



TRACER STUDY REPORT

Tracer study for learners who participated in
HWSETA funded learnerships and internships
certificated during the 2013/14 financial year

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04/05/2015

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the Author and not those of the HWSETA.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The tracer study tracked and traced the target population of the National Skills Development Strategy III (NSDS III) within health and welfare sector which constitute of the individuals or learners “*from school, college or university, or even from the periods of unemployment*”. The NSDS III targets this population for the purpose of skill development through integrating workplace training with theoretical learning thus ensuring sustained employment and in-work progression. The NSDS III, as a subcomponent of Human Resource Development Strategy, seeks to facilitate alignment between skills supply and demand by enhancing the linkages between institutional and workplace learning. This will ensure that the skills mismatch, and lack of critical and scarce skills are addressed in the country (National Skills Development Strategy III).

It is against this background that the Health and Welfare SETA (HWSETA) funded internships, and learnerships for this target population. The learnership programme funded by the Health and Welfare SETA (HWSETA) is premised on the Skills Development Act, No. 97 which promotes the development of work-related skills. This direct involvement of HWSETA in the skills formation in the health and social development sector contributes to the supply of skills thus ensuring the realisation of its vision which is “*the creation of a skilled workforce for the health and social development needs of all South Africans*”. A learnership programme funded by HWSETA, which is a structured programme that incorporates both theoretical and practical component, is designed specifically to ensure the acquisition of work-based experience and to increase the employability of learners in the labour market. Similarly, the internships ensure that the learners gain experience in line with the qualifications they have obtained. In pursuit of this goal, the tracer study assessed whether learners who participated in the HWSETA learnership and internship programme had received employment since they were issued with certificates during 2013/14 financial year.

The main goals of the study were;

1. To track and trace learners who received certificates for HWSETA funded learnerships in 2013/2014 recorded in the SETA Quarterly Monitoring Report (SQMR), in order to find out if they received jobs within six months after receiving certificates.
2. To measure the extent of employability of learners that go through HWSETA funded learnerships
3. To identify employers who give employment opportunities to learners certificated on the HWSETA funded learnerships
4. To evaluate the duration of contracts these learners are able to secure

2. DATA SOURCES AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The SETA Quarterly Monitoring Report (SQMR) list served as the sampling frame for this study which focused on the 2013/14 financial year. The SQMR list included quarter one (from 1 April 2013 to 30 June 2013), quarter two (1 July 2013 to September 2013), quarter three (1 October 2013 to 30 December 2013), and quarter four (1 January 2014 to 31 March 2014). The SQMR list for financial year 2013/14 had a total population of 3 777. The design plan opted for the collection of data from the entire population while employing the stratified sampling technique. This decision was based on the needs of the board which made a commitment to account for the whole population of the HWSETA learners in learnerships and internships. The design plan envisaged dividing data into three groups using specific time periods when the certificates were issued to learners. The plan proposed three groups as follows;

- group one as the learners who received certificates between April 2013 and June 2013,
- group two as learners who received certificates between July 2013 and September 2013 and
- group three as learners who received certificates between October 2013 and March 2014.

The rationale of grouping the data was premised on the goal of the study which seeks to understand the time it takes for a learner to find employment after a certificate has been issued.

The tracer study employed the quantitative method for collecting data. The questionnaire was used as the data collecting tool and administered to learners using the SMS and where necessary a follow-up was made telephonically. The system called smsinbox was used to send SMS to learners. The questionnaire with six questions was sent through the smsinbox as follows;

This SMS is from HWSETA which seeks to assess whether learners have received employment since they got their certificates. Please answer Yes or No for questions 1, 2, 3 (example. 1. Yes, 2. No). If your answer to question 2 is NO do not proceed to questions 3 to 6. Please answer for question 4, 5, 6 in detail. Questions will follow shortly in the next sms.

HWSETA questions (please reply on this sms): 1. Have you been part of the HWSETA learners? 2. Have you found a job since you received a certificate? 3. What is the name of your employer? 4. Is this the same employer as the one who trained you? 5. What position do you occupy? 6. Date of appointment? To seek clarity contact Menzi at 011 607 6959. Thank you for participating.

The responses of the learners were retrieved from the smsinabox as soon as the learner responded to the SMS sent.

3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND CHANGE OF APPROACH TO ANALYSIS

The study had limitations in implementing the proposed plan discussed above. These limitations were at two levels; data collection and data analysis. In terms of collecting the data, the use of smsinabox system required the cellphone numbers of the learners which the SQMR master list did not have. As a result, phone calls and emails were sent to all the training providers who had learners participating in the HWSETA funded learnership to provide the cell numbers. Only 12 out of 54 training providers sent the cellular phone numbers. This process of acquiring cellphone numbers took about two months. In addition to this, the SETA Management System was used to find the cellular contact number of the participants which could not be received directly from the training providers. These activities ensured that a target population of 3107 learners in learnerships was reached as participants of the tracer study. However, the total number of learners who responded either through the SMS or telephone was 860 for the learnership. This meant the response rate was 28%.

Table 1: The number of responses obtained for learners in learnerships

Total population	3777
Target Population	3107
Total number of the same (those who responded to the questions)	860

Of the 860 responses, 65 of them could not be linked to the SQMR master list of financial year 2013/14. This was attributed to ‘accidental snowballing effect’. In the context of this study, this effect means some of the respondents from the SQMR list might have communicated with their former learnerships classmates, not originally in our SQMR list of the 2013/14 financial year, who then responded to the questions of the study. To ensure the reliability and credibility of the findings of the study, these 65 responses were analysed separately. The main reason for this decision was premised on the fact that 65 responses did not have information (variables) that had already been in the SQMR list (i.e. race, provider etc.) therefore could not be analysed collectively with the other 795 responses which were linked to the SQMR.

With regards to the internships, a target population of 95 learners in internships was reached by sending the questionnaire items through the SMS. The total number of learners who responded to the SMS was 21. This meant there was a response rate of 22% learners in internship.

