AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME WITHIN THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

by

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Nine years after the launch of the Learnership programme, considerable efforts have been undertaken by various organisations to implement the programme. However, the implementation of the programme is still faced with various challenges which hamper the overall goal of obtaining a formal registered qualification and maximising the employment opportunities of the learners through the combination of vocational education and training.

The study focuses on the evaluation of the implementation of the Learnership programme within the Public Service Commission. By nature, evaluations play a critical role of determining the worthiness of a programme or its shortcomings. The study provides a detailed account of the Learnership programme, its design, and the implementation thereof. Furthermore, the study highlights the need for a transparent, non-discriminatory legislative and policy context, as well as sound institutional mechanisms for supporting the implementation of the programme. Based on the evidence gathered, it appears that there is little appreciation of the concept of skills development through the Learnership programme.

The implementation of the programme has been marred by coordination and management challenges and as a result, the acquiring of skills or skills transfer through the programme remains a challenge. Overall, the lack of institutionalising the programme has rendered it an *ad-hoc* activity as opposed to a strategic investment of addressing skills shortage. A number of recommendations are provided for improving the implementation of the programme and to contribute towards resolving the pervasive skills constraints in South Africa through the Learnership programme.

OPSOMMING

Nege jaar na die instelling van die Leerderskapprogram is heelwat werk reeds deur verskeie organisasies gedoen om die program te implementeer. Die implementering van die program gaan steeds met verskeie uitdagings gepaard wat nadelig is vir die verwesenliking van die oorkoepelende doel om 'n formele geregistreerde kwalifikasie te verwerf en die leerders se indiensnemingsgeleenthede te verbeter deur 'n kombinasie van beroepsonderwys en -opleiding.

Die studie fokus op die evaluering van die implementering van die Leerderskapprogram in die Staatsdienskommissie. Evaluering speel uiteraard 'n kritieke rol om die waarde of tekortkominge van 'n program te bepaal. Die studie bied 'n gedetailleerde oorsig van die Leerderskapprogram en die ontwerp en implementering daarvan. Voorts beklemtoon die studie 'n deursigtige, niediskriminerende wetgewende en beleidskonteks asook 'n stewige institusionele meganisme om die implementering van die program te steun, hoewel dit uit die getuienis blyk dat daar weinig begrip is van die konsep van vaardigheidsontwikkeling deur die Leerderskapprogram.

Die implementering van die program word belemmer deur koördinerings- en bestuursuitdagings, met die gevolg dat die verwerwing van vaardighede of vaardigheidsoordrag deur middel van die program 'n uitdaging bly. In die geheel gesien, veroorsaak die gebrekkige institusionalisering van die program dat dit 'n *ad hoc*-aktiwiteit is in plaas van 'n strategiese investering om die vaardigheidstekort die hoof te bied. Verskeie aanbevelings word gedoen om die implementering van die program te verbeter en om by te dra tot die oplossing van die wydverspreide vaardigheidstekort in Suid-Afrika deur middel van die Leerderskapprogram.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The lack of skills and the lack of formal work experience have become some of the major problems facing the country, especially amongst young South Africans. The skills shortage, coupled with the lack of work experience, has immensely contributed to the high rate of unemployment which is a key obstacle to the economic growth and social equity that post-apartheid South Africa requires. In this regard, skills development plays a critical role in addressing the problem of a skills shortage and unemployment in general. Amongst the skills development interventions introduced by the new democratic government is the Learnership Programme. A Learnership Programme provides an opportunity for skills acquisition through both the work-place learning with and supported by the relevant theoretical learning path in order to build a skilled workforce.

This introductory chapter provides the historical background that contributed to the challenges of a skills shortage in the country, and a brief overview of the Learnership Programme as one of the interventions to address the challenges of the skills shortage and unemployment. This chapter continues with delineation of the aims and objectives of the study, including the research questions and the research problem. In conclusion, the chapter outlines the ethical considerations and the general structure of the study.

1.2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO SKILLS SHORTAGE

The challenge of the skills shortage dates back to the colonial era and the apartheid laws of the past, wherein the education system and its policies were designed to provide economic development and create wealth for the white minority while the majority of blacks were subjected to menial labour (Chelechele, 2009:48). As a result, this phenomenon led to a shortage of skills, especially amongst black South Africans. The following events, as described below, provide a contextual background for the historical factors that contributed to the current state of skills in the county.

During the industrial revolution of the late 19th century, the involvement of the South African blacks in the economy was marginal, with the exception of the coloured community that was involved in some craft work and semi-skilled activities in the Western Cape (McGrath, 2004:11). The skills trends, as well as the attitudes towards skills that emerged during the time of industrialisation and the First World War, dominated the phenomenon of skills during the 20th century and continued to shape the state of skills in the country today.

The early period of industrialisation was dominated by white immigrants whose engagement in labour was mainly on craft skills. With the continued influx of these immigrants, both the state and employers paid less attention on the need to clarify and provide meaningful roles for all the indigenous citizens in the labour market and in skills development in general. The only training for the citizens of the country was limited to the white artisans with the ideology of addressing the 'poor white' problem that existed during the time. By nature, this kind of training was intertwined with the social policy of the country which was based on the concept of separate development.

As a result, such training was used as a tool to give attention to and advance the economic opportunities of the poor and 'the educationally backward' whites (McGrath, 2004: 12). In essence this gave birth to the notion that skills development was a mechanism to achieve economic development for a designated group of society. Although during this time the skills development for the coloured community in the field of crafts was still, but minimally continuing, there was a strong need to ensure that white semi-skilled labour was protected against cheap black labour. It was further perceived that the latter should only be empowered with skills that would ensure their survival in the remote and rural areas, with the urban areas being designated for the civilized and Christians (Doxey, 1961:136).

This philosophy of separate development in the labour market was reinforced thorough the introduction of the Colour Bar Act, commonly known as the Job Reservation Act (RSA, 1911). The Act was introduced mainly to achieve economic advancement in favour of the whites and to thwart any form of economic growth towards the non-white citizens of South Africa. In this regard, the coloureds and the black working class were forcefully categorised as cheap labour. In addition, they were not allowed to obtain any credentials or form of certification for their skills and thus could only engage in unskilled labour (RSA, 1911).

The implication thereof was not only the relegation of black skilled artisans and semi-skilled workers to unskilled labourers, their wages became much lower, and they were subjected to dangerous and inhumane working conditions. Furthermore, they became a community in limbo that faced all efforts which prevented from working at all. In essence, they were denied an opportunity to sell their skills at a market-related wage and to further build a human capital that would enable them to participate in the labour market (Feinstein, 2005: 157).

However, the growing mining industry created a demand for labour and was thus seen as the primary opportunity to allow black Africans to participate in the 'white economy' (McGrath, 2004: 12). This led to the rise of the migrant labour system during the 20th century. Despite such an opportunity, the concept of skills was unfortunately gender-driven. Regardless of the differences in culture, there were commonalities across all males with regard to their undesirability towards women participating in the economy (McGrath, 2004:13). Furthermore, McGrath (2004) outlines three periods under which this model of highly polarised, radicalised and gendered system of skills advancement came under threat:

Firstly, the beginning of the First World War led to a lower supply of migrant workers to the country. As the demand for labour grew, the employers realized the need to employ lower skilled Afrikaners. However, after the war, the country experienced a huge demand for labour, such that the participation of black Africans in the economy became an important economic and political issue (McGrath, 2004:14). In this regard, some of the employers saw an opportunity of changing the traditional and dominating role of the white minority in the labour market. Such a shift would also enable the black Africans an opportunity to equally participate in the labour market.

However, this move was met with militant action and strong opposition from white workers and white political formations who fought against the emergence of skilled black African workers. Such efforts were further reinforced by the introduction of the Apprenticeship Act which was promulgated in 1922. Through this Act, the minimum entry requirement for apprenticeships was elevated to standard six (RSA, 1922). Therefore, this prerequisite made it difficult for black Africans to meet entry requirement for an apprenticeship.

Potgieter (2003:170) argues that the Apprentice Act, supported by the then Education Act that provided inferior education to the non-whites, ensured that there was no competition between these race groups The Apprenticeship Act thus firmly contributed as a cementing piece of legislation which ensured that skills advancement and skilled work were mainly reserved for the whites (Potgieter, 2003:170).

Secondly, the Second World War also provided an opportunity for major changes in the South African skills arena. According to McGrath (2004), this period saw a huge number of white males having to retreat from the labour market to attend to the war. However, with pockets of gender discrimination still existing, this did not create an opportunity for female participation in the economy as the country had a huge population comprising black males to draw upon (McGrath, 2004: 14). During this period, the racialised, skilled workforce suffered a severe constraint, hence there was a need to swiftly develop skills amongst black South Africans. Unfortunately such reforms did not last long as the 1948 elections saw the National Party come to power, and the introduction of the apartheid administration whose policies sought to keep 'Africans in the rural areas or unskilled or both' (McGrath 2004: 14).

Despite the positive economic growth experienced at the time, there was very limited intervention of skills development and training of whites in the apprenticeship and technical educational fields (McGrath 2004:14). McGrath (2004) argues that this period missed an opportunity of producing more artisans through the above-mentioned system. For instance, most artisans were only allowed to acquire their qualifications after completing the full term of apprenticeship, rather than being offered an opportunity of demonstrating their competency (McGrath, 2004:15).

Both McGrath (2004:15) and Potgieter (2003:170) agree that the decline of the mining and manufacturing industries and the rise of the services and managerial fields (such as the retail trade) had a depressing consequence on the need for new supplies of white South Africans in the industrial and mining sectors. However, despite the apprenticeship system in place, there was no realisation of the need to introduce urgent changes to address and advance skills development in the country. Kraak (as cited in McGrath, 2004: 16) explains that partly the reason for the disregard for developing what 'we would now call intermediary

skills' (then described mainly as skills held by 'skilled artisanal' workers) is in the dominant racial ideology and the belief of what comprise a racially-suitable labour.

The 1960s saw concerns from employers who questioned the efficiency of the apartheid labour system, particularly due to the fact that the skills shortage in the mining and manufacturing industries continued to grow (Doxey, 1974: 65). To these employers, the marginalisation of black South Africans in the labour market was not as important as comparison with the economic gains of using them in skilled roles.

During the 1970s, South Africa experienced uprisings and resistance in the form of a struggle movement for liberation against the apartheid regime; a sentiment that was shared and supported by many countries in the Southern region. The liberation struggle, coupled with the economic decline, exerted pressure on the National Party government to reconsider its policies. In this regard, the late 1970s and 1980s was characterised by new initiatives aimed at transforming the economic policy, and the education and the training system (McGrath, 2004: 15). Due to the exerted pressure, amongst others, policies were put in place with the aim of transforming the education and training system (McGrath, 2004: 15). To this end, access to education and training was reasonable for black people, hence they became employed in skilled work. However, black Africans could still not compete on equal terms with their white counterparts due to the fundamental inequalities in the provision of resources, influenced by policies of separate development and the inferior education offered (McGrath, 2004: 16).

