace-based learning undertaken as part of the requirementfor the "N" Diploma.  |  |  |  |
| Candidacy                            | Means a period of workplace-based learning undertaken<br>by a graduate as part of the requirement for registration as<br>a professional in the required professional designation as<br>stipulated by a professional body                |  |  |  |
| Student<br>internship:<br>Category A | Means a period of workplace-based learning undertaken as<br>part of the requirement for the Diploma, National Diploma,<br>Higher Certificate as a vocational qualification stipulated in<br>the Higher Education Sub-Framework (HEQSF). |  |  |  |
| Student<br>internship:<br>Category B | Means a period of workplace-based learning undertaken as part of the requirement  |  |  |  |
| Student<br>internship:<br>Category C | Means a period of workplace-based learning undertaken as part of the requirement Qualification Council of Trades and Occupations (QCTO).  |  |  |  |
| Student<br>internship                | Means a period of workplace-based learning for a person<br>who is enrolled at any training college and may include<br>vacation work.  |  |  |  |

## Table 3.6: Workplace-Based Learning Programmes

| Workplace Based Learning Programmes |   |  |  |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Graduate<br>internship              | Means a period of workplace-based learning for the purposes<br>of allowing a person to gain experience or exposure to<br>enhance competency and/or employability. |  |  |

Source: <u>https://www.dhet.gov.za</u>

The role players for WBL are: government (DHET and SETAs) who are responsible for policy, incentives, funding, reporting; institutions (CET, TVET colleges) who are responsible for curriculum development, implementation of the WBL, manage and monitor, assess, qualification assessment arrangements, support students, staff and employers; employers who offer workplace opportunities, safe environment for learning, mentor, monitor and feedback; and students who learn, adhere to workplace rules as learner-workers, complete workplace related tasks and submit logbook.

A WBL agreement is signed between the learner and employer, and the agreement is signed between the employer, provider and learner (tripartite agreement). A shortterm employment contract is signed between the employer and the learner if the learner is unemployed. The learning programme and process is discussed and agreed to with the provider. Employer funds the learnership, through grants obtained from the SETA. Employer and provider provide relevant learning and experience, working closely to manage the learnership process. Learners are provided with support through mentoring and feedback and are assessed by a qualified assessor (formative and summative assessments). The SETA Quality Assuror is called to undertake moderation of the assessment and internal moderation must be undertaken by the provider. On successful completion of the learnership, a national qualification is awarded to the learner. Learners receive a statement of results for unit standards achieved if learnership is not successfully completed. Once the learnership is completed, the employer can decide whether to sign the learner on for a new learnership, employ the learner or release the learner for future employment by another organization, if he/she was originally unemployed.

Learnership duration varies but the average is about 18 months. In practice, to attain an artisan equivalent qualification (NQF level 4) four separate learnerships will have to be completed (i.e., qualifications at NQF levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 will have to be attained). Learners may be existing employees or new entrants. Learners must meet the entry requirements for the particular learnership as determined by the qualification requirements on which the learnership is based and learners must meet the selection criteria determined by the organisation taking on the learner.

The theoretical framework of work-based learning is hinged on experiential learning and project-based learning. These theories highlight the learning process to make students ready for work and emphasise the need for learner active involvement in work- and work-related project in the course of learning through initiatives such as apprenticeships, learnerships and internships.

## 3.4.4 Experiential Learning

For adults, no amount of textbook learning can take the place of knowledge, clarity, and wisdom that come from experience (Hedin, 2010). The Experiential Learning Theory states that the essence of adult learning is making sense of experiences. Adults learn best when they learn by doing. They learn best when they are directly involved with experiencing the learning instead of memorizing numbers and definitions from books. This makes on-the-hands learning initiatives such as simulation-based learning and learning factories more effective to adult learners (Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis, 2014).

Kolb (2014) reveals the cyclical nature of experiential learning by explaining how it takes place in four stages:

- Concrete Experience (CE): Adults learn best when the learning experience goes beyond the chalk-and-talk routine. Kinaesthetic learning or learning by encouraging physical actions (simulations) and learning that evokes strong emotional responses (realistic scenarios that reveal cause-effect relationships) create powerful experiences that are not forgotten easily;
- Reflective Observation (RO): Adults need to engage with and reflect on their experiences to glean insights and acquire knowledge. Therefore, it is critical to not only create opportunities for experience-based learning but also provide time and space to encourage reflection. Reflective observation also creates opportunities for "watching" the action unfold before the eyes (demonstrations) and "analysing" processes and procedures (scenario-driven activities, case studies);
- Abstract Conceptualization (AC): The success of experiential learning lies in the learner being able to decode abstract concepts from their reflections, generalize these ideas, and realize the relevance to their reality;
- Active Experimentation (AE): Role-playing activities, internships, and other hands-on tasks let learners apply the learning and thus truly "learn by doing." Active experimentation leads to concrete experiences, and the cycle of experiential learning resumes.

Hands-on learning set-ups such as workplace-based learning provides a model of the tenets of this theory. Kolb's experiential learning stresses that adult learners learn through concrete experiences, reflective observations, abstract conceptualizations, and active experimentation. According to Kolb, abstract conceptualization involves forming new ideas, frequently based on previous reflection while active experimentation provides learners with a chance to apply these new ideas to achieve new outcomes. Concrete experience provides a "publicly shared reference point for testing the implications and validity of ideas". This allows the learner to get explicit feedback on their active experimentation before they begin reflective observation, where the learner reviews on their performance and begins considering new strategies. Thus, learners have to be active, rather than passive learners, thus learning by doing or experimenting.

### 3.4.5 Project Based Learning (PBL)

Developed by Dewey (1987), project-based learning theory holds that learners acquire deeper knowledge through active exploration of real-world problems. Dewey called this principle "learning by doing". Hung (2011) defined project-based learning (PBL) as a model and framework of teaching and learning in which students acquire

content knowledge and skills in order to answer a driving question based on an authentic challenge, need, problem or concern. Savery (2019)also argued that Project Based Learning is done collaboratively and within groups using a variety of employability skills such as critical thinking, communication, creativity and involves a community partner and a publicly presented product. This calls for learning to be able to produce a good relevant to the market. This is congruent with learning factories which, while they are designed for learning, also produce a market-relevant good.

Project-based learning is an instructional approach where learners learn by investigating a complex question, problem or challenge. It promotes active learning, engages students, and allows for higher order thinking (Savery, Overview of problem-based learning: Definitions and distinctions. Essential readings in problem-based learning: Exploring and extending the legacy of Howard S. Barrows, 2015). Learners are tasked with exploring real-world problems and finding answers via the completion of their project. Learners also have some control over the project they are working on, particularly in terms of how the project will finish and the end product. This framework describes what students should be doing, learning, and experiencing in a good project. It stresses the need to learn by doing and experiencing work related or real world scenarios (Bell, 2010).