Table 2: The number of responses obtained from learners in internships

Total population	106
Target Population	95
Total number of the same (those who responded to the questions)	21

There were other factors which contributed to the low response rate in the study. It is possible that some learners might have discarded the SMS assuming that it was one of the marketing junk SMS's. In this instance, a telephonic interview was conducted to follow up those learners who did not respond to the SMS sent. The telephonic follow-up indicated that most of the learners were not sure what was meant by 'employed' in the sms sent to them earlier resulting to them not responding to the message. This confusion may have taken place because most of the learners had a difficulty in deciding whether internships and volunteering forms part of employment.

The telephonic follow-up also indicated that although the SQMR list suggested that the certificates were already issued at a specific time period, some learners had not yet received the certificates from their training institutions. However, this cannot be generalised across the sample because this question was not asked in the SMS. This is crucial as it may have a negative effect for learners when participating in job interviews.

The approach of study was modified mainly because of the lack of cell phone numbers and also the lack of consistency on the learner responses for the 'date of appointment' for employment variable. Instead of learners providing the month and year of appointment for their employment there were missing values, with some only writing the year of appointment. Implication of this inconsistency was that the exact number of months from when a learner was certificated and when employment was found could not be established. As a consequence, data analysis constituted of simple descriptive statistics and crosstabs.

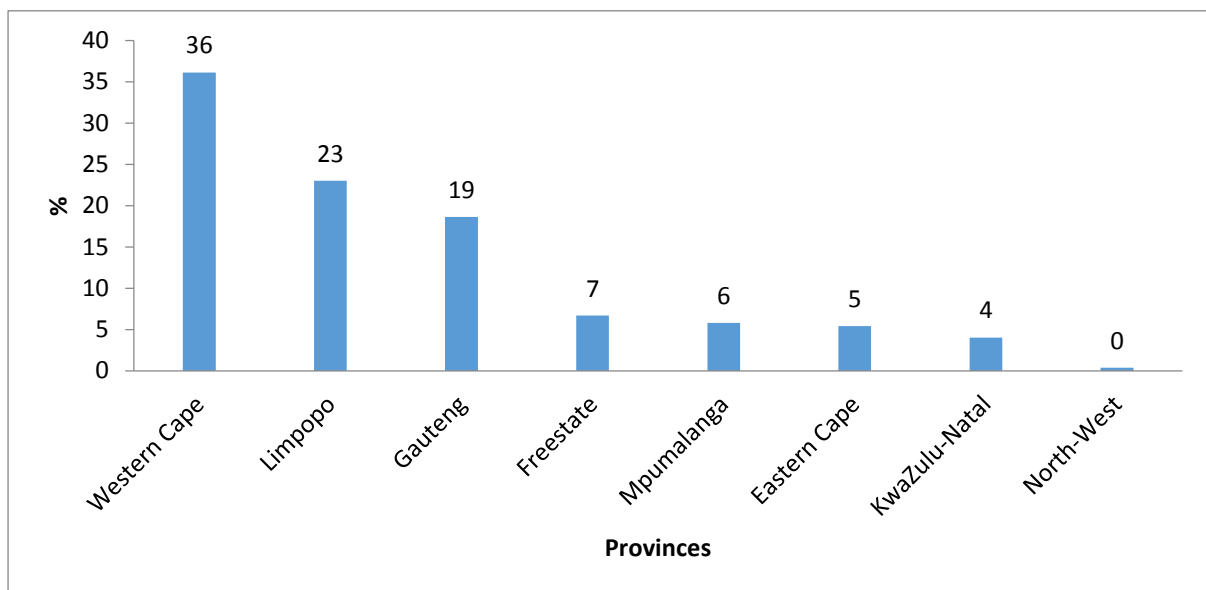
4. DESCRIPTION OF FINDINGS

The STATA software was used to analyse the quantitative data. It is important to note that this section will present the descriptive statistics of those learners who responded either through the SMS or telephonically. This section will present the descriptive findings of the tracer study in learnerships and internships separately. The subsection 4.1 will focus on learnership and subsection 4.2 on the internship.

4.1.Descriptive statistics of the learners in learnership whose responses could be linked to the SQMR master list

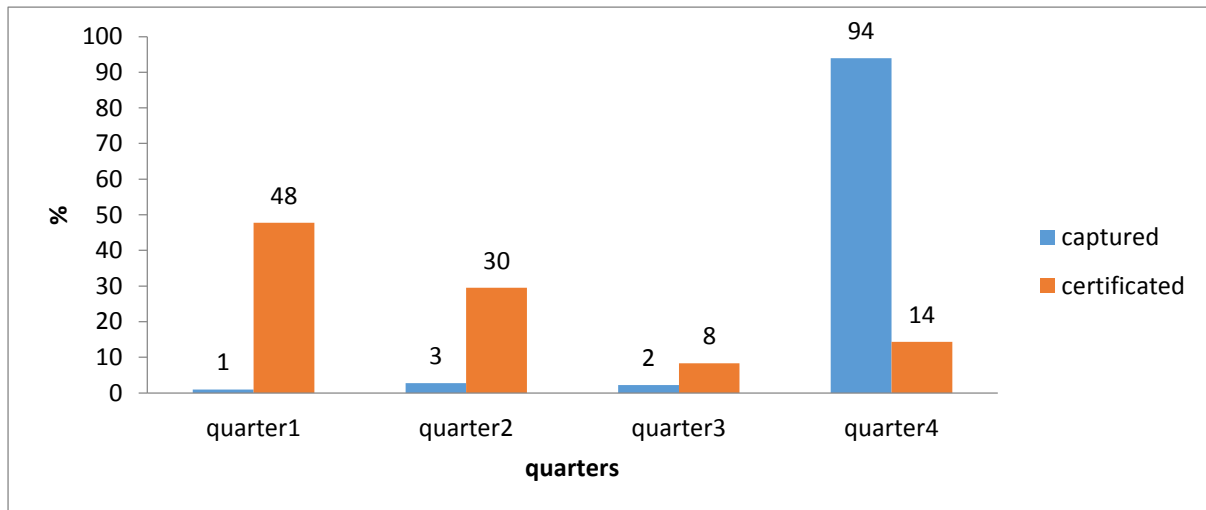
The total number of responses of the learners who were linked to the SQMR list for financial year 2013/14 was 795. The findings show that all of the learners in this sample were black Africans with 89% as females. The sample comprised of 60% of learners as the youth (not more than 35 years old), and 2% of learners with disability. In terms of the geography of where the learners were coming from, 85% were from the urban areas. Most of the learners were coming from Western Cape (36%), Limpopo (23%), and Gauteng (19%) (See Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: The distribution of learners in learnership across the provinces