By 1994, the South African advancement toward the concept of skills had resulted in a dysfunctional skills development system. As a result the new democratic government was faced with three major problems in this area:

- The apartheid driven economic path led to intense polarisation of skills between highly skilled and lowly skilled elements, with a serious underdevelopment of the intermediary skills category.

- The concept of skills had been predominantly racialised and gendered.

- The state had abdicated its responsibility of developing skills and relegated the function to business which did not have the capacity to lead in this area (MacGrath, 2004:16).

1.3. THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME

The challenges facing the country with regard to the skills shortage and employability has necessitated a fresh approach to addressing the skills constraints in the country. During his state of the nation address, President Zuma mentioned that government has placed education and skills development at the centre of its policies (Zuma, 2010:7).

As one of government's flagship programmes to address the problem of the skills shortage and maximise the employability of its citizens in the lower end of the middle level of the economy, a Learnership Programme was introduced in 2001 by the Minister of Labour.

1.4. MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The study seeks to evaluate the implementation of the Learnership Programme within the Public Service Commission (PSC) as one of the institutions of government. The PSC is based in Pretoria with nine regional offices in the provinces. This is to ensure that its services are decentralised, made available, and within reach of the provincial governments and legislatures.

The concept of decentralisation has been employed in an effort to manage inter-governmental relations (Radin, 2003:611). The PSC does not provide services directly to members of the public; however, it is mandated by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa to perform an oversight function of the public service (RSA, 1996). It is an independent institution and a public service watchdog, accountable to the National Assembly. Amongst its powers and functions, the Commission has been mandated by the Constitution to evaluate and investigate the application of personnel and public

administration practices and report to the relevant executive authority and legislature (RSA, 1996).

Like many other government departments, the PSC as a government institution has embarked on the implementation of the Learnership Programme which aims to provide school leavers with an opportunity to study towards a profession with the hope that this will later afford them an opportunity to enter the workforce.

The success of the programme depends on the effective implementation thereof. The implementation of this intervention has not gone without challenges. Whilst many government departments have responded to the implementation of the programme, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) argues that the programme has been implemented in a very fragmented and uncoordinated manner across the public service, and as such, collecting accurate information and data about achievements, successes, challenges and difficulties of implementing the Learnership Programme in the public service has been difficult (DPSA: 2008).

The PSC upholds the principles of good governance and plays an important role in the betterment of the public service through continuous engagement in the public discourse. This is evident in the number of reports produced by the PSC with findings recommendations aimed at contributing towards an efficient and effective public service.

1.5. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Learnership Programme was introduced in 2001 with the aim of addressing skills constraints and maximising employability. However, the programme still faces various challenges such as the lack of support from senior management of the employers, commitment from mentors, lack of capacity to host the learners, and recruitment processes that are not transparent. Such challenges are likely to play a large role in hindering the success of the programme in ensuring that the learners eventually acquire the skills they require to enter the workforce.

1.6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is based on the following research questions:

- Is the PSC Learnership Programme centred on providing the relevant practical experience which complements the theoretical framework, leading to employability?

- Does the Learnership Programme lead to the development of both practical and theoretical skills amongst the learners?

- To what extent has the Learnership Programme contributed to the employability of the learners?

1.7. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research intends to find out how the PSC has implemented the Learnership Programme and whether the objectives of the programme have been met.

The research will also uncover the achievements, successes, challenges and difficulties in implementing the Learnership Programme at the PSC. It is the aim of the researcher to unpack all the information to understand the overall implementation of the Learnership Programme at the PSC in order to determine whether the programme does create opportunities for the actual development of skills and employability of the learners. The specific objectives are:

Objective One: To assess the recruitment and selection processes of the learners in determining their placements against the relevant practical experience to be acquired at the PSC and the intended qualification to be obtained.

Objective Two: To establish the kind of support offered to the learners in the form of coaching and mentoring to be able to successfully complete the programme.

Objective Three: To establish the availability of institutional and other requirements to ensure that Learnership Programme requirements are met.

Objective Four: To determine if the Learnership Programme is achieving its intended objective of providing opportunities for the learners to acquire both experiential learning and a formal qualification.

Objective Five: To determine if the Learnership Programme has afforded the learners an opportunity to acquire skills to enable them to be employed.

1.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher was the main source of data collection and analysis. However, in order to avoid bias which could compromise the validity and reliability of the data, interpreted data were taken back to the respondents in order to confirm their authenticity. Permission was also requested from the respondents to tape-record the interviews in order to make transcription and analysis easier. Respondents' participation was voluntary and they were assured of the confidentiality of the research and that no individual respondents would be mentioned in the study.

1.9. STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

Chapter 1 provides the historical background that contributed to the skills shortage facing the country. This was followed by a brief overview of the Learnership Programme as one of the government's interventions to address the challenges of the skills shortage and unemployment. The motivation for conducting the study, the research problem, the research aim and objectives as well as the research questions are contained in this chapter. The chapter concluded with the ethical considerations and the structure of the study.

Chapter 2 presents the literature reviewed during the study. The literature is based on a number of sources on skills, with reference to the definition of skill and categories of skills. Literature on programmes as a mode or intervention to address problems is also provided. The researcher further demonstrates how the concept of evaluation manifests itself in programmes, the purpose of programme evaluation, and the types of evaluations. Lastly, the chapter provides specific insight on the Learnership Programme and its characteristics.

Chapter 3 presents the contextual background of the Learnership Programme. The chapter commences with an overview of the challenges of the skills shortage, with particular reference to the public service.

The researcher demonstrates government's effort of addressing challenges of the skills shortage through a sound legislative and policy framework, as well as governance mechanisms that support the Learnership Programme. Lastly, the chapter provides insight on the development and the implementation of the Learnership Programme.

Chapter 4 presents the overview of the theory of research, the research design applied in the study, as well as the research approach undertaken. The chapter further highlights the research methodology, including the sampling technique and the data collection methods used in the study. The chapter concludes with the analysis of the data.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the study. The chapter commences with the contextual background of the institution, namely, the Public Service Commission (PSC), its mandate and role in government, the PSC's key areas of work, and the need to build skills around these areas in order to enable it to achieve its mandate. Furthermore, the chapter provides some insight into the PSC Learnership Programme from the researcher's knowledge of the Programme and then presents the findings of the study.

Chapter 6 presents the general conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The following literature review is based on a number of sources on skills, with reference to the definition of skill and various categories of skills. Literature on a programme, as a mode or intervention in addressing problems, is also provided. The researcher further demonstrates how the concept of evaluation manifests itself in programmes, the purpose of programme evaluation, and the types of evaluations. Lastly, the chapter provides specific insight on the Learnership Programme and its characteristics.

2.2. DEFINITION OF SKILL

In light of the importance of the concept of skill, it is imperative that one defines 'skill' in order to arrive at a common understanding and a shared point of departure. According to Harrison (1993:264), skill is about the ability to undertake new roles in order to successfully achieve outcomes. Skill is also defined by Robbins (1995:15) as the ability to display behaviour which is aimed at obtaining a particular goal. These two authors are of the view that through skill one is able to achieve predetermined objectives. De Jager (2002: 35) agrees that key to the concept of skill is the capacity acquired through either training or learning, with the objective of fulfilling certain goals. It is therefore important that public servants are trained and equipped with the necessary skills to enable them to perform their duties effectively.

2.3. MAIN CATEGORIES OF SKILLS

Babb and Meyer (2005:3) identify three main categories of skills bands in the country as well as the skills challenges facing each of them. Firstly, at the top end of the economy, for instance, are the Chief Executive Officers and Directors of companies and organisations. Amongst this category there is a lack of skills, such as project management and financial management, which are required to build organisations able to compete at the global level and drive economic growth (Babb & Meyer, 2005:3).

Secondly, the country has residents who fall within the middle level of the economy. At the top range of this category are, for instance, the engineers, architects, teachers and medical professionals including nurses, doctors and emergency medical practitioners. Unfortunately, due to skills migration to the most advanced and industrialised counties, this level of the economy has been the most hit by this new phenomenon, popularly known as the 'brain drain' (Potgieter, 2003: 169).

As a result of the fact that the skills in this level and category of the economy are valuable, they are traded at a high currency rate that matches the global market place. This trend gives economic advantage to the individuals selling their skills and also to the countries that are utilising these skills which are usually acquired without investment in their development and advancement (German Agency for Technical Co-operation, 2008: 35). This phenomenon has, on the other hand, created a disadvantage for the countries where these skills originate as they lose their investment and are thus faced with the problem of a skills shortage (Potgieter, 2003: 170).

The problem of 'brain drain' has created a skills challenge for South Africa. Schwab indicates in the World Economic Forum report that South Africa is at a competitive disadvantage with regard to most of the aspects under the seventh pillar of labour market efficiency (2009-2010:283). Whilst the economy is consistently changing, complex technologies are being introduced, and there is a demand for the jobs that require higher levels of skills and competence. Therefore the ability of the workforce, through its skills and competence, determines the performance of the country in the global economy.

At the lower end of the middle category of the economy are those with senior secondary schooling. However, they do not possess qualifications for a profession. Babb and Meyer argue that one of the advantages of South Africa's competitors at the international level is the availability of skills at this level of the economy, popularly known as further education and training (FET) (2005:4). In South Africa, this is a well-placed sector to absorb the majority of school leavers. South Africa's FET is an extensive and wide-ranging segment of education and training in the sense that secondary schooling is integrated in FET (Kraak & Hall, 1999: 1).

According to Kraak and Hall, FET is broadly delivered through senior secondary schools, technical and community colleges, enterprise-based training, and various private providers including for-profit and for non-profit institutions, and caters for the pre-employed, employed and the unemployed (1999:2).

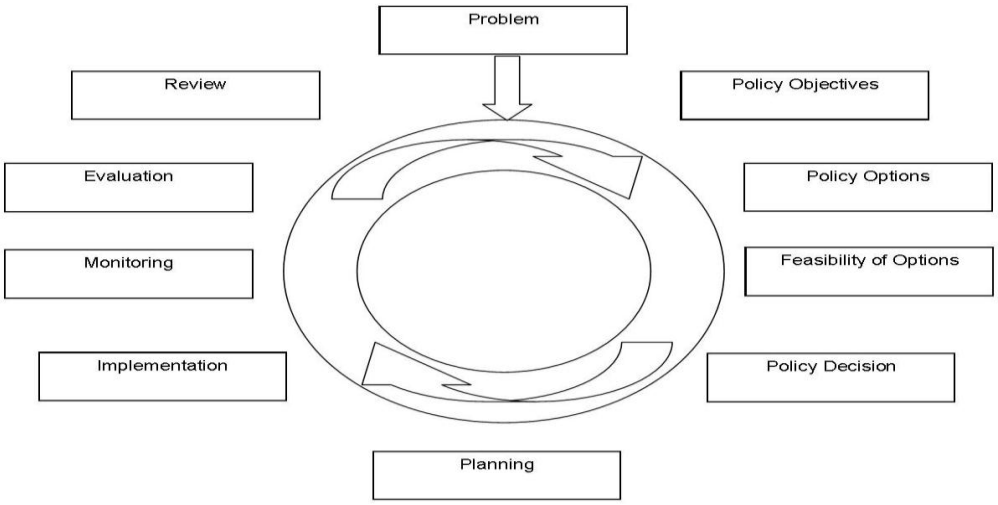
The third level of the economy is at the lower end and it caters for a huge number of people, including rural residents who are illiterate and relatively unemployable in a modern economy. For this group, literacy is the key to development. The challenges facing this segment of the economy is coping with poverty and the need to survive. In addition, there is a need amongst this group to attain life skills such as writing, reading and communication skills in order to lay the foundation for the attainment of the next level of skills that would allow them to survive.