### 3.4.6 Summary of work-related learning typologies

The table below summarises the 2 theories of work-based learning discussed under this section.

| Theory                       | Summary  | Best suited for  |  |  |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Experiential<br>Learning     | A hands-on approach where individuals learn by<br>doing.<br>Puts the learner at the centre of the learning<br>process.<br>Learning happens through an active process of<br>doing and reflection.                                   | Mechanical skills<br>Leadership skills<br>Process<br>improvement<br>Systematic<br>thinking |  |  |
| Project<br>Based<br>Learning | Learners engage in active investigation of a real-<br>world problem.<br>Gives learners a voice in the overall process<br>through a process of inquiry, critical thinking,<br>problem solving, collaboration, and<br>communication. | Project<br>management<br>Process<br>improvement<br>Manufacturing                           |  |  |

### Table 3.7: Summary of WBL typologies

Source: Adapted from Kearsley (2010).

This section concentrated on work-based learning theory which also resonates well with Post-School Education and Training. Furthermore, the tenets outlined by these theories highlight some of the ways to make education more relevant to the workplace. This provides an indication that learning at, for and through work links education work, thereby empowering the learners to be work relevant. The theories also highlighted that learning opportunities for adults exist in a variety of settings ranging from a formal institution to a place of employment and learning or training initiatives should acknowledge their prior knowledge and experiences of learners, including their ability to recognize their own skills as lifelong learners.

# 3.5. Empirical Framework

## 3.5.1 Introduction

This section discusses the pathways through education into work that are utilised in different countries. The aim is to gain a deeper understanding on the link between the education/ training system and the workplace and assess the routes that learners take to get to their desired profession. The section also reviewed briefly the South African labour market. This provides an indication of unemployment situation in South Africa and relate to the easy with which learners progress from education to the workplace. The section also reviews the South African mining model of work-based learning to draw lesson that can improve learning for and through work. Lastly, the use of simulation-based training and learning factories in some industries to bridge the gap between the learning and work environment is also highlighted.

### 3.5.2 Pathways through education and into work

The ways in which young people move from initial education to employment depend on a complex set of moderating conditions. The nature of the available routes through education and training and into a first job is of relevance to SETAs and policy makers. Education systems vary greatly in the degree to which general and vocational studies complement each other and in the ways in which they are sequenced.

It is useful to analyse the routes and choices for learners to make their transition from education to work. According to Raffe (2003), these pathways linking education to work are organised into

- i. Institutionalised ways: young people have to choose between different programmes but have then relatively little choice over the courses that they take and the moment at which they exit from the chosen programme.
- ii. A more "individually constructed" pattern: Learners choose from a large range of frequently modularised and separately certified courses.

The first type of pathway encourages the completion of programmes leading to recognised qualifications, while the latter type emphasises learners' personal initiative and responsibility in composing their own qualification profiles and determining their own exit points. Institutionalised pathways offer greater protection in the years after compulsory schooling; individually-constructed ones may offer greater flexibility to leave and later re-enter the system to build on partial qualifications (Raffe, 2003). Parallel to these differences in pathways to qualification are mechanisms for entry into the labour market. In some systems this transition is dominated by collective agreements and regulations, with negotiations between employers, governments and trade unions playing an important role (Stone III and Aliaga, 2003).

Elsewhere, choices and connections between education and employment are left much more to the individual learner. Looking more specifically at the types of pathway on offer immediately after compulsory education, most learners go through one of three routes: general education; predominantly school based vocational pathways leading to work, to further education or to both; and apprenticeship type pathways in which learning within paid employment is combined with classroom learning (Bridgstock *et al.*, 2015).

In South Africa, the great majority of young people enter a general education pathway at the end of compulsory primary schooling, and the choice of a vocational pathway is both delayed and made by relatively few people. Many of those completing the general education pathway enter work rather than further study. Transition to work thus follows a highly "individually-constructed" model. A significant minority of young people have difficulties in the transition process. Various features of the pattern of education employment linkages in South Africa are similar to those in most African countries and other countries such as Canada, in New Zealand, and in the United States (Paul Ashwin and Case, 2018).

In China, Japan and most advanced economies, young people choose between a general education and several vocational pathways at a relatively young age. Most opt for vocational/technical pathways: a shorter or a long school based vocational route (the latter qualifying young people for both technician level work and higher education), or apprenticeship. Most general education graduates enter tertiary study. This highly "institutionalised" model is also very inclusive: at the age of 16. Only about 3 per cent of young people are not involved in education or training, and youth unemployment is low. Similar structures are found in other German-speaking countries and in Denmark (Raffe, 2003).

In the Czech Republic and Austria, the choice between a general education and several vocational pathways is made at an early age, with most choosing the latter, but in this case the vocational options are all school based. Each vocational pathway offers several possible exit points, one of which can qualify young people for tertiary study as well as for work. Most general education graduates enter tertiary education. The emphasis upon school-based vocational pathways has points in common with approaches found in those completing the general education pathway countries such as France and Italy, enter work rather than further study (Ibid).

In Norway, at the age of 16, nearly half enter general education and those entering one of two vocational pathways. Structural linkages allow the latter to transfer to the general education pathway in order to qualify for tertiary education. Many of those completing the general education pathway enter work rather than further study. So Norway combines institutional pathways with aspects of individual construction – apparently with some success. At the age of 16, only 3 per cent of young people are not involved in education or training, and non-participation remains low at age 18 (Ibid).

The Norwegian approach has much in common with that found in Sweden in Austria, the very low proportion of 20–24-year-olds who are unemployed appears to owe much to the ability of the vocational pathways in that country to connect a high proportion of young people to the labour market at a relatively early age, and to provide another significant part of the youth (about 20 per cent) with high quality vocational qualifications combined with university entry certification. The high rate of educational participation at age 18 in Norway is partly due to the later starting age and long duration of all of its pathways, but also to the diversity of programs that they offer to meet the needs and interests of a wide spectrum of young people (Ibid).

More generally, there is considerable evidence that institutional pathways can, where well designed, be effective in steering most young people into employment. The evidence on individually constructed pathways is less clear. Their outcomes are by definition harder to pinpoint and classify, while their overall performance in terms of employment rates have been mixed rather than universally inferior to more institutionalised systems (Paul Ashwin and Case, 2018).

However, looking more closely at the dynamics of the transition, it appears that countries with well-developed pathways from education to work succeed in getting young people into their first job quickly, and in limiting long-term youth unemployment. This is important given the evidence discussed above showing the relationship between initial and subsequent employment rates of school leavers. In general, in countries with the lowest youth unemployment to population ratios, the unemployed are often making a relatively short-term transition to work, rather than being long-term unemployed. Countries with well-defined institutionalised pathways, with strong links into employment.