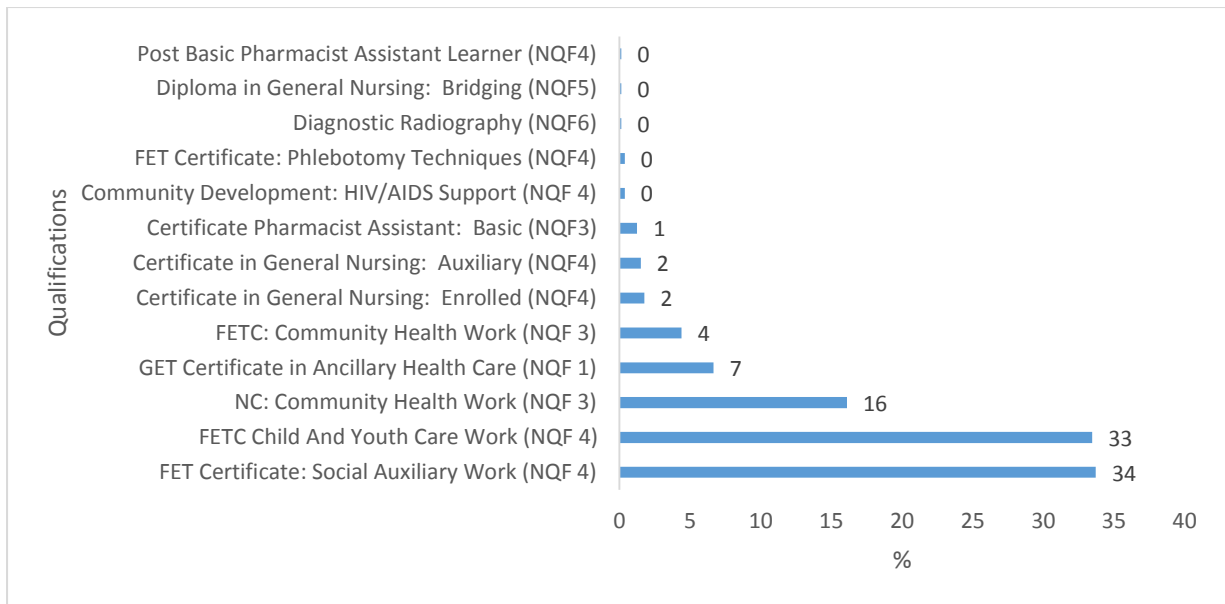
The findings of the study indicate in Figure 2 that about half of the sample (48%) had their qualification certificates issued between April and June in 2013. However, it is important to note the delay in our data management system which captures or records these learners (94%) at the last quarter (quarter four).

Figure 2: The distribution of learners across different quarters of the 2013/14 financial year



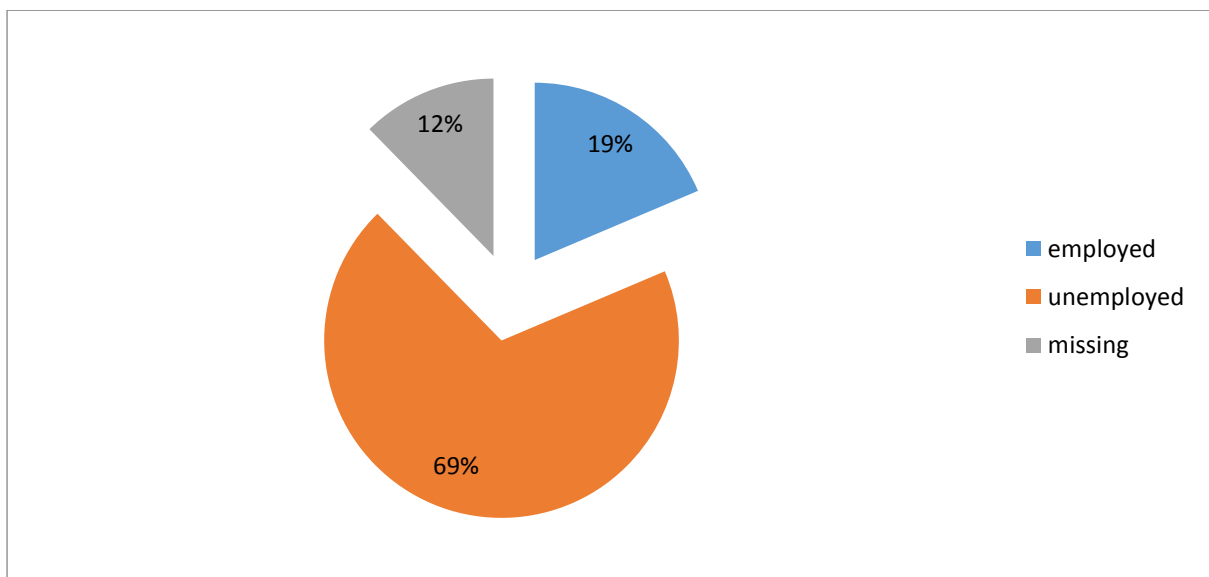
The findings show that there were 13 qualifications which learners had enrolled for in this sample. Of these qualifications, FETC: Social Auxillary Work (34%) and the Child and Youth Care work (33%) were the dominant qualifications in the sample.

Figure 3: The distribution of learners across different qualifications



However, the key question of this study was whether a learner was employed or not since the certificate was issued. Figure 4 (below) shows that 69% of the learners were unemployed with only 19% (148) employed.