The following section provides some insight on the use of programmes or projects as an intervention to achieve certain goals or address specific needs. Furthermore, the researcher highlights how the concept of evaluation manifests itself in such programmes.

2.4. WHAT IS A PROGRAMME?

A programme is designed to serve as an intervention for a particular problem or situation, and it is defined as a systematic and logical attempt to achieve a certain, planned purpose (Fink, 2005: 4). A programme is further defined as a set of related activities aimed at accomplishing a single or many objectives (MacDavid & Hawthorn, 2006:200). The PSC argues that in government, programmes emanate within the broad policy lifecycle which focuses on addressing various problems facing the society (2008: 9). Figure 1 shows the lifecycle of a policy and it also demonstrate how programmes emanate, from problem identification to the review process.

Figure 1: Life cycle of a policy



(adapted from PSC, 2008: 42)

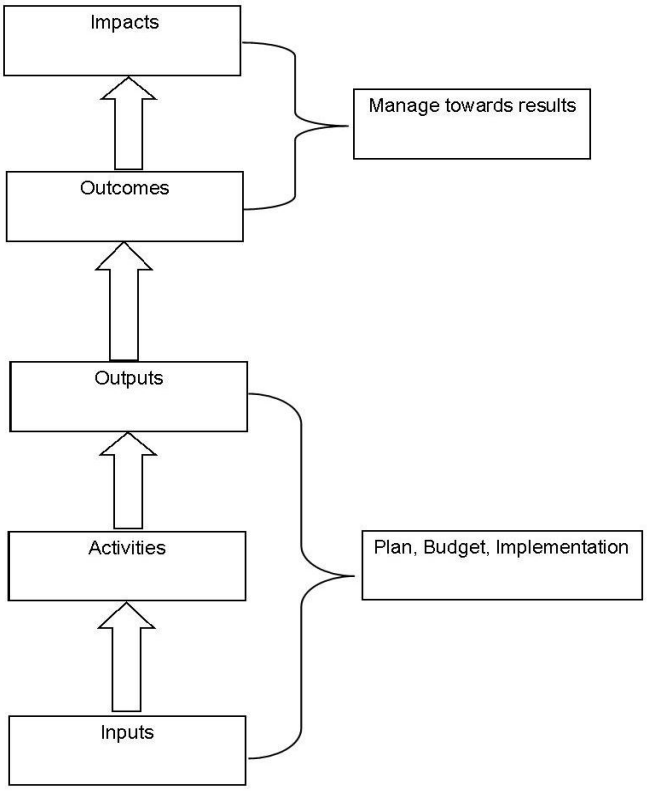
From the figure shown above it can be seen that the conceptualisation of a programme starts with the identification of the problem facing society; thereafter policy objectives are determined. In this regard, objectives are the policy's planned purpose; an example of which could be the improvement of employment patterns in the labour market (Fink, 2005: 7). Following the determination of policy objectives, policy options are examined to establish which ones could best address the problem, and thereafter, the feasibility or the cost-benefit analysis is conducted to check the viability of the options as well as the practicality of such options. The PSC states that the process of decision making on a policy is intricate and it filters through many layers of stakeholders, and such policies are further argued in various documents, like discussion papers and policy documents (2008: 9).

Once a policy decision has been agreed upon and adopted, the relevant government department/s commence with the processes of designing a programme that can achieve the policy objectives, thus developing a detailed plan of the programme and its implementation (PSC, 2008:9). To ensure that implementation proceeds as planned and that the envisaged objectives are achieved, the programme is monitored and evaluated. Monitoring and evaluation plays a key role in a programme.

Depending on the results achieved by the programme, the initial policy decision, or aspects of the design, implementation and resource allocation to the programme, may be reviewed (PSC, 2008:9)

Furthermore, another way to conceptualise a programme is to use a logic model. Logic models help to explain the relationship between means and ends (PSC, 2008: 42). A logic model is a systematic method to break down a programme into logical components to facilitate its evaluation. A simplified logic model consists of the hierarchy of inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts. Figure 2 below shows an example of a programme logic model.

Figure 2: Programme logic



(adapted from Morra-Imas & Rist 2009: 124)

Morra-Imas & Rist view programme logic as a theory of change (2009: 150). They further describe a theory of change as a representation of how organisations are expected to achieve results.

Contrary to the traditional evaluation which focuses only on inputs, activities and outputs (implementation), the theory of logic combines the traditional method of monitoring the inputs, activities and outputs with a strong focus on outcomes and impacts, popularly known as results-based monitoring and evaluation (Morra-Imas & Rist, 2009: 109). Key to the concept of programme logic and the theory of change is the building blocks aimed at achieving impact in terms of addressing problems, and these are discussed as follows:

Inputs: According to Morra-Imas and Rist, inputs refer to all resources used in a project or programme, including human resources, tools, equipment and budget (2009: 109). The PSC states that inputs are important since they play a huge role towards the production and delivery of outputs; in essence these are 'what we use to do the work' (PSC, 2008: 52).

Activities: Both Morra-Imas & Rist (2009:109) and the PSC (2008: 42).agree that activities are 'what we do'. Furthermore, activities are undertaken through the use of inputs to arrive at the outputs.

Outputs: Outputs refer to the tangible products or services rendered through the activities undertaken (Morra-Imas & Rist, 2009: 109). Furthermore, they may be defined as 'what we generate or deliver' (PSC: 2008: 43).

Outcomes: These are the medium-term behavioural changes that take place as a result of the use of outputs. They describe what the organisation wishes to achieve (PSC: 2008:42).

Impacts: These are the long-term results experienced from the accumulation of the outcomes. In essence, this describes the positive change that people experience in their lives as a result of the implementation of the programme or intervention.

Programme logic helps to answer questions like, 'Were the means to achieve the objectives appropriate?', 'Were the activities implemented relevant to arrive at the desired output, and

were they competently implemented?', and 'Have the objectives of the programme been achieved?' (PSC, 2008: 43).

The efficiency of a programme can be described as the proportion between inputs and outputs, and the effectiveness of the programme would be the relationship between outputs and outcomes. Therefore logic models help to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of a programme (PSC, 2008: 43).

In order to manage programmes towards results, it is critical that the planning thereof is directed towards meeting the needs of the people and addressing the problems they experience. Posavac and Carey (2007: 4) state that in many instances programmes are offered without proper dialogue between the affected participants and the planners. The creation of a huge gap between the planners and beneficiaries is likely to result into misunderstanding even before the implementation of the programme (Posavac & Carey, 2007: 4). Furthermore they emphasise the importance of verifying that programmes do provide the intended services, since the most basic challenge with programmes is that some are not implemented as designed, or are implemented in such a weak manner to the extent that the beneficiaries receive no or minimal benefit (Posavac & Carey, 2007: 4).

The implementation of a programme requires stakeholders, such as managers, donors and political leaders, to expect to see activities during the commencement of the programme. For outcomes to be observed in a programme it is critical that inputs are used, activities undertaken, and beneficiaries access and benefit from the service.

Speer and Trap (as cited in Posavac & Carey, 2007: 5) comment that the hypothesis which suggests that operating a service is the same as providing a service, and that both are equal to providing a quality service, are no longer being respected as intrinsically convincing. Therefore it is critical that programme planners develop guidelines for defining successful outcomes prior to deciding if the results achieved have been worth it.

2.5. PROGRAMME EVALUATION

An evaluation plays a critical role in determining the worthiness of a programme or a project. An evaluation is a methodical and objective appraisal of a continuing or completed project or programme with the focus on its design, implementation and results (PSC, 2008:3).

The PSC further states that an evaluation serves to determine a programme's merit or shortcoming (2008:3). According to Fink (2005: 9) one of the key tasks of an evaluation is to ascertain the programme's merits, and therefore he argues that a commendable programme is one that has achieved its goals in terms of the effectiveness, one that has presented benefits to its participants, yet they are completely informed of the possible risks involved in the programme and leaves no harm amongst them.

Since evaluations are centred around programmes or projects, the concepts of programme and evaluation have been used simultaneously by various authors, and Posavac and Carey (2007) argue that programme evaluation is a compilation of techniques and skills necessary to establish whether a human service is required, whether the service is adequately exhaustive to meet the needs of people, whether the service is provided as planned, and whether the service indeed does assist people in meeting their needs within acceptable costs and without negative side effects. This definition of programme evaluation resonates with the definitions of evaluation, as outlined above by the PSC (2008) and Fink (2005), and for this purpose, the researcher will use the two concepts simultaneously.

According to Posavac and Carey (2007:10), it is critical to understand activities that are often confused with programme evaluation in order to understand what programme evaluation includes. In this regard, they claim that concepts such as research, individual assessments, and programme audits are often confused with programme evaluation (Posavac & Carey, 2007). For instance, they argue that research focuses on areas of theoretical interest and is less concerned with the needs of people or organisations, whereas programme evaluation collects information to assist people in improving their efficiency; therefore information emanating from a programme evaluation is used for making decisions around the programme and it affords interested stakeholders the opportunity to scrutinise the efficiency of the programme (Posavac & Carey, 2007:10).

Furthermore, programme evaluation is not about personal assessment, such as the evaluation of an individual's needs to qualify for a particular service or assessment of their qualifications for specific occupation or promotion; however, it is about learning how well the programme is assisting the people or the organization. In addition, Posavac and Carey (2007: 10) argue that programme audits and programme evaluations are not carried in the same way.

For instance, whilst programme auditors are interested in information supporting the fact that the programme was undertaken within the prescribed regulations and frameworks, programme evaluators are interested in how the services offered have affected the beneficiaries (Posavac & Carey, 2007: 10).

2.6. PURPOSE OF PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Programme evaluation can be conducted for a variety of purposes. Posavac & Carey (2007:14) state that programme evaluation contributes to the provision of quality service though the feedback from its activities and outcomes to stakeholders who can either modify the programmes or who choose which services are provided. Therefore, in the absence of feedback, programmes are likely not to be carried out effectively.

Morra-Imas and Rist (2009: 11) and the PSC (2008: 6) are of the view that feedback from programme evaluation can be used for a variety of purposes. The following highlights some of the purposes of programme evaluation:

Ethical purpose: both Morra-Imas and Rist (2009: 11) and the PSC (2008: 5) agree on the ethical purpose of conducting programme valuation. In this regard, it is important that public officials account to political leaders and to the citizens on how a policy or a programme has been implemented and the results that have been from the implementation of the programme. The PSC (2008: 5) further argues that this purpose of evaluation substantiates the use of public funds by officials in carrying out their duties with a high level of integrity.