Analysis of the pathways between education and work for a number of countries revealed the following key points:

- Delaying entry to vocational pathways can reduce their attractiveness to young people, especially in countries where choices have traditionally had to be made at an early age, or where the value of vocational qualifications in the labour market is perceived to be unsatisfactory.
- Ensuring that vocational pathways can qualify young people for both work and tertiary study increases their attractiveness.
- Offering a range of pathways suited to differing interests and needs at the end of compulsory education encourages a higher proportion of young people to remain in education and training.
- Ensuring broad pathways with multiple exit points increases their holding power and attractiveness, as does ensuring that there are opportunities for young people to cross from one pathway to another with minimal loss of time.
- Vocational pathways that involve strong links to employers and enterprises result in better immediate labour market outcomes for young people than do those with weak links.

The above analysis has demonstrated some of the pathways and difficulties facing learners who leave school without completing a matric education. Changes in the labour market and the wider economy mean that they find it hard to gain stable employment and thereby to start a process of successful integration into society. Without recognised qualifications, they are more likely to enter part-time or temporary work, or unemployment, or be outside the labour force altogether. Poor start in the labour market can be difficult to overcome, especially for those with low levels of initial qualifications. The evidence shows that both for groups with and without educational qualifications, early labour market prospects vary greatly from one country to another. Apprenticeship systems have a good track record of keeping youth unemployment at comparatively very low levels and at ensuring that these labour market benefits persist for young adults. This has led to many efforts at developing similar arrangements in other countries. systems to function successfully, a very good example is South Africa. Such conditions include the self-organisation of employers and their collective co-operation with public authorities in designing and implementing training regulations, as well as the content and modes of certification.

### 3.5.3 Characteristics of South Africa higher education and labour market

There are currently 26 public universities in South Africa, classified by the Department of Higher Education and Training as 12 'traditional' universities, 8 universities of technology, and 6 comprehensive universities According to Ashwin and Case(2018), poor performance by young people is a big impediment that militates against their transition from basic education to higher education. Further, weak vocational sector forces many young people to consider higher education as the only route to social mobility. More so, public funding has not grown in accordance with growing enrolments in South Africa and thus an increasing share of the cost has been shifted to students and their families. This gas negatively affected the aspirations of school leavers (Ibid).

"About one million young individuals exit the schooling system annually," notes the department's strategic plan for fiscal years 2015/16 – 2019/20. However, only a small number of those who leave the schooling system enrol in TVET colleges or have access to any Post-School Education and Training. The few who enrol for PSET are however, upon completion, even not sufficiently prepared for the workplace due to the poor quality of education and training provided (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2017). The department acknowledges PSET system, currently is not able to produce the number and quality of graduates needed by the economy.

South Africa is a country defined by extreme inequality and this plays out in many ways across its social landscape, including higher education. Its history in colonialism and apartheid continues to structure the present (Kerr and Wittenberg, 2020). During apartheid, the burden of unemployment was racially skewed, and fell disproportionately on the Black African. Access to school and employment during apartheid was difficult for the black communities (Ibid). More so, historically, women and youth also had a greater burden of unemployment. According to, these Apartheid and historical patterns of employment and wage differentials continue to characterise the South African labour market, despite huge progress and effort by the government to reverse the patterns (Mosomi, 2019).

According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) of the 2nd quarter of 2021, young people are still struggling in the South African labour market. The official unemployment rate was 34.4%. This rate was 46,3% among young people aged 15 – 34 years, implying that almost one in every two young people in the labour force did not have a job in the 2nd quarter of 2021. About a quarter (24,4%) of the youth have jobs and 45,3% of them participate in the labour market. Within the youth, those aged 15–24 years are more vulnerable in the labour market with an unemployment rate of over 63%, an absorption rate of about 7,6% and a labour force participation rate of 20,6% (StatsSA, 2021).

Though regarded as one of the advanced labour markets in Africa (Kenny, 2019), the South African labour markets exhibit similar characteristics to those of the Southern Africa and the rest of Africa. The labour market is highly segmented in rural and urban, formal and informal or public and private markets. These overlap and are not entirely homogenous, there being other sub segments within these broader groups. These segments also define broader wage disparities (Ncube, 2008).

### 3.5.4 The mining qualification model

Work integrated learning (WIL)has been a part of some of some of South African professions and careers. There are a number of success stories of this model in South Africa, particularly the mining qualifications model that encompasses University of Pretoria (UP), University of Johannesburg (UJ), Witwatersrand University (Wits)and University of South Africa (UNISA). As part of the mining engineering curriculum, students are required to be placed in industry for vacation work or work-integrated learning (WIL) for at least six months.

The mining universities in South Africa currently use two different models for work placement to fulfil WIL requirements in their programmes (Maseko, 2018). The first approach is where the work placement component is embedded in the National Diploma qualifications offered by universities of technology or comprehensive universities and is referred to as experiential learning (UNISA and UJ). The second model is what is referred to as vacation work by universities that offer the Bachelor's qualifications (Wits and UP in this case). In this model the students are required to attend an engineering workshop at the end of their first year. In their second year the students are exposed to practical training on a mine, focusing on mining activities. This is where the students complete the Competent Person A and Competent Person B qualifications. The third year is dedicated to project work for the dissertation. The total duration of exposure amounts to eight weeks in industry per year in the first three years at university.

In addition, students are taken for mine tours, survey camps in the middle of their third year, and mine visits in their fourth year. At the end of the vacation work, the summative assessment will be carried out by the university to gather evidence of the student's critical analysis skills, good organization, clarity, and conciseness. This will be clearly demonstrated in the dissertation that the student submits to the university. Practical mining is assessed through the Competent Person A and Competent Person B reports.

In the past, universities were easily able to place students in the industry. However, this has been changing due to the economic situation in the mining industry. Wits and UP currently have embarked on new initiatives to complement the learning activities of their students. UP has a Virtual Reality Centre for Mine Design which aims to enhance education, training, and research in operational risk across industries through an innovative approach to information optimization and visualization. Wits has the Digi-Mine laboratory, the purpose of which is to make mining safer and more sustainable using digital technologies. This project comprises a mock mine equipped with a life-size tunnel, stope, lamp room, and other features. Both initiatives contribute immensely in exposing students to a similar environment to that of the real world.

UNISA, as a distant-learning institution, faced more challenges in placing international students. The Colliery Training College has contributed towards alleviating the problem by accepting such students (Maseko, 2018). The other solution is for students to be placed in their respective countries where possible, but that entails its own challenges. Despite the placement challenges, both of the work placement models outlined above contribute to a certain extent to students' learning but involve quality assurance difficulties.