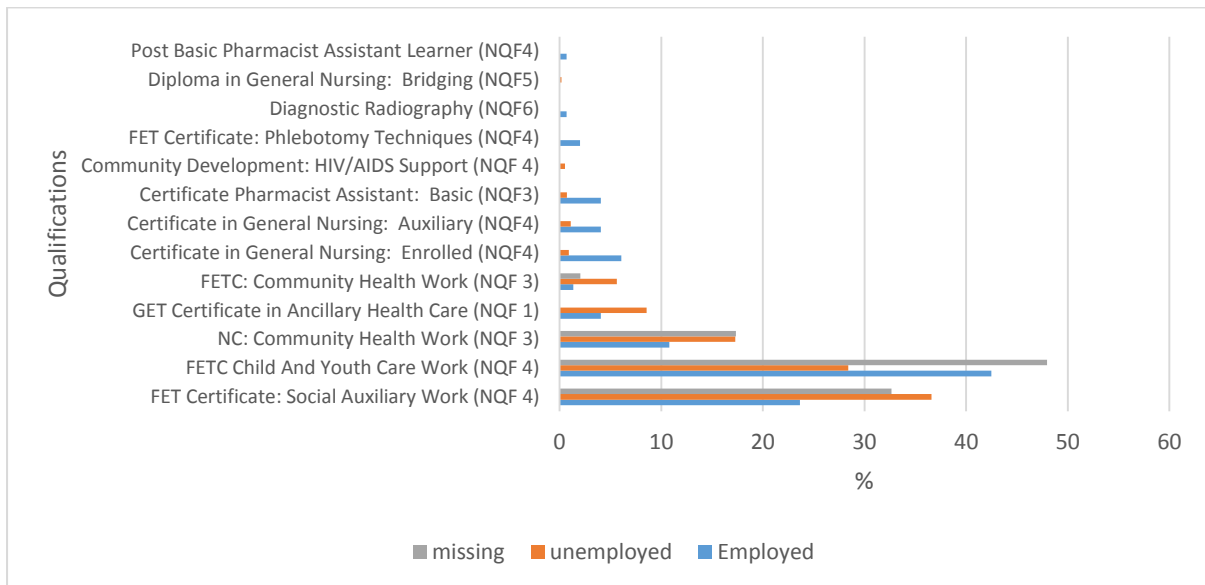
Figure 4: The distribution of learner's employment status across the sample



It was important for the study to establish whether the type of qualification had an influence on learners finding employment. Using chi2, it was found that there exist a positive association between type of qualification and employment. Therefore, type of qualifications does influence learners to find employment. The findings, as shown in Figure 5 below, indicate that learners with qualification in FETC: Child and Youth Care Work (constitute

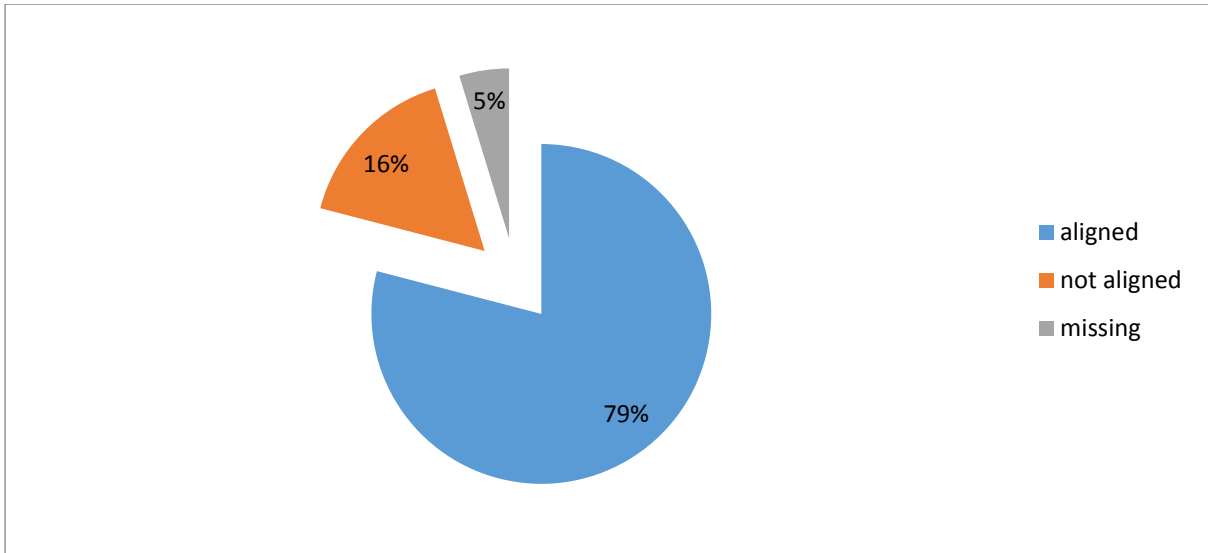
42% of those employed) have more likelihood of finding employment compared to other qualifications.

Figure 5: Distribution of learner's qualifications across the sample by employment status



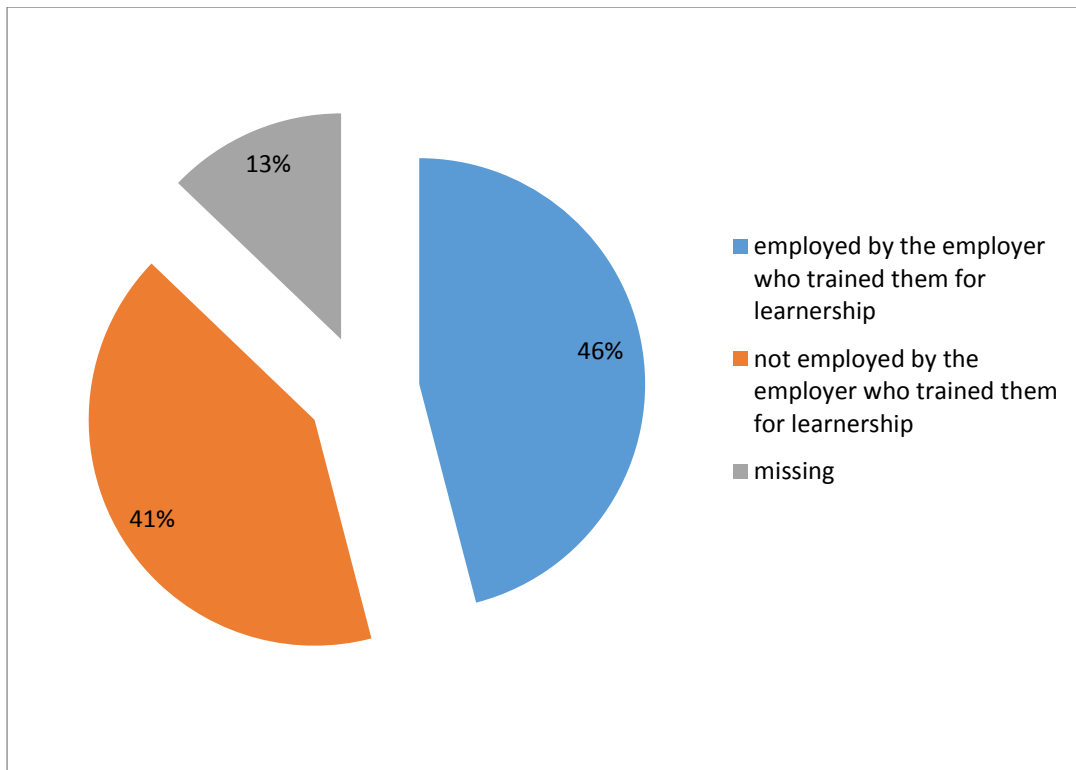
While it was important to understand the extent to which type of qualification had an influence in a learner finding employment, it was equally important to establish the scale at which learners were employed for what they were qualified for. This aspect of assessment was able to address the question of alignment between employment and qualification. The findings (Figure 6 below) showed that of those employed (148), 79% of them were employed for what they were qualified for. For the purposes of this study, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) framework was used to define alignment between qualifications using their articulation options both horizontally and vertically. By description, Articulation “can be used to refer to the linkage between educational levels, phases, programmes or qualification types. There are thus vertical, horizontal and diagonal forms of articulation” (CHE 2013, 5).