Management decision making purpose: Morra-Imas and Rist (2009: 11) states that feedback from a programme evaluation can be used to obtain a reasonable distribution of

funds, but also assists in the decision-making, particularly regarding the need to go on with the programme, termination or redesign thereof. The PSC (2008: 5) argues that the precision of the feedback and the method in which it is presented is very important for supporting management in decision making. Therefore, feedback emanating from programme evaluation enhances managerial processes and provides evidence for decision-making (PSC, 2008:5).

Soliciting support purpose: According to the PSC (2008: 5), if the achievement of a programme can be confirmed through feedback from evaluation, it is therefore easy to gather support for the programme, such as increased budget or political back-up, when critical policy decisions that impact on the programme are made.

Organisational learning purpose: This purpose assumes that feedback emanating from programme evaluation will help create learning institutions. However, the PSC (2008: 5_ argues that the interpretation of feedback into 'learnings' can become a challenge, and therefore it is critical that feedback obtained from programme evaluation should be translated into analytical, action-oriented reports that facilitate effective learning.

2.7. TYPES OF EVALUATIONS

There are various types of evaluation. McDavid and Hawthron (2006: 21) highlight two types of evaluation; namely formative and summative evaluations. Primarily, formative evaluation focuses on the implementation of the programme at the coal face, whilst summative evaluation seeks to determine if intended objectives of the programme have been achieved Specifically, formative evaluations are aimed at providing feedback with the overall intention of improving the programme (McDavid & Hawthron, 2006: 21).

Morra-Imas and Rist (2009: 9) agree that the overall aim of formative evaluation is to improve the performance of the programme and therefore they are in most instances conducted during the course of the programme. Furthermore, formative evaluation is meant to establish whether or not the presumed 'operational logic' is in line with the actual processes and to show the direct results emanating from the implementation phases (Morra-

Imas & Rist, 2009: 9). Whilst Fink (2005: 22) agrees with the two authors, he uses a different term for describing formative evaluation which is 'process evaluation'.

However, he argues that process evaluation is an evaluation that focuses on the implementation of the programme, its activities and management, and that such an evaluation assists evaluators to gather insight to build a hypothesis for later investigation and rationale for the achievement (or lack of achievement) of the programme's objectives (Fink, 2005:22).

As indicated earlier, summative evaluations deal with the achievement of the programme's objectives, as opposed to process and operation matters. Therefore, this kind of evaluation asks questions such as, should money be spent on the programme or is there a need to continue with the programme? (McDavid & Hawthorn 2006: 21).

According to Morra-Imas and Rist (2009: 9), a summative evaluation, also known as outcome or impact evaluation, is undertaken at the end of the programme to establish the degree to which expected results were achieved, and therefore this evaluation is intended to provide information about the value and impact of the programme. In general, a summative evaluation encompasses impact evaluations, cost-effectiveness investigations, quasi-experiments, randomised experiments and case studies (Morra-Imas & Rist, 2009: 9).

The third type of evaluation identified by Morra-Imas and Rist (2009: 10) is the prospective evaluation. A prospective evaluation focuses on the possible outcomes of a programme and these authors state that it is similar to an 'evaluability assessment'. Prospective evaluation blends evaluation findings from earlier work to assess the likely outcomes of proposed new projects, programmes, or policies (Morra-Imas & Rist, 2009: 10).

The following section provides a review of the literature, specifically dealing with the Learnership programme and its characteristics.

2.8. DEFINING THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME

A Learnership Programme is an intervention that combines vocational education and training in order to establish a linkage between structured learning and workplace experience, with the overall goal of obtaining a formal registered qualification with the South African National Qualification Framework. The minimum entry level of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) for the Learnership Programme is level 2, with a certificate being awarded upon completion of the requirements of NQF level 4. By its nature, the Learnership Programme is mainly (but not entirely) aimed at addressing skills development at NQF 2-4 levels (Davies, 2005:69).

The programme is made available both to school leavers and employed candidates and is peddled by the Department of Labour (DoL) as an approach to skills development in various kinds of learning (DoL, 2001). The scope of the programme is as follows:

- The programme caters mainly for young South Africans between the ages of 16-35 who are unemployed and who aspire to obtain a profession.

- It also caters for employees who do not have any qualifications but aspire to obtain one whilst being employed.

- The duration of the programme is 12 months, and depending on circumstances it is renewable for the same period for both the practical and theoretical learning part of the programme.

The long-term objective of the programme is to create opportunities for the learners to acquire practical skills and facilitate the employability of the learners upon completion of the programme. Through this intervention, learners are better positioned, given their obtained qualification and work experience to enter the workforce.

The concept of workplace learning is not entirely new in the country. Prior 1994, under the apartheid regime, apprenticeships were introduced as a means of transferring workplace skills. However, the fundamental principles and objectives of the apprenticeship differ completely to the Learnership Programme. The most critical innovation of skills

development on the NQF 2-4 in the post-apartheid era is the Learnership Programme (Kraak, 2007:19). This innovation has created a need for all role players including government, employers, Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) and education training providers/institutions to make a contribution in ensuring that the skills deficit is addressed through the provision of a workplace environment that allows learning and development in order to contribute to employment.

A Learnership Programme is intended to simultaneously complement an occupational learning and theoretical education. It is a work-based approach to learning and gaining a qualification, and includes both structured work experience (practical) and structured institutional learning (theory) (DoL, 2001). McGrath (2004:246) agrees that the Learnership Programme is based on the practice of merging skills formation through work experience with the period of vocational education which leads to a qualification. A review of the provision of education and training as well as work experience has shown that in the past these concepts have been conducted without synergy between the theory and practice (DoL, 2001).

The Learnership Programme was designed to address the gaps that exist in the provision of education and training with the aim of responding to the needs and demands of the labour market. Whilst there are various components of skills development, such as the internship programme, Babb and Meyer (2005:17) are of the view that in general, the concept of learnership is one component of the skills development system that has the most visible success. For instance, amongst the various learnerships case studies conducted by the authors, they site an example of the Bank SETA Letsema Learnerships wherein 826 learners were accepted into the programme, 788 of them successfully completed the programme on time, 709 received their qualifications, and 582 are now employed on full time basis (Babb & Meyer, 2005: 44). The example shows the implementation of the programme in a particular sector, where the outputs and outcomes were successfully achieved.

2.9. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME

Vorwerk (as cited in Fester, 2006:32) explains that the Learnership Programme is different from the theory-based approach of learning. Due to the practical element that has been incorporated in the programme, it places attention on what the learners need to be proficient and competent in what they are being taught and not necessarily what is being theoretically presented to them (Vorwerk, as cited in Fester, 2006:32).

Vorwerk (as cited in Fester, 2006:32) highlights the following as characteristics of a Learnership Programme.

- The programme is driven by demand.
- It caters for any profession in which on- the-job learning opportunities are viable.
- The programme targets a wide group of learners covering all available economic sectors and professions.
- It involves various role players and requires cooperation and commitment of the workplace in order to afford learners an opportunity to gain work experience.
- The programme combines theoretical learning and skills training both during learning and assessment.
- The focus of the programme is on the future, thereby preparing the learners to obtain a qualification, skills and competencies for future profession.
- A structured working environment is a central part of the programme.
- The programme culminates in to a recognised qualification made of 120 credits achievable within a period of 12 months.

The concept of on-the-job learning is not completely new to South Africa. During the 1920s, the apprenticeship system was introduced as a means of skills development. The apprenticeship system gained momentum during the 1940s, however, it later declined during the 1980s and the 1990s for various reasons such as the government's removal of the tax incentive for participating employers and the general economic depression in the country during that period (Potgieter, 2003: 170). Whilst the Learnership Programme is modelled on the apprenticeship system, the programme should not be perceived as the resuscitation of the apprenticeship system as the Learnership Programme is not based on the same principles. As indicated below, Potgieter (2003: 170-171) highlights the five fundamental differences of the two programmes:

- Prior to 1994, the South African labour market was dominated by policies of segregation, and as a result, the apprenticeship system was used as a mechanism for discriminating against blacks. In this regard, it catered for the participation of the white male, thus endorsing the apartheid regime's policy of job reservation. Whilst the Learnership Programme is open to all, it does to a certain extent address issues of equity and is aimed at achieving redress targets with no discriminatory intentions. Therefore, within the Learnership, men, women and persons with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in the programme.

- The apprenticeships were only confined to developing skills in the specific trade and industry, hence only certain trades were targeted. On the other hand, the Learnership Programme covers skills development in all economic sectors.

- The apprenticeship system was aimed at developing a thin band of skills and as a result its qualification streams were very limited. As earlier indicated, the Learnership Programme extends across the old artisan and professional divide. As a result the programme has made it possible to offer a learnership opportunity on any level of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

- The apprenticeships were mainly driven by agreements between selected work environments, training institutions such as technical colleges. In this regard, there

was no quality assurance of these apprenticeships. In the case of the Learnership Programme, formal agreements are entered in to by the learner, representative of the work environment and the training provider/institution. In addition, mechanisms for ensuring quality in the delivery of the programme are also put in place.

The apprenticeship system was used as a tool to heighten the apartheid government's poor investment in the development of the country's skills. The Learnership Programme has, on the other hand, brought genuine intentions of swiftly investing and developing the country's human resources.

2.10. CONCLUSION

The reviewed literature has highlighted a number of issues that are critical to the study, in particular the categories of skills that exist in the country as well as the skills challenges facing each category. For a study of this nature, it was also important to provide some insight on programmes as interventions or vehicles to address problems. The purpose of conducting programme evaluations, types of evaluations, and the timing of conducting such valuations, are important in guiding any evaluation process.

Lastly, the theory on the Learnership Programme and its characteristics demonstrate the philosophy behind the programme with the intention of not replicating some of the flaws that came with the apprenticeship system implemented during the apartheid era.

CHAPTER 3. POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 the theoretical framework was provided for the Learnership Programme. Chapter 3 presents the contextual background of the Learnership Programme. The chapter commences with an overview of the challenges of the skills shortage, with particular reference to the public service. The researcher demonstrates government's efforts in addressing the challenges of the skills shortage through a sound legislative and policy framework, as well as governance mechanisms that support the Learnership Programme. Lastly, the chapter provides insight on the development and the implementation of the Learnership Programme.

3.2. CHALLENGES OF SKILLS SHORTAGE IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

In South Africa, the effects of the skills shortage have been felt by all sectors, including the public service. Post 1994, the new democratic government found itself with a public service that was marred by the policies of the apartheid system with the remains of its legacies. These have in turn hugely contributed to the low skills base in the public service. According to the public service human resource development strategic framework, the public service constitutes approximately 1.055,244 employees and it represents about 9% of employment opportunities in the county (DPSA, 2005:33). As a key employer in most parts of the country it has to compete with the private sector for the limited available skills to enable it to achieve its mandate.