### 3.5.5 Simulations and Learning Factories

The need to align the learning environment to the workplaces has never been underestimated. The transition of learners from education/training environment to the workplace is one that worries curriculum developers and education experts. If learning environment mimics, to a larger extent, the workplace, then the transition of learners from the training to work would be smooth and easy. The problem alluded by Jansen and Walters (2018) that South African universities produce half-baked graduates would be minimised. The introduction of simulations and virtual realities in training has helped strengthen the link between education and the workplace as it brought the workplace environment to the learners. Simulation training is the creation of a true-to-life learning environment that mirrors real-life work scenarios. Learners apply real knowledge and skills into practice not just by reading books on theory or listening to lectures, but through physical, hands-on activity (Davidsson and Verhagen, 2013). This type of training is deemed effective as it takes into account several of the learning styles preferred by different learners. Not everyone learns visually, or through auditory materials, and simulation-based training also considers the needs of kinesthetic learners who flourish through practical exercises.(Patel et al., 2020).

Sørensen et al., 2017 argue that simulation-based training is a highly effective way of transferring key skills to learners in a cost-effective manner. It provides an optimum way for employers to assess how well their trainees are putting skills into practice, and the decisions they are making in front of simulated real-life situations. Learning in a safe and managed environment provides essential hands-on experience that integrates key theoretical concepts with interactive, computer simulated situations.

The birth of modern simulation-based training can be credited to the history of the aerospace industry. Flight simulations were first conceived in 1929 when Edwin Link designed an amusement park ride that gave the sensation of flying a plane. This machine eventually was modified into the Link Flight Simulator. Training with this primitive simulator was associated with a 90% reduction in night time and badweather collisions. During World War 2, pilots needed to learn how to fly in quickly changing environments and higher speeds. Ground simulations with entire cockpit crews were practiced so that the soldiers knew how to fly as a team. The field of medicine and military were the early adopters of simulation-based training.

Since that first successful simulator, several major advances have been added to the concept, including motion camera displays and eventually computer-generated displays. The success of this means of training as well as its cost effectiveness in the aerospace sector has been well documented. In the 1970s, computer-generated simulators were developed. These simulators gradually improved over time, as technology advanced. Today, three-dimensional landscapes are the common feature, and are created at the precise scale of landscapes of the real world they imitate. Today, simulation training is used in most industries, but the leading industries are the pioneers and early adopters, that include aviation, healthcare, military/law enforcement and other hazardous industries such as fire-fighting, transportation, and athletics (Davidsson and Verhagen, 2017).

Learning Factories, on the other hand, are complex learning environments for the manufacturing context that contain authentic replicas of real production systems and value chains, so that participants can learn based on experiences, in a hands-on fashion (Abele *et al.*, 2017). They are are simplified for didactic reasons and reproduced inside a lab to train students. Learning Factories have been used in universities and industry for many years now and they work on real challenges in actual factory settings (Abele *et al.*, 2015). Learning factories and simulation training have received credit for using technology to link education/ training and the work place(Mavrikios, Georgoulias and Chryssolouris, 2018).

## 3.6. Conclusions

Traditional apprenticeship arrangements provide the more relevant model for African countries seeking to improve learners' transition from education to work. There is however, need to develop pathways that respond flexibly to young people's desire to access tertiary education, and at the same time provide them with occupational qualifications that are relevant for the labour market. Depending on the occupational structures and the readiness of enterprises to provide training in each industry, such pathways may encompass many types of early contact with the labour market, ranging from formal apprenticeships to internships and student projects. Such initiatives ease the transition of learners from education to workplaces.

The PSET system has not been able to produce the right number and quality of workready individual, and work-based learning initiatives remain at the forefront to bridge the gap. There are several success stories of qualifications that use the Work-Integrated Learning model, a good example being the mining related qualifications offered by UJ, UP, Wits and UNISA where learner placements on work during the course of learning is mandatory and forms part of the curriculum. This prepares the learner for and through work and the transition from education to work is relatively easy.

WBL and WIL will remain important for years to come, as the literature indicates, and because practice is part of education for professional qualifications. In an unequal society such as South Africa, WIL can be used to bring about equity and excellence in the workplace. Simulation based training that mimic the working environment and learning factories have also proved to be able to link the progression of learners through from training to the workplace.

Universities are addressing challenges of student placement using different approaches, development of a new curriculum for WIL has started, and the UP Virtual Reality Centre and Wits DigiMine project are examples of progress in addressing education and training in South Africa. Despite the positive developments mentioned above, WIL programmes face challenges that need attention. These challenges include student placement in the industry, further improvement of the WIL curriculum and programmes, availability of suitable mentors, environments conducive for training and development in the industry, and effective partnerships to improve WIL.

# 4. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

## 4.1. Introduction

Chapter four presents and discusses results gathered from primary data collection. Responses were obtained from employers, training providers, graduates and leaners. A questionnaire was emailed to all the respondents on the database received from W&RSETA. The response rate is quite impressive though it was after a lot probing to get the targeted respondents to participate. All respondents were given an opportunity to complete the survey-on-survey monkey, however, researchers had to do telephone calls to improve the response rate. Responses received from all participants are summarised in preceding sections.

# 4.2. Research Challenges

Challenges were encountered during the primary data collection exercise. Although researchers had to zero in with an adapted research design, it is worth noting the challenge so that it is considered in future research.

• Stakeholder willingness to participate in the research: the biggest challenge encountered is that many targeted research participants neglected/forgot to complete the survey. This is even after the survey was sent to them through emails and had an option of completing either the soft copy or online through survey monkey. Also, when the targeted respondents were contacted through telephone, some opted out stating that they are busy whilst some promised to complete the online version which they never did.

# 4.3. Findings from employers

# 4.3.1 Employers' fieldwork reflections

The employers' database used was drawn from all the country's nine provinces, however, responses were received from eight provinces which are; Gauteng 41.5 percent (17 responses), Western Cape 17.1 percent (7), Eastern Cape 12.2 percent (5), KwaZulu Natal 9.8 percent (4), Limpopo 7.3 percent (3), Mpumalanga 4.9 percent (2), Free State 4.9 percent (2) and Northwest 2.4 percent (1). Unfortunately, there were no responses received from Northern Cape province. The employer distribution is presented in the figure below.