Figure 6: Learner's employment in relation to their qualification



The study had also made a specific enquiry to establish whether the employed learners had been ‘absorbed’ to employment by the same training provider. The findings show on Figure 7 that of the 148 learners who were employed, almost half of them (46%) had been ‘absorbed’ to employment by the training provider which had trained them for learnership.

Figure 7: Learners employed either by the same training provider which trained them for learnership



The findings presented above on Figure 7 are important and were thus disaggregated to training providers to explore their effect on employment across the sample (Figure 8) and for learners within a training provider (Figure 9). The NACCW accounted for 41% (61/148) of employment across the sample and of these learners it had only absorbed 51% (31/61) for employment at NACCW. Candy Nxusani Trading accounted for 12% (18/148) of employment across the sample and of these learners it had only absorbed 39% (7/18) for employment at Candy Nxusani Trading. These findings are crucial as they indicate that on average, amongst those learners who were able to find employment, training providers were able to absorb 40% of them within their organisations.

Figure 8: learner's employment distribution across training providers

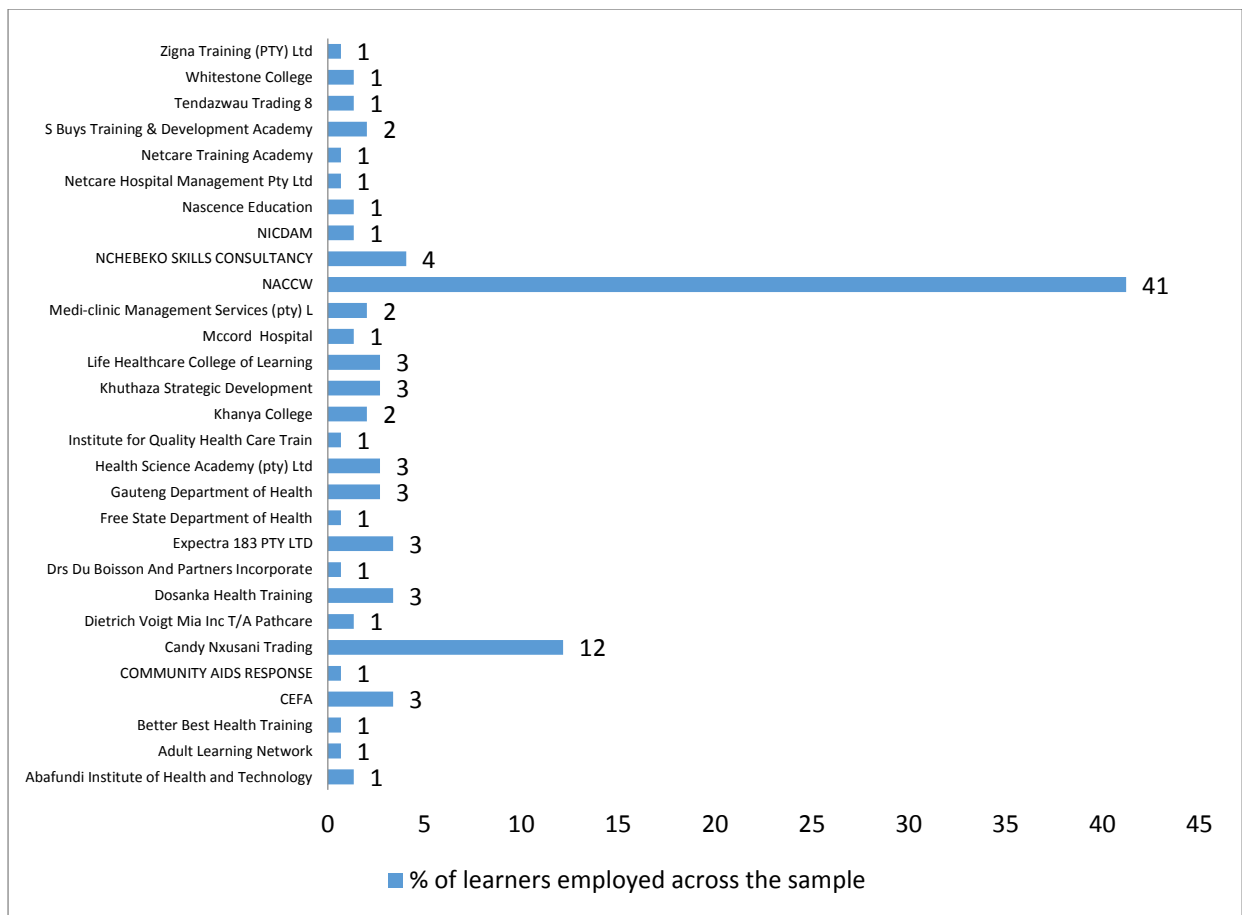
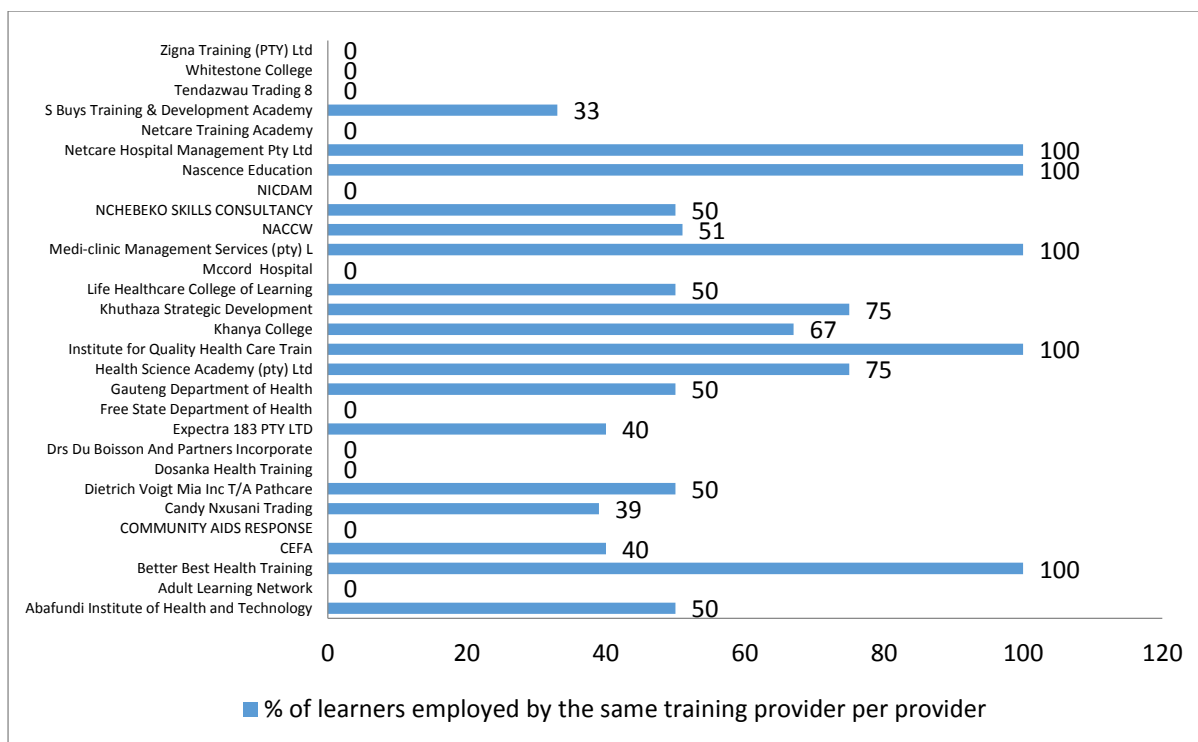