In terms of its mandate, the public service plays an important role in ensuring that the policies of government are implemented. In this regard, it is mandated to ensure that government's imperative of improving the quality of the lives of South African citizens as contained in the Constitution (RSA, 1996) is achieved.

In order to accomplish this important agenda and address the imbalances of the past, the new government adopted a developmental approach in running its business. In this regard,

one of the fundamental guiding policies of government was the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RSA, 1994) which is centred on high skill levels. Unlike an apartheid-oriented system, a developmental state plays an important and active role in providing guidance to the development of its economy, thus balancing the economic growth and improving social development of its citizens.

In a developmental state, skills are developed and resources are maximised to ensure that the needs of the people are met. In pursuance of the developmental agenda, the government had to extend its business to previously disadvantages areas. Such a move created a need for capable and qualified personnel, particularly in the middle level of the economy, to ensure that the service delivery needs of the citizens in those areas are met. Therefore the role and capacity of the public service becomes very important in assisting government to achieve its developmental mandate. The developmental programmes of government are not likely to succeed in the absence of the necessary skills to deliver services and improve the lives of the people (Qwabe & Pillay, 2009: 15).

The aspirations of the new democratic government with regard to skills development in the public services is enshrined in the Constitution which states that, '…public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation' (RSA, 1996). This provision reiterates the importance of achieving employment equity as one of the key goals of transforming the public sector. In this regard, the development of skills in the public service is one of the organisational mechanisms to ensure that the previously disadvantaged in the form of African citizens, disabled and women are afforded an opportunity for growth (RSA, 1996).

Since 1994, it has been the goal of government to ensure that blacks, women, youth and the disabled are integrated in the public service. In this regard, the most evident achievement of the democratic state in the public service has been clearly displayed in how the country's population demographics are currently represented.

According to the Public Service Commission (PSC), black citizens which include African, Asian and coloured people, constitutes 87% of the public service (PSC, 2009:13). However, the PSC highlights that gender targets (i.e. women integration) have not been achieved. In terms of addressing disability targets, the public service has not achieved much either.

Besides the difficulties experienced by the public service in meeting the gender and disability targets, the biggest challenge facing the public service is the skills shortage, which has in turn also failed the public service in meeting the gender and disability targets. One of the challenges associated with skills development in the South African public service during the post-apartheid period has been as the problem of political uncertainty. Chelechele (2009:49) argues that during the early '90s, much time was spent on the political transition, thus giving minimal attention to the investment in skills development, particularly in light of the post-apartheid economic growth. The costs attached to the attention enjoyed by political engagements during that period was that South Africa lagged behind whilst other developed and developing countries were adjusting to the global economy and ensuring that the capacity of their workforce was developed (Chelechele, 2009:49).

One of the examples of the effects of the skills shortage in the public service is the high vacancy rate which contributes immensely to the ineffective and inefficient functioning of the departments in delivering their mandate. The high vacancy rate has a huge impact on the delivery of services to the citizens. For instance, as at 1 August 2007, the total number of vacant posts in the public service was 23%, with the highest number of vacancies at salary levels 6 to 8, followed by salary levels 1 to 5 (PSC, 2007: 21). These are the salary levels that absorb the majority of the skills drawn from the lower end of the middle category of the economy.

In October 2009, the public service had a total number of about 314 210 vacant posts which implies that about one post is vacant in five of all posts available. Table 1 highlights the number of filled and vacant posts in the public service as at October 2009 (PSC, 2009: 19).

Table 1: Number of posts filled and vacant in Public Service as at October 2009

Posts	**National**	**Provincial**	**Total**	**%**

	Departments	Departments		
Posts filled	300 673	869 371	1 170 044	79.0
Posts vacant	45 328	261 037	306 365	21.0
Total	346 001	1 130 408	1 476 409	
%	23.4	76.6	100	100

(Adapted from PSC, 2009)

Such statistics are of serious concern because the performance and accomplishment of government programmes relies on the availability of the required skills and capacity in order to deliver services to the people. One of the critical factors that contribute to the high vacancy rate is the shortage of these required skills in the market, particularly at levels 1-8. The PSC argues that one of the main reasons for not filling the posts in the public service is the scarcity of skills and the lack of skills development in this area.

The shortage of skills in the public service, as demonstrated above, is as a result of the lack of skills development. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa acknowledges the importance of skills development and therefore requires a public service whose management of human resources and career development is promoted in order to capitalise on human potential (RSA, 1996). The shortage of qualified and experienced officials (particularly at levels 1-8) of the South African public service has the potential of crippling the developmental plan of the state because these are at the coalface of service delivery and they determine the speed and quality of services rendered to the public.

Johnston (as cited in Qwabe & Pillay, 2009:25) argues that the skills shortage and capacity constraints within the public service have negative effects on two levels; firstly the ability to deliver the eminent and essential services to the citizens, and secondly, the management and coordination of policy making.

Undoubtedly, the success of the South African government in eradicating poverty and unemployment, and providing a sustainable and better life for all depends on a public service that is characterised by a highly skilled cadre of public servants. To this end, the

government has put in place a number of mechanisms to give effect to its developmental agenda. The Learnership Programme was introduced as one of government's interventions to address the problem of the skills shortage, both in the public and private sector.

3.3. POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND SUPPORTING THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME

The challenge of the skills deficit has been seriously acknowledged by the government and as such strides have been made to address this problem. Key to this has been the introduction of various pieces of legislation to give effect to skills development in the country. The following section provides the national policy framework for skills development with reference to the Learnership Programme. The policy framework is critical as it guides skills development in the country.

3.3.1 Skills Development Act (No 97 of 1998)

Central to the concept of skills development is the Skills Development Act of 1998 (RSA, 1998). The Skills Development Act (SDA) provides a framework within which institutions such as the National Skills Authority and the Sector Education and Training Authorities, as well as systems such as the National Skills Fund and Skills programmes, are created to improve the skills development of the South African workforce. The main objective of the SDA is to develop and improve the skills of the citizens of the country so that they can actively participate in the economy and improve their social and economic needs.

In particular, the SDA provides for the establishment of the Learnership Programme through the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). Furthermore, section 16 (a) (b) (c) of the SDA provides for the institutionalisation of the programme through the establishment of the Learnership Agreement which should be entered into by the learner, the employer and a training provider accredited by the South African Qualifications Authority (RSA, 1998).

The Learnership Agreement is important in committing all role players and ensuring that concrete outcomes in a form of a recognised qualification are achieved (Fraser-Moleketi, 2008).

It is through this Act that employers are expected to ensure that the workplace environment is able to provide work-related experience to the entrants, particularly those who have been previously disadvantaged with the aim of improving their opportunity of being part of the labour market. Whilst the education training providers/institutions are playing a huge role in transferring knowledge, the workplace contributes immensely to the transferring of skills through experiential learning (Fraser-Moleketi, 2008).

Various authors agree that the Act is central to addressing issues of skills enhancement in the country. The SDA has played an important role in establishing workplace strategies in order to improve skills of the South African society (Chelechele, 2009:47). Mercorio & Mercorio (undated: 4) agree that the legislation encourages all role players such as the state, learners, education training providers, employers and trade unions to work together in addressing skills shortage in the country.

In addition, chapter two of the SDA establishment of the National Skills Authority (NSA) has the aim of advising the Minister of Labour regarding matters of policy and strategy for the new skills development system (RSA,1998). It further provides guidance on the National Skills Development Strategy and how it should be implemented. The main role of the NSA is to be the middle coordinating structure in relation to the SETAs and it is in charge of the national skills fund.

The NSA provides for broader participation of various role players and comprises various stakeholders including organised business, labour, government, education and training providers, and community representatives, as well as representatives from the South African Qualification Authority. Such institutional mechanisms demonstrate the commitment of government in addressing issues of skills development and enhancement in the country.

3.3.2 Skills Development Levies Act (No 9 of 1999)

In terms of the Skills Development Levies Act, employers are expected to pay a skills development tax of one per cent of their wages bill.

The benefit to the employer is that they can claim this tax back if they train their employees. However, the public service is exempted from paying the tax (RSA, 1999). The purpose of the act is to incentivise employers to undertake skills development for their employees and also to provide support to the national skills development.

3.3.3 National Skills Development Strategy (2005)

The National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) was first established in 2001 for a period of five years to 2005, and during this period, the Minister of Labour, MMS Mdladlana, launched a revised strategy for the period 2005-2010. The primary purpose of the strategy is to ensure that there is sustainability in the development and growth of skills.

In addition, the strategy aims to ensure that the relevant institutions address issues of skills development and equity through aligning their resources and working towards skills demand for service delivery. The strategy is based on the principles that promote the development of skills which contribute towards employability, promotion of productive citizens, economic empowerment of the blacks including women, persons with disabilities and the youth, and inculcating a culture of life-long learning (DoL, 2005:2).

The concept of learnerships is central to the principles of the strategy. In particular, the strategy states that access to learning should be made available to learners through, for instance, the availability of learning material so that they effectively play a part in the skills development. The strategy further provides for learners with disabilities. As such, it states that learners with disabilities must be supported through the provision of facilities such as reasonable accommodation, and depending on the nature of their disability, assistive devices should be made available to enhance the learning process (DoL, 2005: 2).

The five objectives of the NSDS are as follows:

- Prioritising and communicating critical skills for sustainable growth, development and equity.

- Promoting and accelerating quality training for all in the workplace.

- Promoting employability and sustainable livelihoods through skills development.

- Assisting designated groups, including new entrants, to participate in accredited work.

- Integrated learning and work-based programmes to acquire critical skills to enter the labour market and self-employment.

- Improving the quality and relevance of provision (DoL, 2005).

In essence, the objectives of the strategy provide the 'how' of the SDA. In relation to the Learnership Programme, the strategy highlights the importance of providing quality training in the work place, and addressing equity issues to ensure that the previously marginal are afforded an opportunity to acquire the skills needed to enter the workforce and make a meaningful participation in the economy. The NSDS further acknowledges that poor skills, lack of productivity and poor wages are not sustainable and do not address governments' priority of reducing poverty. Such traits further impact negatively on the competitiveness of the economy and its capacity to positively contribute to the social development of its citizens.

3.4. GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS FOR LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME

The Learnership Programme is by its own nature a multi-stakeholder initiative (Babb & Meyer, 2005:5). To this end, it has both internal and external stakeholders. The internal stakeholders include the employer, mostly represented by the human resources and its

training function, line function managers, assessors, coaches and mentors, and the learners themselves.

On the other hand, external stakeholders include The Department of Labour, the Sector Education and Training Authority, potential learners in the labour market, and, in many cases, external training providers. Fester (2006: 34) argues that relationships between stakeholders (workplace, training provider, assessors and mentors) can be complex and role clarity needs to be addressed as early as possible.

It is in this area that many Learnership Programmes experience the most difficulties. Within an organisation, the governance, roles and responsibilities need to be clearly articulated and understood to facilitate the smooth and successful implementation of Learnership Programmes (Babb & Meyer 2005:6). The following highlights the roles undertaken by various stakeholders in the Learnership Programme.