Figure 2: Employers distribution by province



More than 77 percent of the employers who responded are small enterprises with full time employees less than 500. The second largest group of employers are those with more than 1 000 employees whilst the 501-1 000 employees group constituted 5.7 percent of the total employers who participated in the primary data gathering exercise. The size of companies, based on number of employees, that participated in the study is represented in the figure below:



Figure 3: Organisation size by number of employees

The employers were gathered from different sectors so as to gather information that is more representative of the wholesale and retail sector in South Africa. These sectors include:

- Clothing and textile; •
- Food and beverages; •
- Hardware, paint and glass; •
- Pharmaceuticals; and •
- Household furniture and appliances, among others.

#### 4.3.2 Alignment between education and workplace skills requirement

Employers were asked to rate, in their opinion, the link between education at tertiary institutions and the skills required in the workplace. The findings on this aspect are quite interesting in that there was a balance, 40 percent each, from those who say yes there is a link between the two and those who say there is a link "to some extent". The remaining 10 percent of respondents do believe that there is no link between education and workplace skills requirements. The responses gathered are presented in the chart below:



Figure 4: Is there alignment between education and employment

Some of the reasons given for the rankings are that when learners enrol at a tertiary institution, they would have little/no experience at all, however, they do acquire those skills during their learning phase at these institutions. This is a testimony of the relevance and linkage of education and workplace skills requirements. Some pointed out that those with higher levels of education have better knowledge of the position allocated by employer. Those who ranked the link as 'somewhat' raised those skills acquired in tertiary institutions are used in the workplace to a certain extent, however, they feel that tertiary education needs to incorporate more practical aspects and introduce more practical lectures from captains of industry. Furthermore, they raised that the current retail industry is different from the old retail in the sense that there are terminologies, systems and procedures used by workplace which requires foundational learning hence tertiary education must constantly update to keep pace with the volatile wholesale and retail sector.

 Table 8: Select employers' responses on linkage between education and workplace skills requirements

- People with higher levels of education have better knowledge of the position allocated by employer;
- Skills acquired in tertiary education are used in the workplace to a certain extent. I do however feel that Tertiary education needs to incorporate more practical aspects and introduce more practical lectures from captains of industry;
- Tertiary qualifications are sometimes off what is expected in the work environment;
- Most of the education received at tertiary institutions is based on theory. Once one is
  exposed to the work environment, the theory seizes to apply;

- Most tertiary institutions are theory based only and when students leave, they cannot be placed or find employment;
- There is a very real need for merchandise and production education within the retail sector.

### 4.3.3 Adequacy of training provided by tertiary institutions

Researchers asked employers to rate the adequacy of training provided by tertiary institutions for employment in specific employee (learner) chosen field? The responses received indicate that 35 percent of employers do believe that the training provided by tertiary institutions is adequate for employment in chosen field. 55 percent had the perception that it is adequate to some extent whilst 10 percent believe that the training is not adequate at all. Responses received are shown in the figure below:



Table 9: Employers' rating of the adequacy of tertiary institutions training

Some of the reasons given by employers for rating the adequacy as somewhat, are that the human resources courses learnt by learners are not compatible with retail sector. They feel that the business understanding is not relevant to retail as it is too general and should be contextualised. They also bemoaned little practical which makes the transition to workplace challenging. The table below provides select direct responses from employers.

 Table 10: Select employers' responses on adequacy of training provided by tertiary institutions

- If the tertiary institution is not affiliated to skills programs through some form of practical expertise, it does not help a graduate to learn theory only;
- The training lacks workplace skills such as interpersonal skills and business etiquette;
- The human resource management training received by learners is not compatible to retail;
- The theoretical teaching seems adequate however there is need to provide more work-related practical.

# 4.3.4 Balance of experiential and theoretical aspects of tertiary learning programmes

On rating the average balance of experiential and theoretical aspects of tertiary learning programmes that they are familiar with; an equal percentage of employers (40 percent each) rated the balance as 75 percent experiential (practical) and 25 percent theory. The other 40 percent of employers rated the balance as 90 percent theory and 10 percent experiential. The main point raised is that the programmes are not much practical, they are theoretical and even the people who facilitate do not have in-depth retail context. 20 percent of the employers rated the balance as 90 percent theory and 10 percent experiential, as shown below:



#### Figure 5: Balance of experiential and theoretical learning

### 4.3.5 Role of experiential learning as a component of a learning programme

Employers were also asked if they see it worthy to have experiential learning (workbased learning) as a component of a learning programme. The views received indicate that those who responded agree that experiential learning is an important element of a learning programme. Some of the responses gathered are presented in the table below:

Figure 6: Select employer responses on importance of experiential learning

- Practice makes perfect hence it is important to have the practical component;
- We learn by experimenting;
- Everyone should receive work-based learning to their theoretical qualification;
- Very important as it forms part of productivity at a workplace and productivity equals to profitability;
- It brings the theory to life for the learner;
- It gives learners real life experience of what happens in industry and prepares them better for the world of work;
- Its good because it reduces training and development expenses at the workplace (monetary expense and production time lost whilst training)

The employers' views on the importance of experiential learning were asserted by their preferred balance between theoretical and experiential training for learning programmes that they and tertiary institutions facilitate. Majority (57.9 percent) want a 50-50 balance between theory and experiential learning, 36.8 percent prefers more

experiential learning (75 percent) to 25 percent theory. Some (5.3 percent) want as much as 90 percent experiential learning to 10 percent theory, as indicated below.



Figure 7: Employers preferred balance of theory and experiential learning

# 4.4. Findings from learners

### 4.4.1 Learners' fieldwork reflections

The learners' database for this research study was drawn from all the countries nine provinces and responses were received from all the provinces as follows: Gauteng 23.1 percent, Eastern Cape 17.9 percent, KwaZulu Natal 15.4 percent, Free State 10.3 percent, Limpopo 10.3 percent, Mpumalanga and Western Cape 7.7 percent each, Northwest 5.1 percent and Northern Cape 2.6 percent.



50 percent of the leaners who responded are from TVET colleges whilst 26.7 percent are being trained at university of technologies. 16.7 percent are from community

education and training college, with the remainder of 6.7 percent indicating that they are training at other universities as indicated below:



The majority, 80.0 percent of leaners who responded are females. This is quite encouraging in the sense that it improves the country's gender equality, education is the surest way out of poverty. Males constituted 20.0 percent of the learners as shown below. Also, all the learners (100 percent) who participated in the survey are blacks.