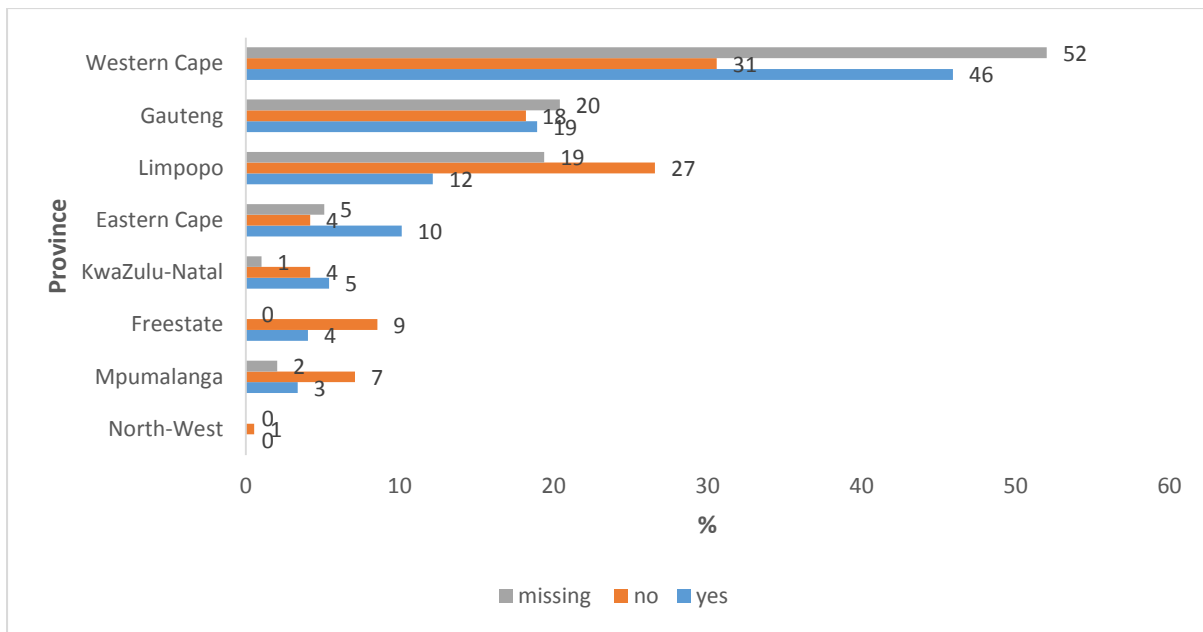
Figure 9: Learner's absorption to employment by the same training provider which had trained the learner for a learnership qualification



It is important to note that when using the chi square to test for association between training providers and employment status there was a positive statistical significance. Implication of this finding is that learner employment does depend on which training provider a learner comes from.

The HWSETA Sector Skills Plan update 2013-2014 states that *“the HWSETA will give preference to skills development for the disadvantaged learners...encourage learning programme that are accessible to people living in rural areas”*. As a consequence, the study had to explore the association between geography of the learner and employment. The findings demonstrated that there was no association between these factors suggesting that they do not influence/depend on each other. However, there was positive association between province and employment status in this study. This indicates that the institution (training provider) situated in a particular province which a learner attends best explains employment than whether a learner comes from rural or urban areas. Figure 10 demonstrates that most learners employed were coming from Western Cape, Limpopo, and Gauteng.