3.5. THE ROLES OF THE INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

3.5.1 The human resource function

The human resources of any organisation are guided by its human resources (HR) plan. The plan involves determining the demand and supply of employees that are critical to achieving the strategic objectives, analysing gaps between demand and supply, and developing a plan that seeks to close the gap. In particular, the Public Service Commission's (PSC) HR plan is designed to enable the PSC to anticipate and manage the surplus and shortage of staff (PSC, 2007:4). It also ensures that the PSC develops a multi skilled, representative and flexible workforce in its six key performance areas which are:

- Labour relations improvement.

- Public administration investigations.

- Professional ethics and human resources reviews.

- Governance monitoring.

- Leadership performance improvement.

- Service delivery and quality improvement.

- Institutional building/support services (PSC, 2007:5).

The first five key performance areas are critical and core to the delivery of the mandate of the PSC, whilst the sixth is mainly about support services. In line with the workplace skills plan of the PSC, these competencies are considered critical to the PSC in order to enable it to perform efficiently and effectively to fulfil its mandate, mission and achieve its strategic objectives. In addition, the PSC Learnership Policy states that preference for the recruitment of the unemployed youth will be focused in the critical areas of the PSC where there is a clear skills demand to support strategic objectives of the organisation and its Employment Equity Plan (PSC 2006: 2). In essence, it means that priority to the recruitment of the learners will be given to those key performance areas of the organisation where there is a skills gap or a need to enhance skills in order to assist the organisation in meeting its mandate.

The human resources function in the organisation has an important role to play in the Learnership Programme. Besides providing the strategic human resource direction in terms of the key areas to be considered when embarking on the Learnership Programme, HR also has an operational role to play, as follows:

- Markets, administers, manages and coordinates the Learnership Programme between learner, the service provider and the employer.

- Sensitises members of staff and orientates the new learners.

- Reports to the Director-General, the responsible SETAs and other relevant departments on the progress, impact and challenges facing the Learnership Programme within the organisation.

- Aligns the Learnership Programme with the organisational human resource development plan/strategy.

- Ensures that all other Learnership requirements are met (PSC, 2006:3).

One other critical factor that affects the Learnership Programme is the provision of a suitable learning environment by employers, particularly the HR, to encourage the learning process. The PSC policy on learnerships states that staff members must be sensitised about the learners and that they must be properly orientated in their workplace (PSC, 2006:4). This also requires that proper infrastructure must be made available to ensure that proper learning takes place. The matter regarding the capacity of departments to host learners was identified by PSETA as a challenge that hampers the effective implementation of the programme (DPSA: 2008).

3.5.2 The line function managers

Line function managers play an important role in the skills acquisition and development of any organisation. They are better positioned to determine the skills required. The PSC in its research work argues that managers are often not trained in this activity and fail to comply with basic standards, and this in turn places the burden on HR (PSC, 2007:18). According to the PSC's Learnership Policy, the role of line function managers is described as to:

- Identify strategic areas upon which learnerships must focus.

- Provide mentorship throughout the learnership programme.

- Monitor progress and provide continuous feedback on the learner's performance to the Directorate: Human Resources Management and Development.

- Serve as the workplace assessors if they are registered and accredited by SAQA (PSC, 2006: 3).

Key amongst the roles of the line function managers is that they are supposed to play a critical role of identifying strategic areas upon which learnerships must focus to ensure that the right organisational skills gaps are addressed by the programme (PSC, 2006:2). Like many other government interventions, the Learnership Programme is faced with its own challenges which negatively affect the successful implementation thereof, particularly at an organisational level. For instance, according to the PSETA, the lack of support from senior managers hampers the successful implementation of the Learnership Programme (DPSA: 2008). O'Neil (2007:94) agrees that that strong top management support of any organisation is critical for any new intervention.

The selection of the learners that are suitable to participate in the programme is also a challenge raised by Babb & Meyer (2005:20). Learners selected for the programme must have the potential to succeed; however, these should still be the ones marginalised from the mainstream economy. To succeed at the Learnership Programme, potential learnership candidates should be tested, on their willingness to learn, work ethic, and attitude as these are important if South Africa wants to build a strong workforce that can compete with other countries in the world. Once organisations have identified a specific target of learners, it is critical that appropriate selection criteria are applied to recruit the learners, since the programme should focus on attracting the right learners and not just a particular number to be achieved (Davies & Farquharson, 2004:343). The sentiments on the proper recruitment requirements and employability of the learners are also echoed by PSETA which states that due to lack of transparent recruitment policies, the Learnership Programmes have often become vehicles for nepotism and corruption (DPSA, 2008).

The process of mentoring and coaching also play a very important role in any skills enhancement programme, including the Learnership Programme. Mentoring is the process that involves the mentor and the person to be mentored or developed (learner). In this

regard, the mentor recognises developmental needs and leadership potential in the learner. The mentors also provide support and continued counselling to ensure that learners do complete the programme.

Since mentors do not possess expertise on the subject, their role is clarified by Hattingh (2006:64) at that of supporting, advising and counselling them personally to complete the learning programme. In this regard, mentors could:

- Identify and follow-up where there are problems.

- Identify obstacles hampering learning (Hattingh, 2006:64).

In light of the importance of the mentoring process, the public service has developed its own mentorship programme which has been designed within the framework of other governmental skills development agendas such as the National Human Resource Development Strategy for the public service and other government interventions on skills development. The development of the mentorship programme moves from the premise that there is a need for skills transfer in the public service and that on-the- job learning in a non-authoritarian environment is critical. The key objectives of the public service's mentorship programme are to:

- Provide a powerful non-formal training vehicle for enhancing human capital in the public service.

- Provide a value-added experience to enhance formal learning programmes such as the Learnership Programme and experience-based programmes such as the Internship Programme.

- Improve and maximise the efficiency of employees in meeting government's strategic objectives.

- Speed up the implementation of the employment equity programme.

- Improve the quality and overall effectiveness of human resources development in the public service.

- Attract and retain scarce skills in the public service.

- Provide management with a tool to simultaneously monitor and improve the abilities of both individual new and young managers, and new cohorts of managers, in the public service.

- Accelerate and improving the induction/orientation of selected groups of new employees and reduce wastage in the early stages of employment (DPSA: 2006:7).

The public service mentorship programme further states that mentors should be trained in both theory and practice of mentoring in the public service to ensure that they are able to carry out their function effectively. One of the key targets of the mentorship programme in the public service is the learners who are registered for the Learnership Programme in the public service (DPSA, 2006: 7). Therefore the learners should benefit from the mentorship programme and this should enhance their learning.

To further ensure that there is consistency, the mentorship programme requires that there should be performance contracts entered into by the mentor and the mentee and such contracts should specify the expected deliverables. The PSC Learnership Policy also states that mentors have a role in providing a supportive environment for the learner, overseeing the training and mentoring of the learner, and conducting an ongoing monitoring and assessment in line with the performance agreement entered into with the learner (PSC, 2006:3).

On the other hand, coaches play a direct role in facilitating the learning process by providing content-specific expertise. They assist the learners to solve emerging problems and in the process develop capacity (Hattingh, 2006:63). In the context of implementing learnerships,

the PSETA states that departments perceive the role of mentoring and coaching as an *ad hoc* matter and therefore there is no commitment to it (DPSA, 2008). Hattingh (2006: 63) argues that it is the employer's responsibility to encourage and support the role of coaches as they play an important role in ensuring that there is quality and relevance in the Learnership Programme. Hattingh (2006: 63) highlights the following as critical to the coaches' contribution to the success of the Learnership programme:

- It is important that coaches study and understand the qualification that the learner is learning towards. They should also explore the particular requirements of the qualification in order to ensure that the relevant work-related activities are developed to enable the learner to acquire the required competencies.

- Coaches should be involved from planning to implementation to ensure that the two key principles of the programme, which are workplace learning and theoretical learning, are integrated.

- Coaches should design activities and demonstrate to learners how a particular task should be performed. They should clarify the different aspects of a task while showing it to the learners and expose the learners to undertake such tasks appropriately.

3.5.3 The learner

The learner, as the main beneficiary in the process, does also have a role to play. For instance, the PSC's Learnership Policy highlights the following as the role of the learner in the Learnership Programme:

- Enters into a formal learnership agreement with the employer and the accredited service provider.

- Familiarises herself/himself with the sector and the employers' policies, rules, regulations and protocols.

- Enters into a performance agreement with the respective mentor.

- Develops a portfolio of evidence.

- Demonstrates pro-activeness towards learning (PSC, 2006: 4).

3.6. THE ROLE OF THE EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

3.6.1 Sector Education and Training Authority

According to the Skills Development Act (SDA), employers, workers, and government departments that are working in a particular sector must come together and register with the Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) (RSA 1998). In March 2005, the Minister of Labour identified 25 SETAs and these have since been merged to 11. In the public service the responsible SETA is the PSETA. Like the other SETAs, the PSETA is mandated to carry the following functions in relation to the Learnerships as set out in the SDA:

- Establishment and registration of the Learning Programmes. In this regard, the PSETA develops learnerships and skills programmes and further develops learning frameworks and supports the development of learning material. They also review registered Learning Programmes in line with the registered qualification.

- Promoting and monitoring the implementation of Learning Programmes. The PSETA facilitates workplace readiness and builds partnerships with stakeholders for implementation of the Programme, nurtures partnerships with quality assurance bodies, fosters compliance during implementation of the Programme, and reports on learning investment / impact analysis.

- Manages learning agreements. In this regard, the PSETA assists in the conclusion and registration of learning agreements and develops learnerships conditions, facilitates induction sessions (workplace conditions/training provider policies/SETA role/learner role) and tracks learner performance (maintains learner records).

- Manages learner disputes. The PSETA ensures that they interpret the application of any provisions of the learnership agreement, contract of employment, and facilitation and assessment of learning.

- Reports accurately on the skills development investment and its impact in the sector. In this regard the PSETA compiles quarterly and annual reports, compiles records and conducts verifications, and develops learner files (RSA, 1998).

3.6.2 The education service providers

According to Fester (2006:36), the role of an education training provider is not limited to an institution or organisation and therefore such a role can be undertaken by companies, work-based training centres; in a collaboration amongst a range of partners (organisations, institutions, companies, tuition centres, recognition of prior learning (RPL) centres, assessment centres, trade testing centres, individuals, community structures); and even within some forms of consultancies.

According to the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), a training provider is responsible for ensuring that education and training is provided to the learner which complements the on-the-job learning in order to arrive at a recognised qualification (2001). A training provider is therefore required to be accredited and must have a quality management system, including quality management policies and procedures, which defines what the provider wishes to achieve (Fester, 2006:36). The provider's ability to achieve the desired outcomes, using available resources which the ETQA body considers necessary to deliver and evaluate learning programmes, is important. Such outcomes should culminate in specified registered standards or qualifications (SAQA, 2001). Specifically, the training provider should:

- Provide education and training to the learners.

- Sign a contract between the learners and the employer.

- Be accountable to the ETQA body for the management, development and delivery of education against the standard registered on the NQF.

- Record and report on the learner's achievements to the ETQA (PSC, 2006).