# 4.4.2 Alignment between education and workplace skills

Learners were asked to rate, in their opinion, the link between education at tertiary institutions and the skills required in the workplace. In other words, the learners were asked to rate the alignment of tertiary education to workplace skills requirements. Most learners, 46.7 percent, do believe that there is a link between the two whilst 33.33 percent rated it as 'to some extent'. It is worrisome to note that, a significant 20.0

percent of the learners indicated that there is no link at all between the training they are receiving at tertiary institutions and skills required in the workplace. The responses gathered are presented in the figure below:



Figure 11: Is there alignment between education and workplace skills requirements

The reasons given for the ratings above are presented in the table below:

#### Table 11: Is there a link between education and workplace requirements

- There is a link because, although I am yet to complete my qualification, I am already working in the in a field related to what I am studying;
- The theory and practical I am acquiring are related to the tasks;
- It is related as it's supposed to be an eye opener on how one should conduct himself or herself in the workplace based on the level of education received;
- I believe so, because when I graduate, I strongly believe I will be competent in my field of study to deliver the results on the workplace.

### 4.4.3 Adequacy of training provided by tertiary institutions

Researchers asked learners to rate the adequacy of training provided by tertiary institutions for employment in specific employee (learner) chosen field? The responses received indicate that 50.0 percent of learners do believe that the training provided by tertiary institutions is adequate for employment in chosen field. 26.9 percent had the perception that it is adequate to some extent, whilst the other 23.1 percent rated it as not adequate at all. The findings are shown below:





# 4.4.4 Balance of experiential and theoretical aspects of tertiary learning programmes

On rating the average balance of experiential and theoretical aspects of tertiary learning programmes; 50 percent of the learners rated that there is an equal balance (50-50) of experiential learning and practical learning. 29.0 percent believe that the training is more theory oriented at (75 percent theory and 25 percent experiential learning. 22.6 percent rated the training as 90 percent theory and 10 percent experiential learning and 10 percent theory whilst the other 3.2 percent are of the opinion that the balance is 75 percent experiential learning and 25 percent safe are of the opinion that the balance is 75 percent experiential learning and 25 percent safe are of the opinion that the balance is 75 percent experiential learning and 25 percent theory. The responses are shown below:



 Table 12: Learners' rating of balance between experiential and theoretical aspects

# 4.5. Findings from graduates

#### 4.5.1 Graduates' fieldwork reflections

To ensure enough geographical representation, researchers solicit responses from graduates in all the country's nine provinces. Likewise, responses were received from all the provinces as follows; Gauteng 22.2 percent, Mpumalanga 17.5 percent, Eastern Cape 12.7 percent, Free State 11.1 percent, Limpopo 9.5 percent, KwaZulu Natal and Western Cape 7.9 percent each, Northern Cape 6.3 percent and Northwest 4.8 percent. The graduates' distribution is presented in the figure below.



75 percent of the graduates who responded trained at TVET colleges. 16.7 percent trained at university of technologies whilst only 8.3 percent trained at other universities as indicated on the figure below:



To ensure gender representation on the survey responses, researchers had to interview all gender groups. The majority, 58.3 percent of graduates who responded are females. Males constituted 41.7 percent of the graduates as shown below. Also, all the graduates (100 percent) who participated in the survey are blacks.



In terms of employment status, it was discovered that most of the graduates are employed although they got employed at different intervals after graduation. 34.9 percent were employed after more than a year of graduation, 23.3 percent got employed within 12 months of graduation whilst 14.0 percent gained employment. On the other hand, 27.9 percent of the graduates who responded are still unemployed.



#### Figure 16: Graduates employment status

#### 4.5.2 Alignment between education and workplace skills requirement

Graduates were asked to rate, in their opinion, the link between education at tertiary institutions and the skills required in the workplace. The findings on this aspect show that 56.4 percent of graduates do believe that there is a link between the two whilst 22.9 are of the opinion that there is a link "to some extent". The remaining 20.7 percent of respondents do believe that there is no link between education and workplace skills requirements. The responses gathered are presented in the chart below:





Some of the reasons given for the rankings are provided in the table below.

Table 13: Select graduates' responses on alignment between education and workplace skills requirements

- I think it depends on the education course. So yes, to some fields of education it does link;
- The job we do in the workplace is not the same as what we study;
- Some workplaces do practice what we have learned at the tertiary institutions;
- What they teach at school it's exactly what is needed at work.

### 4.5.3 Adequacy of training provided by tertiary institutions

Researchers asked graduates to rate the adequacy of training provided by tertiary institutions for employment in specific employee (graduate) chosen field? The responses received indicate that 41.2 percent of graduates do believe that the training provided by tertiary institutions is adequate for employment in chosen field. 35.3 percent had the perception that it is adequate 'to some extent' whilst 23.5 percent believe that the training is not adequate at all. Responses received are shown in the figure below:



Figure 18: Graduates' rating on the adequacy of tertiary institutions training

Some of the reasons given by graduates for rating the adequacy of training received are provided in the table below:

Table 14: Select graduates' responses on adequacy of training provided by tertiary institutions

- No internship was arranged or made available;
- We tend to implement some of the things we were taught at the training;
- Some of the stuff we were taught is irrelevant;
- Practical component is limited.

# 4.5.4 Balance of experiential and theoretical aspects of tertiary learning programmes

On rating the average balance of experiential and theoretical aspects of tertiary learning programmes; an equal percentage of graduates (33.3 percent each) rated the balance as 75 percent experiential (practical) / 25 percent theory and 50 percent experiential / 50 percent theory. Likewise, 16.7 percent each rated the balance as 90 percent theory / 10 percent practical and 90 percent experiential / 10 percent theory, as shown below:





#### 4.5.5 Role of experiential learning as a component of a learning programme

Graduates were also asked if they see it worthy to have experiential learning (workbased learning) as a component of a learning programme. The views received indicate that those who responded agree that experiential learning is an important element of a learning programme. Some of the responses gathered are presented in the table below:

 Table 15: Graduates responses on importance of experiential learning

- It is important as it affords first-hand exposure to certain categories of work/career;
- It is going to help many students to decide on the career paths they want to take;
- It is good because it gives practical exposure

The graduates' views on the importance of experiential learning were asserted by their preferred balance between theoretical and experiential training for learning programmes. Majority (34.1 percent) want a 50-50 balance between theory and experiential learning, 26.8 percent prefers more experiential learning (75 percent) to 25 percent theory. Some (22.0 percent) want 75 percent theory and 25 percent experiential learning. The remainder 9.8 percent and 7.3 percent prefer 90 percent experiential / 10 percent theory and 90 percent theory / 10 percent experiential, respectively.



#### Figure 20: Graduates preferred balance of theory and experiential learning

# 4.6. Findings from training providers

#### 4.6.1 Training providers' fieldwork reflections

The Training Providers' database used was drawn from all the countries nine provinces, however, it is always a challenge to get responses from training providers especially TVET colleges. Researchers had to solicit for responses from both private and public training providers to improve the response rate. It is pleasing to note that although it was challenging, researchers managed to get responses from all the provinces with 82.5 percent response rate.