Figure 10: Learner employment distribution across provinces



The ttest was also used to test whether there is any statistical significance in the difference of means between age and employment. The findings indicate that there is no significance in the difference of means between age and employment which means age is not a factor determining employment. Other factors explored in this regard included the funder (SETA or Industry funded), and whether the training provider was private or public. These factors were found to have a positive association with employment status of learners. However, it should be emphasized that the direction of influence could not be determined at this descriptive level for these factors. Finally, the ttest showed that there was a strong statistical significance in the difference of means of the number of months from when the learner was certificated to the month when the study was conducted between those employed and unemployed. On average, those learners who were employed had been certificated a month earlier than those unemployed.

4.1.1. Descriptive statistics of the learners whose responses could not be linked to the SQMR master list

The total number of responses of the learners who were not linked to the SQMR list for financial year 2013/14 was 65. This portion of data only had two variables (employment and same employer) that could be used for analysis since it did not have the variables which forms part of the SQMR list. Figure 11 shows that only 28% (18) of learners not linked to the SQMR list were employed. Of these learners employed 44% (8/18) of them were employed by the training provider who had trained them for their learnership qualification (Figure 12). It is important to note that these findings of the 65 responses not linked to the SQMR shows the same pattern as the 795 learner responses presented above.

Figure 11: Learner employment distribution across the 65 learners not linked to SQMR

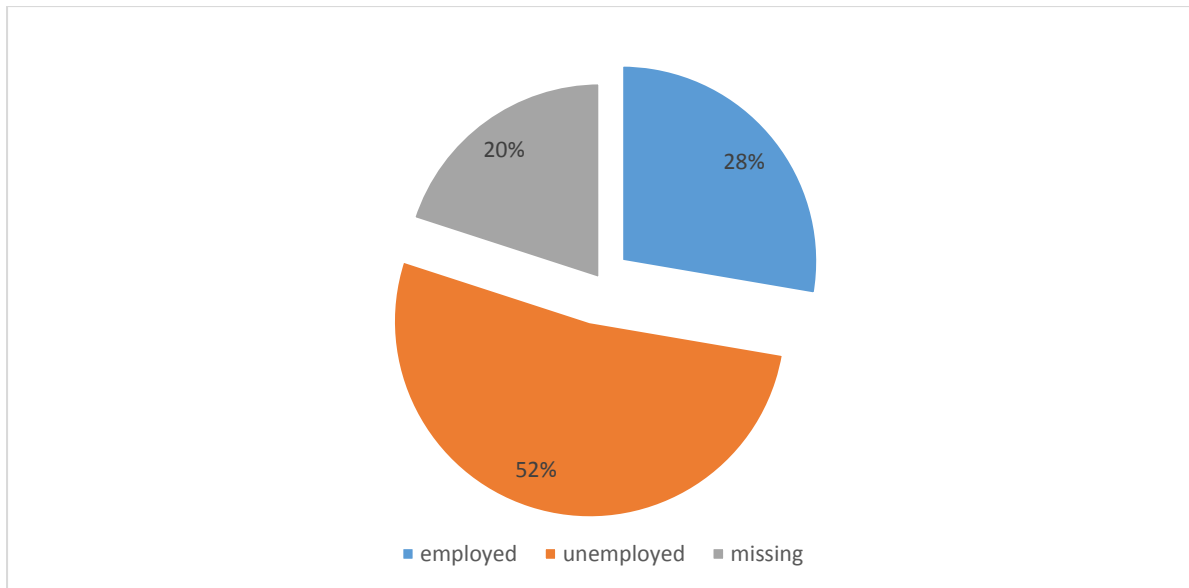
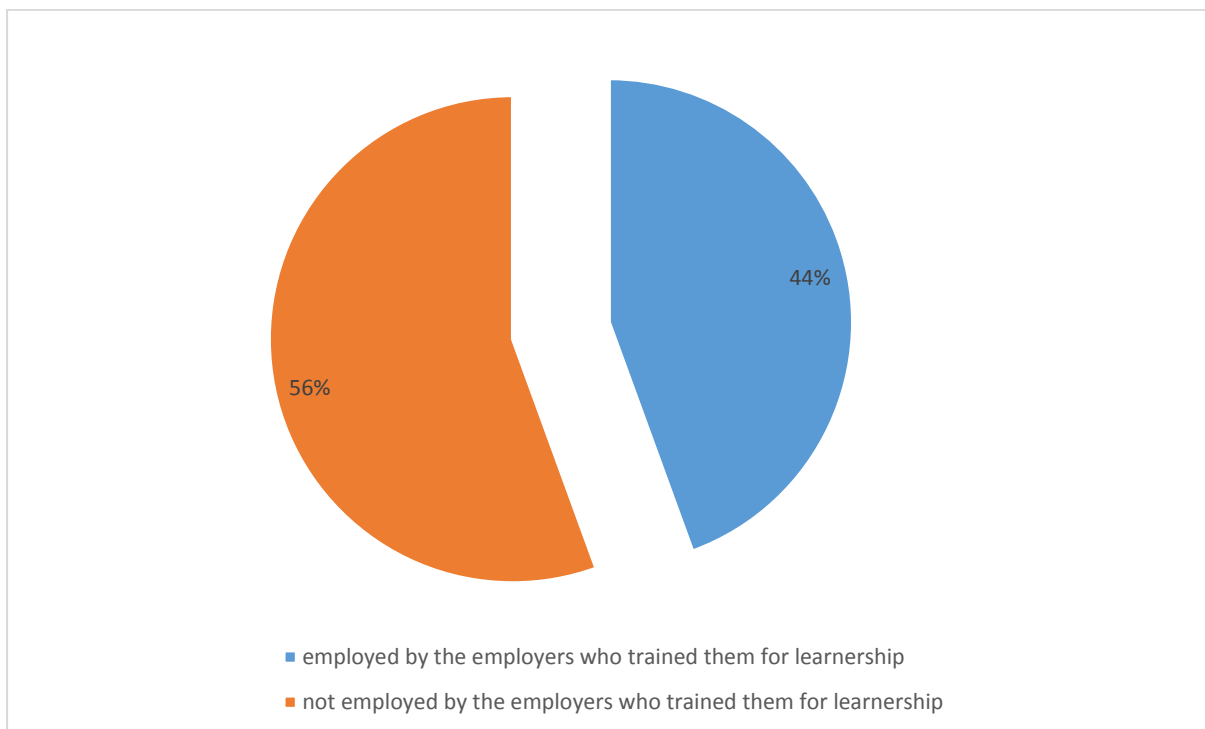