3.7. DEVELOPMENT OF A LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME

The implementation of the programme requires the SETAs to approve the Learnership Programme and forward them to the Department of Labour for registration. However, there are various critical steps prior to the approval of the Learnership by the SETAs. These include the identification of the skills shortages and/or opportunities within the employers' environment by the employer and the SETA.

In this regard, they have to describe the occupation, together with the required skills and knowledge required for the successful completion of the occupation. After generating such information, it is then forwarded to the relevant Standards Generating Body (SGB). The SGB is a statutory body responsible for the registration and quality assurance of all standards and qualifications aligned with the National Qualifications Framework. The SGB will then form work group which consist of employers, providers, employee representatives and interested parties.

The SGB then analyses the occupation and identifies the outcomes and stages of the occupation. The outcomes and stages are then clustered so that unit standards can be developed. According to the SAQA Act, a unit standard is a registered statement of desired education and training outcomes (RSA, 1995). Simpson (2006:28) describes a unit standard as a collection of knowledge, skills, attributes in which a candidate must prove competence to gain credit on the National Qualification Framework. The unit standards are then

clustered into a logical format for the qualification. Guideline learning materials and assessment guides are then developed by the SETA for each of the unit standards.

According to SAQA, the following components (credits) of learning are identified as critical for the attainment of the competencies needed for the country's workforce and the economy to compete meaningfully in the global arena:

Fundamental learning: These are deemed as essential and basic to learning towards all qualifications. At a primary level, they include basic mathematics and language; at an elementary level they include skills such as communication, teamwork and self-management.

Core learning: This refers to those areas of contextual knowledge that are necessary for specialised work to be effective such as an introduction to social development, the workings of the labour market, entrepreneurships or industrial issues including health as safety.

Elective learning: This pertains to the theoretical knowledge which underpins the application in the area of specification. Structured practical components, in a workshop or simulated workplace, may also be included (but may not replace work experience). This learning can take place in an institution such as a technical college, at an accredited NGO, private or company training centre, through technologically enhanced sites, or at combination of these.

Work experience: This needs to be related to the structured learning and prepares the learner for a competence assessment. It may take place at a single workplace, or be spread across several work sites.

3.8. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME

The literature shows that in order to successfully implement the Learnership Programme, a particular process and steps should be followed. For instance, Hattingh, de Jager & Huster (2002) provide a guide entailing a proposed process of implementing a Learnership

Programme, with practical recommended steps to be undertaken by employers and training providers. The following sub-sections highlight the brief overview of the key steps involved in a Learnership Programme, as outlined by Hattingh, de Jager & Huster (2002: 8):

- Establishing a learnership management committee.
- Establishing implementation partnerships.
- Curriculum development.
- Development of learning programme.
- Recruitment of the learners.
- Implementation of a learning programme, assessment of learners, and support to learners.
- Evaluating the impact of the programme.

3.9. ESTABLISHING A LEARNERSHIP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Firstly, Hattingh, de Jager & Huster (2002:8) propose that a learnership management committee be established, comprising key role players, namely, the employer or representative thereof, the training provider and the relevant SETA. The main purpose of establishing a learnership management committee is to ensure that they arrive at a project plan for the programme, determine the required budget, reach a consensus on activities to be undertaken during the implementation, and develop a communication strategy (2002:8). This suggest that at this stage the employer would be clear about the learning areas or gaps of learning within the organisation to be addressed thorough the Learnership Programme, hence bringing the training provider right at the fore of the process.

3.10. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to the establishment of the learnership management committee, Hattingh, de Jager & Huster (2002: 9) argue that the committee should take it upon itself to select partners within the organisation who would assist in the implementation of the programme. These potential partners would act as change agents, or champions, that would assist in ensuring that workplace or organisational learning is well facilitated and that the assessment of the learners and the overall programme is undertaken. In this regard, the implementation partners would execute activities of the programme, such as (Jager & Huster, 2002: 9):

- Coordinate the recruitment and selection process of the learners.
- Assist with and coordinate the administrative activities of the programme.
- Ensure the development of a curriculum.
- Ensure the development of learning material.
- Assist with the development of processes and procedures for quality management.
- Ensure that capacity of the mentors, coaches and assessors is built.

3.11. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

In any formal learning setting, it is critical that a curriculum is developed to shape the learning process. In this regard, the curriculum should be developed from the desired qualification and unit standards. A unit standard is a registered statement of desired education and training outcome (RSA, 1995). Therefore, the curriculum provides meaning to the unit standard, as on their own, unit standards cannot be used as the curriculum since they outline what is to be accomplished as opposed to how they are to be accomplished.

Hattingh, de Jager & Huster (2002:10) further argue that this step may be a prerequisite for registering the Learnership Programme with the relevant SETA. Key to the curriculum development is that it should ensure that outcomes of the qualification and unit standards are achieved in an integrated manner.

3.12. DEVELOPMENT OF A LEARNING PROGRAMME

Once a curriculum is developed, it is used to inform the development of learning materials. Learning materials serve as practical tools to be used to deliver the curriculum, and it is thus recommended that this process should involve the training provider and all officials that are to participate in the programme such as the facilitators, mentors, coaches and assessors (Hattingh, de Jager & Huster, 2002:11). Key to the Learning Programme is the practical way in which learning and assessment will be undertaken, and therefore it is critical that the learning programme includes the following:

- The order and flow of the topics coved in the programme.
- The time put aside for each subject.
- The schedule for the learning and assessment activities.
- The total period of the learning programme.
- The development of capacity to facilitate and assess learning (Hattingh, de Jager & Huster, 2002:11).

Institutional capacity to ensure that learning is facilitated and the assessment thereof is critical in the implementation of the Learnership Programme. This process gives meaning to the existing curriculum and the learning materials. It is only when capacity is built to facilitate the Programme that such outputs will be subjected to test. Hattingh, de Jager and Huster (2002:12) suggest that the roles of the learning facilitators, coaches, mentors and assessors

and their duties and responsibilities need to be clearly articulated. In addition, requirements that would determine the successful implementation of the programme such as physical facilities, human and financial and information technology resources must be acquired (Hattingh, de Jager & Huster, 2002:12).

3.13. RECRUITMENT OF THE LEARNERS

Once all organisational requirements have been met, such as bringing the service provider on board, developing the curriculum, developing learning materials, building capacity to facilitate the learning, and ensuring that all other necessary resources are available to facilitate smooth learning, Hattingh, de Jager & Huster (2002:16) suggest that learners may then be brought on board.

In the process of recruiting and selecting the learners, it is critical that the organisation is clear about the number of learners it can accommodate and the areas of learning that will take place. These would, to a great extent, be informed by the above-mentioned processes. Furthermore, Hattingh, de Jager & Huster (2002: 16) suggest that normal recruitment procedures, such as head hunting and advertising, should be followed, and once the learners are recruited, they are inducted to the curriculum, learning programme assessments and the available support structures. This step is to ensure that learnership agreements are therefore entered into and submitted to the SETA. In addition, information pertaining to the outcomes to be achieved by the learners is filed and individual learning programmes aimed at achieving such outcomes are then drawn up.

3.14. IMPLEMENTING THE LEARNING PROGRAMME, ASSESSMENT OF THE LEARNERS AND PROVISION OF SUPPORT TO THE LEARNERS

The implementation of the Learnership Programme provides an opportunity to lay down practical expectations about the learning path ahead. During this period, all role players such as the education training provider, mentors and coaches, are expected to be ready to undertake their activities in a coordinated manner. Hattingh, de Jager and Huster (2002:17)

state that during implementation of the programme, the theoretical and the workplace leaning should be conducted according to the Learning Programme and curriculum.

Stuart (2008:211) agrees that learning schedules that have been developed in the learning strategy should be adhered to and that modification should only be effected where necessary. He further stresses the organisational responsibility of ensuring that both the theoretical and practical components of the programme are implemented effectively (Stuart, 2008: 211).

Assessments are critical in establishing whether the learners are competent, thus they (i.e. the learners) know what they have learnt and they can practically demonstrate it. Assessments can either be formative or summative.

Formative assessments are conducted during the course of the programme and are meant to assist in further guiding the learning process, whilst summative assessments are conducted at the end of the programme to determine if the learner is eligible to receive credit for the learning (Stuart, 2008:112). Hattingh, de Jager and Huster (2002:17) state that it is critical to ensure that learners are prepared for assessments and that they are assisted in compiling a portfolio of evidence throughout the learning process. Furthermore, during assessments, it is important that feedback is provided to the learners on their development and accomplishments, and where necessary, remedial action needs to be taken to address the developmental needs of the learners (Hattingh, de Jager & Huster, 2002: 17).

Provision of support to the learners is equally critical during the implementation of the Programme and it should be both theoretical and practical. Stuart (2008:113) argues that the Learnership Programme should provide a learning environment that tests the learning ability of the learners while ensuring that they are comfortable in asking questions and seeking clarity in order to learn from their mistakes (Stuart, 2008:113). Furthermore, learners should be exposed to a high quality learning environment that meets the requirements of the unit standards (Stuart, 2008:113).

3.15. EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

The aim of evaluating the Programme is to establish its impact and to make recommendations for future implementation. Posavac and Carey (2007:14) state that programme evaluation contributes to the provision of quality services though the feedback from its activities and outcomes to stakeholders who can either modify the Programme or choose which services are to be provided.

Stuart (2008: 212) states that evaluation of a Learnership Programme should be at two levels; the programme impact and the organisational impact. In this regard, on the programme impact, the evaluation should establish if the Learning Programme was sound; whether it achieved its purpose; and whether knowledge, behaviour and attitude change was achieved as a result of the programme (Stuart, 2008:113). On the business level, Stuart (2008: 113) argues that the evaluation should seek to determine if there has been s business impact as a result of the evaluation, whether evidence can be produced to substantiate that there has been skills transfer, and whether the benefit of implementing the Programme outweighs the cost.

Hattingh, de Jager and Huster (2002: 18) are of the view that evaluation of the Learnership Programme should focus on the impact of the Programme, with particular reference to improving organisational performance and the employability of the learners. Furthermore, issues such as the suitability of the curriculum design, Learning Programme, and the facilitation and assessment process should be reflected in the feedback from the evaluation (Hattingh, de Jager & Huster, 2002:18).

3.16. CONCLUSION

Policy guidelines and legislative frameworks are important in assisting government to translate the political vision into programmes or projects in order to achieve the desired outcomes. In this regard, this chapter has demonstrated government's commitment to supporting skills development through the Learnership Programme. This is shown in the policy and legislative frameworks, as well as the governing mechanisms that have been put in place to support the Learnership Programme. Furthermore, the chapter provided insight into the development and implementation processes of the Programme.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 presents a brief overview of the theory of research and the research design applied in the study. The chapter further highlights the research methodology, including the sampling and data collection methods. In conclusion, the chapter demonstrates how the data were analysed.