Most responses were received from KwaZulu Natal 18.2 percent, followed by Western Cape and Free State with 15.2 percent each, Limpopo and Mpumalanga with 12.1 percent each and Eastern Cape with 9.1 percent. Gauteng, Northern Cape and Northwest had 6.1 percent of the respondents each. The respective response rate distribution is presented below:





#### 4.6.2 Alignment between education and workplace skills

Training providers were asked to rate, in their opinion, the link between education at tertiary institutions and the skills required in the workplace. Only 16.7 percent of the training providers do agree that there is really a link between the two whilst 83.3 percent did argue that there is a link 'to some extent'. It is worth noting that none of the employers who responded rated that there is no link at all. The respective ratings are presented below:





#### 4.6.3 Adequacy of training provided by tertiary institutions

Researchers asked training providers to rate the adequacy of training provided by tertiary institutions for employment. It is quite disturbing to note that 70.8 percent of the training providers believed that more needs to be done to really supplement the current training as it is adequate 'to some extent'. 16.7 percent were of the opinion that the training is not adequate at all whilst 12.5 percent ascertain that the training provide by tertiary institutions is adequate.



Figure 23: Adequacy of training being provided

Some of the reasons which were provided for the ratings on the adequacy of training provided by tertiary institutions are indicated below:

 Table 16: Trainers' perception on adequacy of training being provided

- Practical component of training is critical, students need to undergo experiential/workplace exposure to be fully competent in their field;
- There is no adequate workplace exposure which prepares learners for workplace experience;
- Most of the programs offered at TVET colleges are academically inclined especially the NATED courses. There must be other skills offered to holistically develop the student;
- In most instances, learners can complete the qualifications without having the requisite skills and this renders them unemployable;
- Bigger focus must be placed on the very important skills for the workplace such as critical thinking, decisiveness, problem solving, data analytics, systems thinking, among others;
- The training must also include introductory business management course.

## 4.6.4 Experience of Training Providers

To ensure that the responses received are from experienced trainers who are well versed with the system, training providers were asked to indicate their training experience. The majority (87.5 percent) indicated that they have more than 10 years as trainers and the remainder (12.5 percent) had between 7 - 10 years' experience. This cements the authenticity of survey results as they are provided by those who have been in the system for a while.





# 4.6.5 Balance of experiential and theoretical aspects of tertiary learning programmes

On rating the average balance of experiential and theoretical aspects of tertiary learning programmes that they provide; 50.0 percent of the training providers rated the training as 50-50 theory and experiential learning. A significant 33.3 percent indicated that the training is more theory oriented with 75 percent theory and 25 percent experiential learning. Only 16.7 percent believe that the training is balanced on a ratio of 75 percent experiential learning and 25 percent theory.

The other training provider rated the balance as 70 percent experiential and 30 percent theory. The explanations provided for the ratings brings to the fore some interesting insights.

Table 17: Trainers perceptions on the balance of experiential and theory components

- Teaching theory is cheaper than conducting simulations/practical, as a result training providers focus mostly on theory because most of them are operating on limited funds;
- The huge chunk of work still requires learners to complete portfolio of evidence (PoE) which mostly requires a person to be in class rather than to be at a workplace;
- As much as it is expected that the ratio should be 30/40 percent theory and 70/60
- percent practical but in real sense it is vice versa.

#### 4.6.6 Role of experiential learning as a component of a learning programme

Trainers were also asked if they see it worthy to have experiential learning (work-based learning) as a component of a learning programme. The views received indicate that those who responded agree that experiential learning is an important element of a learning programme. A summary of the responses gathered are presented in the table below:

#### Table 18: Trainers perceptions on the importance of experiential learning

- It is very essential as it exposes learners to the real world of work which at times enables them to decide if they are in the correct career path;
- It is a prerequisite for obtaining a National Diploma after completing N6. Therefore, it is important considering that students will not obtain a diploma without this practical component;
- Experiential learning plays a pivotal role in preparing learners better for the workplace while completing their qualification and is essential for developing other skills;
- It provides an important practical learning component.

# 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1. Conclusion

This research study was commissioned by W&RSETA with the strategic intent to improve labour market data, to inform the W&RSETA Strategy, and inform all related strategic documents, which include the Sector Skills Plan (SSP), Strategic Plan (SP), and Annual Performance Plan (APP). The main purpose of the study is to explore education for and through work, with specific reference to the W&R sector. This study sought to better understand the possibilities, challenges and opportunities that education-forand-through work present to the W&R sector. This provides a good background to improve the sector's ability to link education and the workplaces.

The nature of the project demanded that it involves both desktop (secondary) and primary research and employed primarily qualitative and quantitative methods. Desktop research included a thorough literature review. Primary research focused on gathering data from targeted stakeholders through semi structured survey and telephone interviews. The response rate was impressive though there were challenges encountered as presented under research challenges. Lessons learnt and suggested recommendations are provided in the ensuing section.

# 5.2. Key lessons learnt and suggested recommendations 5.2.1 W&RSETA areas of intervention

The two main areas of disconnect that came out from the study are the disconnect between what students learn at tertiary institutions and how they are expected to perform at tertiary institutions. Also, the difficulties learners face in securing work-based learning. To address this, there is a need for collaborated efforts from employers, W&RSETA and other stakeholders. Specifically, W&RSETA is recommended to consider the following:

- 6. W&RSETA can assist with funding for simulation equipment. It must be recognised that TVET Colleges do not have the capacity to procure state-of-the-art equipment for use in practicals. The more outdated the equipment they have, the more challenges students experience in transiting from theory to the world of work. However, the Seta does not have to shoulder this burden on its own. This is where creating solid partnerships will come in handy. If partnerships are created with other stakeholders, it will be easier to identify and procure the required equipment for simulated learning.
- 7. The Seta already has a program of funding TVET College lectures so they get attached to the industry for them to gain exposure on best practices. We recommend that more resources be expended on this initiative as it assists in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Once lecturers are adequately exposed to what employers are looking for, they will assist mentor/coach students even before WIL exposure.
- 8. The Seta can also consider creating a fund to subsidise experienced executives to be engaged as mentors and coaches at TVET Colleges. TVET Colleges cannot on their own afford such costs and yet these engagements would play a crucial role in bridging the gap between theory and practice.
- 9. One of the challenges with current TVET education relates to outdated learning material. Again, this can be an opportunity for the Seta to engage relevant

stakeholders and ensure updated learning material is used at colleges (material that will integrate theory and practice)

10. Where possible, the Seta should consider promoting more exchange programmes for lecturers and administrators to visit colleges in some of the countries we identified as leading in integrating theory and practice, for example, Germany, Sweden, Netherlands etc. They may start by identifying specific colleges and using these as pilot centres of specialised learning. If the model works, then it can be rolled out to the rest of the country.