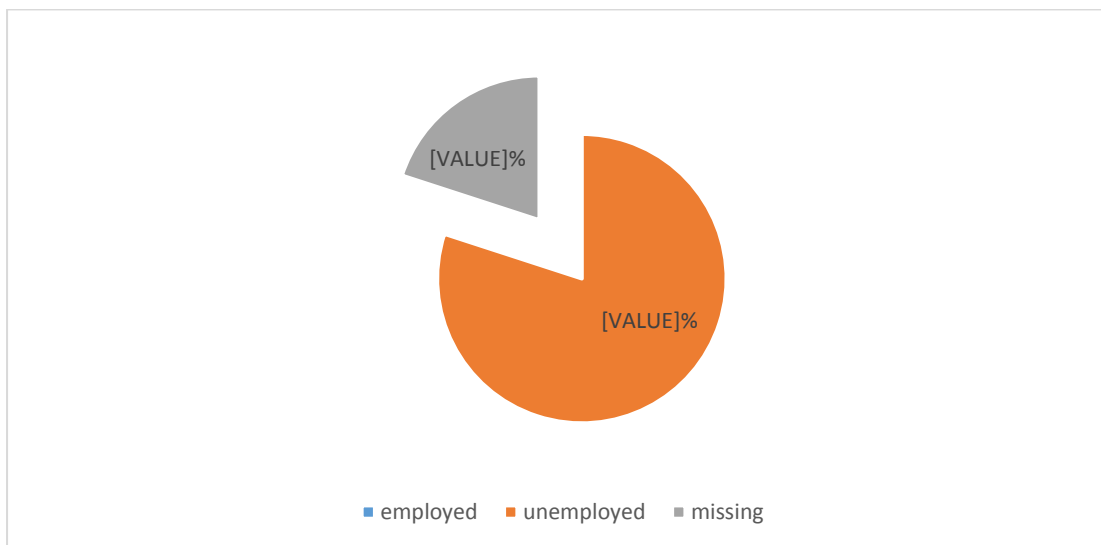
Figure 12: Learners not linked to SQMR employed by the same training provider which trained them for learnership



4.2.Descriptive statistics of the learners in internships

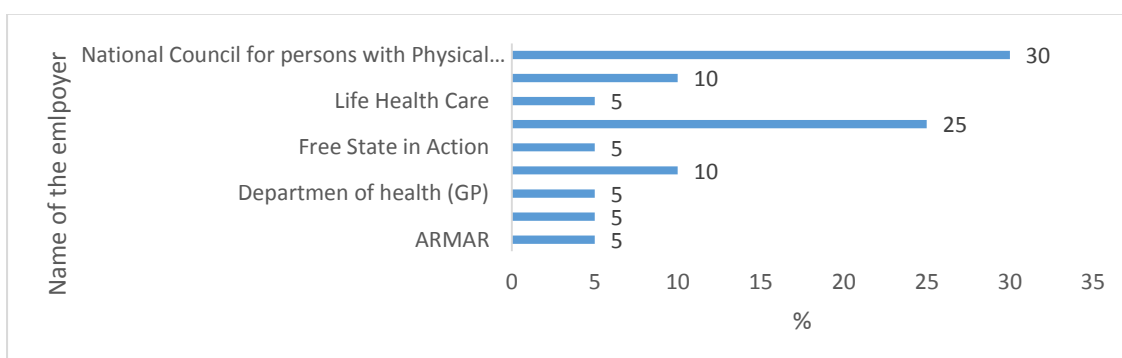
It is important to note that there was only one learner who could not be linked to the SQMR master list of the total population of learners in an internship. Thus the total number of the sample of learners in an internship presented in this section is 20. This sample consists of 90% of Africans and 10% of whites. In terms of gender, this sample has 65% of females and 35% of males. Most of the learners were coming from Eastern Cape (35%), and Gauteng (25%). Less than half (45%) of the sample consisted of the youth (age not older than 35). The findings show below (Figure 13) that 80% of the learners in this sample were unemployed and 20% of them not answering the question of employment status.

Figure 13: Learner employment distribution across sample



The absence of employed learners in this sample meant that no further analysis could be done since other variables were specific to the characteristics of employment. However, it was important to understand the employers who had hosted the learners (Figure 14) in an internship as this speaks directly to the failure of learner absorption to employment by the host organisation. However, it is crucial to interpret this finding while considering that all the learners in an internship were placed to acquire experience in administration work-related positions.

Figure 14: The distribution of learners across the sample by employer



5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The tracer study of the learners who participated in HWSETA funded learnerships and internships who were certificated during the 2013/14 financial year has important lessons. The tracer study, as a monitoring and evaluation tool, was necessary as a control tool of management to ensure that HWSETA can measure its effectiveness in relation to the objective of ensuring that 80% of the HWSETA learners of financial year 2013/14 have been employed. In principle, this study was also able to signal a change that is necessary for the efficient use of resources in achieving the objectives at hand. In this regard, the study was able to show that the lack of cellular numbers of learners from the SQMR list affected the response rate of the study hence the study could not reach the entire population of 3 777. It is the recommendation of this study that the HWSETA data management system specifically the SETA Management System be updated with cellular numbers for all learners in learnerships to ensure that data collection is possible within a short period of time thus enabling effectiveness and efficient use of resources.

With regard to research methodology, the study showed that the use of SMS to send the data collection tool was not ideal because the meaning of what was asked and what was given as a response was not always aligned. An example in this case was how the learners understood the definition of employment. In view of data quality being premised on precision, it is recommended that the telephonic interviews or a structured survey which involves direct engagement be employed for the tracer study.

The findings of this tracer study are indicative not representative. With regards to the absorption of learners by training providers to employment, the findings indicate compliance of the training providers to the policy of HWSETA promoting absorption of learners. The study further indicates the dominance of learners who are employed for what they are qualified for. These findings could be seen as signalling positive gradual change induced by the HWSETA policy. However, it is recommended that the tracer study be conducted annually in order to determine whether the trends and patterns from different financial years validate the key findings of this study.

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