# 5.2.2 Strategies to produce job ready graduates

The following were identified as some of the strategies to help learners to be ready for the workplace.

3. Traditional Apprenticeship

Traditional apprenticeship arrangements provide the more relevant model for African countries seeking to improve learners' transition from education to work. There is, however, a need to develop pathways that respond flexibly to young people's desire to access tertiary education, and at the same time provide them with occupational qualifications that are relevant for the labour market. Depending on the occupational structures and the readiness of enterprises to provide training in each industry, such pathways may encompass many types of early contact with the labour market, ranging from formal apprenticeships to internships and student projects. Such initiatives ease the transition of learners from education to workplaces.

4. Work Integrated Learning and Simulation training

The PSET system has not been able to produce the right number and quality of workready individuals, and work-based learning initiatives remain at the forefront to bridge the gap. There are several success stories of qualifications that use the Work-Integrated Learning model, a good example being the mining-related qualifications offered by UJ, UP, Wits and UNISA where learner placements on work during learning is mandatory and forms part of the curriculum. This prepares the learner for and through work and the transition from education to work is relatively easy.

WBL and WIL will remain important for years to come, as the literature has indicated, and because practice is part of education for professional qualifications. In an unequal society such as South Africa, WIL can be used to bring about equity and excellence in the workplace. Simulation-based training that mimics the working environment and learning factories have also proved to be able to link the progression of learners from training to the workplace.

# 5.2.3 Recommended skills focus areas

Employers provide a platform on which skills are traded in exchange for wages and salaries. In the context of linking education and the world of work, employers inform the market of the skills that they need. The education system must then ensure that its systems emphasise these skills to produce an employable graduate. In line with these, the following skills were recommended as prerequisites for entry-level positions and upskilling, respectively.

The following were identified as entry-level skills required in the wholesale and retail sector:

- Basic information communication technology;
- Interpersonal skills
- Mathematical skills
- Stock control;
- Purchasing;
- Marketing skills;
- Problem-solving skills;
- Time management;
- Financial skills; and
- Communication skills.

It was also recommended that those already on the job need to keep upskilling in line with trends in the wholesale and retail sector. The following were identified as some of the skills to be incorporated in upskilling courses:

- Business management;
- Human resources management;
- Supply chain management;
- Customer service;
- Data analysis;
- Online marketing;
- Warehousing; and
- Value chain optimisation.

### 5.2.4 Overall lessons and recommendations

The training being provided especially that targeted at the wholesale and retail sector appears to have some issues that have been noted throughout this document and summarised in the table below. The following table also details practices that have been working well and should continue going forward. Implementing the recommendations below is expected to embed positive practices and address issues noted; thus, assisting W&RSETA in improving sector performance through productive, skilled and knowledgeable personnel.

#### Table 19: Key lessons learnt and recommendations

| OBJECTIVE  | KEY LESSONS LEARNT   | <ul> <li>SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATION         <ul> <li>expectation of being employed only.</li> <li>The aspect of having more females and blacks in training augurs well with the national strategy of addressing poverty and inequality especially among previously disadvantaged groups hence it must be upheld.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul> <li>Investigating how education<br/>providers, employers and<br/>learners interpret and<br/>experience education for and<br/>through work (barriers,<br/>opportunities, examples of<br/>good practice)</li> </ul> | <ul> <li>All stakeholders who participated in this research study do agree that there is a link between training and workplace skills requirements, the training is somewhat adequate and can be better with some adjustments and additions to the programmes.</li> <li>Some learners find it difficult to secure work-based learning which will be a component of their studies.</li> </ul>   | <ul> <li>Facilitate interchanges among<br/>all stakeholders especially<br/>trainers, employers and<br/>learners' representatives to<br/>foster dialogue on enhancing<br/>the training by tertiary<br/>institutions and to provide<br/>input in the development of<br/>training materials so that in the<br/>end the training system<br/>produces better output which<br/>gives improved outcome and<br/>has a more positive impact.</li> <li>Facilitate work-based learning<br/>placement to ensure that<br/>learners complete the requisite<br/>practical learning on time.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul> <li>Investigating the role of<br/>experiential training in<br/>preparing / upskilling<br/>graduates for the retail<br/>industry</li> </ul>  | <ul> <li>All the interviewed stakeholders agreed that experiential learning is a very important component of the training programmes as it gives real life experience of what happens in the industry;</li> <li>Experiential learning also prepares learners better for the world of work;</li> <li>It forms part of productivity at a workplace and productivity translates to profitability;</li> <li>Furthermore, it reduces training and development expenses at the workplace – both monetary expenses and production time lost whilst training.</li> </ul> | <ul> <li>Set a mandatory experiential and theory ratio for all courses and have an implementation mechanism which is supported by strict monitoring framework to ensure that it is adhered to religiously;</li> <li>In as much as experiential learning is important, it does not discount the importance of theory. Therefore, the setting up of experiential and theoretical ratios must be considered on a course-by-course basis and must be informed by industry experts, academic experts and other key stakeholders to minimise the risk of an umbrella ratio which may be detrimental to the end goal of producing a graduate who is well prepared to the workplace.</li> </ul> |
| Priority skills development     and occupation pathways for  | • The wholesale and retail sector is a very volatile sector with ever evolving skills  | <ul> <li>Implement flexible short<br/>courses that can accommodate<br/>those who are already</li> </ul>   |

| OBJECTIVE   | KEY LESSONS LEARNT   | SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATION  |
|---|--|---|
| a resilient wholesale and retail<br>food sector in South Africa | <ul> <li>needs, more so in this digital era;</li> <li>Practical experience is a very vital component for an employee to be more effective and productive at a workplace however, because of the costly nature of experiential learning vis-à-vis the limited budget of most training providers, the consequence usually is that most trainers end up resorting to concentrate more on theory with minimal experiential learning;</li> <li>The wholesale and retail sector is an interactive sector with a lot of query handling and resolution especially from unsatisfied customers.</li> </ul> | <ul> <li>employed to enhance their<br/>skills through further education<br/>and training.</li> <li>Foster financial partnerships<br/>with trainers and support them<br/>in monetary or material terms<br/>so that they balance the ratios<br/>of experiential and theory<br/>learning especially for some<br/>courses that are supposed to<br/>be conducted on a ratio of 70<br/>percent experiential / 30<br/>percent theory.</li> <li>Enforce the teaching of soft<br/>skills like interpersonal skills,<br/>dispute resolution, customer<br/>service, team building,<br/>communication and<br/>presentation skills. These<br/>should be part of the training<br/>over and above other business<br/>courses like finance, business<br/>management, human<br/>resources and purchasing,<br/>among others.</li> </ul> |
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