4.2. THEORY OF RESEARCH

Before elaborating on the research design applied in the study, it is critical to understand the aim and purpose of conducting research as this has an impact on the type of research design and methodology to be selected. In this regard, various authors, including Brynard and Hanekom (2006:8), Mouton (2001:54) and Welman *et al*. (2005:22) have identified a combination of various purposes of social science research, namely, exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, predictive, historical, correlational, participatory, action, evaluation, analytical and experimental research. The researcher has also learnt that whilst in some instances these above-mentioned concepts have been used individually to describe a particular research purpose, in other instances such concepts have been used in combination. For instance, Brynard and Hanekom (2006:8) have used the analytical and explanatory research methods in combination to examine and elucidate on why or how something is happening.

After a careful consideration of the various research purposes mentioned above, the researcher came to the conclusion that this study comprises evaluation research with a focus on implementation evaluation. According to Brynard (2006: 6), an evaluation research method refers to a research case where a particular intervention or programme has been applied and therefore the research identifies the shortcomings or usefulness of a programme.

Mouton (2001:158) also concurs that implementation evaluation focuses on whether an intervention (programme, therapy, policy or strategy) has been properly implemented and whether such intervention was implemented as designed. Ba Tall (2007:10) further states that evaluation research is gaining a reputation around the globe as it is perceived to have the potential to give answers to continuing questions such as how to make policies work better, what interventions work better, what interventions lead to success, and how success can be recognised, sustained and duplicated. Evaluation research is also perceived to answer questions about a programme's activities and offers insights into a programme's implementation and management (Fink, 2005:5).

4.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is described by Mouton (2001:55) as a plan or blueprint which addresses questions relating to the kind of study that is to be undertaken. Yang and Miller (2008:75) argue that research design denotes a process aimed at facilitating the building of a sound argument. In this instance, an argument is a rational and coherent case that marshals both facts and reasons why the facts support some claim or point. Therefore a substantive argument is one that supports its claim in such a manner that even to a hesitant and well informed audience, given the resources available for gathering data and analysing the facts, such facts continue to support the claim (Yang & Miller, 2008:75).

According to Yang and Miller (2008:75), the significance of a research design is two-fold; firstly, the quality of the design will determine the quality of the output, and, secondly, by restraining the research to a certain grouping of particular hypothesis, structures, research questions, evidence, methods of drawing inferences from evidence and audience, the research design determines what arguments can and cannot persuasively be made, and what uses can and cannot rationally be made of the research findings.

Therefore choosing a particular research design serves as the first step to determining what is to be researched and how the researcher intends to arrive at the end product. In order to ensure that the research problem of this study was well tackled, an empirical research design with a focus on an evaluation research was followed since the study focused on how the PSC has performed in the implementation of a Learnership Programme.

According to Punch (2009:2), empiricism is a theoretical phrase to explain an epistemological premise that regards experience as key and underpinning the source of knowledge, and such experience is attributed to what is received through the senses. In essence, conducting an empirical study denotes that knowledge will be acquired through the direct trial or examination of the world. Therefore, answers brought about by an empirical research are obtainable through direct and observable information from the world, rather than by theorising or reasoning (Punch, 2009:2).

The researcher relied on both primary or new data and secondary data collected during the period of the study. The nature of the data collected was textual, as opposed to numerical, and the degree of control was a natural setting, as opposed to a highly structured condition. The choice of the research design was largely guided by the nature of the study, the type of data that was to be collected, and how the researcher intended to use the data to arrive at some point or claim.

4.4. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

The research problem and available data determine whether the research approach will be will be quantitative or qualitative. For instance, in a quantitative research, there is a representative sample of the population, and statistical calculations are used for analysing and interpreting the results. On the other hand, a qualitative research approach focuses on a few respondents with the aim of understanding a phenomenon. In this regard, words are utilised to analyse and interpret the results. Therefore, this study in particular has adopted the qualitative approach which is more suitable given the nature of data to be collected.

Denzin and Lincoln (as cited in Yany & Miller, 2008:141) define qualitative research as a situated activity that locates the observer in the world, where the researcher is attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them in a natural setting. According to Brynard and Hanekom (2006:37), a qualitative approach to research provides descriptive data which is drawn from the respondents' written or spoken contribution, based on their perception or experience. Mouton (2001:107) concurs that in a qualitative study, it is critical for the researchers to keep field notes to be used during data analysis.

The motivation for applying a qualitative approach is because explanations, reflections and interpretations of respondents would provide a basis for understanding and discovering the underlying meanings of a setting. It is against this backdrop that a qualitative approach was adopted in conducting this study because it was deemed suitable for the type of investigation to be undertaken in evaluating the implementation of the Learnership Programme within the PSC. In essence, qualitative research provides an in-depth understanding of people's experiences, perspectives and/or histories in the context of their personal circumstances or settings. In addition, a qualitative approach provides an understanding of the society and meaning that people attach to life.

According to Henning in Fester (2006: 48), qualitative research is used for a range of purposes, including identifying the factors that contribute to successful or unsuccessful delivery, identifying outcomes and how they occur, examining the nature of the requirements of different groups within the target population, exploring context in which policies operate, and exploring organisational aspects of delivery. Morse (as cited in Yang &Miller, 2008:149) further provides four cognitive processes that are involved in the stages of qualitative research:

Comprehending: This means studying everything about a setting or the experience of participants. This step is not complete until the researcher has enough data to be able to write a complete, coherent, detailed and rich description. When overlaid on the concrete research design, this step parallels data gathering.

Synthesising: This is the emerging of several stories, experiences, or cases to describe a typical or composite pattern of behaviour or response.

Theorising: This is the process of constructing alternative explanations and of holding these against the data until a 'best fit' that explains the data most simply is obtained. In a

research design, this will be the phase of laying down the end result of the research connecting specific phenomena in the study.

Re-contextualisation: This is the development of emerging theory so that the theory is applicable to other settings and to other populations to whom the research may be applied. The step generalises the results of particular research in abstract terms.

4.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Mouton (2001:56), research methodology is described as a subject of the research process and the kind of tools and procedure to be used in data collection. This includes the sampling and data collection methods. The following section highlights the sampling techniques applied, as well as the data collection methods.

4.5.1 Sampling

Brynard and Hanekom (2006:54) define sampling as a technique employed to select a small group with a view of determining the characteristics of a large group. Thus, if selected appropriately, the sample will display the same characteristics or properties as the large group. In essence, a sample is used to simplify the research by studying the small group instead of the entire population. This saves time and costs, as studying the entire population could be time consuming and expensive, whereas the data required could be extracted from a sample. Welman *at al.* (2005: 56) identify two major types of sampling, namely, probability samples and non-probability sampling.

Probability sampling includes, for instance, random, systematic and cluster samples, while non-probability sampling includes, for instance, quota, purposive, snowball and self-selection samples (Yang & Miller, 2008:132). For the purpose of this study, a non-probability sample was applied with a focus on the purposive sampling. The main respondents in the study were the learners and the Learnership Coordinator at the PSC, and therefore a purposive sampling was chosen as it assisted in eliminating people who do not fit within this requirement. The Learnership Coordinator and a sample of 10 learners were targeted as they have particular knowledge and experience which enables a detailed exploration of the research objectives.

4.5.2 Data collection methods

Marshall and Rossman (as cited in Yany & Miller, 2008:156) identified 15 techniques of qualitative data collection and analysis, namely, participants observation, interviewing, ethnographic interviewing, elite interviewing, focus group interviewing, document review, narratives, life history, historical analysis, films, questionnaire, proxemics, kinesics, psychological techniques and unobstructive measures. The above-mentioned techniques are broadly grouped into three categories, namely, observation, interviewing and documentary analysis. In this study, secondary data was collected through document review (discussed in Chapter 2 and 3) and primary data was collected through interviews.

4.5.2.1 Secondary data

The secondary data was mainly developed from books, various journals and internet articles. The data was organised and presented in Chapter two as literature review. Furthermore, the researcher provided a contextual background as part of secondary data in Chapter three. This was mainly informed by the legislative framework. In addition, documents such as the PSC's Learnership policy and the PSC's Human Resources Plan and various PSC research reports were used in the compilation of the secondary data of this study.

4.5.2.2 Primary data

The primary data was developed through interviews as a data collection method. Interviews are the commonly used methods of collecting data in qualitative research, and in this case they were the main source of collecting primary data. The face-to-face interview approach was applied as it helps the researcher to retrieve more data from the participants. Semi structured interviews were applied to gain access to the viewpoint of individuals being interviewed in order to uncover what cannot be directly observed, such as thoughts, emotions and intentions. Since it is not possible to observe the meanings that individuals attach to events and situations in the world, it was necessary to enquire by questioning how the individual feels, and how they think.

The researcher first conducted an interview with the PSC Learnership Coordinator following which a focus group session was held with the learners. In this regard, a 100% response rate was achieved as the researcher managed to interview the Learnership Coordinator and all the 10 learners currently placed at the PSC. A set of questionnaires were designed and used to guide the interview process, both with the Learnership Coordinator and the focus group session with the learners **(see Appendices A and B).** The questionnaires contained a few open-ended questions that encouraged dialogue, rather than dictating the course of the interview. The questionnaires were developed into themes which focused on the recruitment and selection processes of the learners, the support offered to the learners, the availability of institutional resources and a conducive learning environment as well as efforts aimed at achieving the objectives of the programme. Participants were therefore able to enlighten the researcher about actual experiences, and the interviews produced a comprehensive and detailed data which addressed the objectives of the study, namely:

Objective One: To assess the recruitment and selection processes of the learners in determining their placements against the relevant practical experience to be acquired at the PSC and the intended qualification to be obtained.

Objective Two: To establish the kind of support offered to the learners in the form of coaching and mentoring to be able to successfully complete the programme.

Objective Three: To establish the availability of institutional and other requirements to ensure that Learnership Programme requirements are met.

Objective Four: To determine if the Learnership Programme is achieving its intended objective of providing opportunities for the learners to acquire both experiential learning and a formal qualification.

Objective Five: To determine if the Learnership Programme has afforded the learners an opportunity to acquire skills to enable them to be employed.

Prior to the focus group session with the learners, a request was made to the Learnership Coordinator in order to obtain permission to interview the learners. Permission was granted on condition that such interviews did not interfere with the learning programme. Learners were addressed and informed about the research. Dates were also scheduled for both the interview with the Learnership Coordinator and the focus group session with the learners. Both the interview and the focus group session started with an introduction of the topic and the overview of the purpose of the research. In this case participants were provided an opportunity of understanding the activity and to decide if they were still interested in participating.

Participants were assured about the voluntarily principle of participating in the study and that their identities would remain anonymous. Through the focus group session, the researcher was able to solicit the views, perceptions and attitudes of the learners towards the Learnership Programme. It further provided an opportunity for an interactive session with the learners about their opinions regarding the Learnership Programme.

4.6. DATA ANALYSIS

The following section presents the primary data. The data was coded, arranged into categories, and themes were identified as they emerged. Themes also emanated from the research questions. Major themes and sub-themes were identified and sub-themes were summarised under the major themes, which will be discussed in detail the next chapters. The following primary data is organised according to the objectives of the study which was collected through the interview and the focus group session.

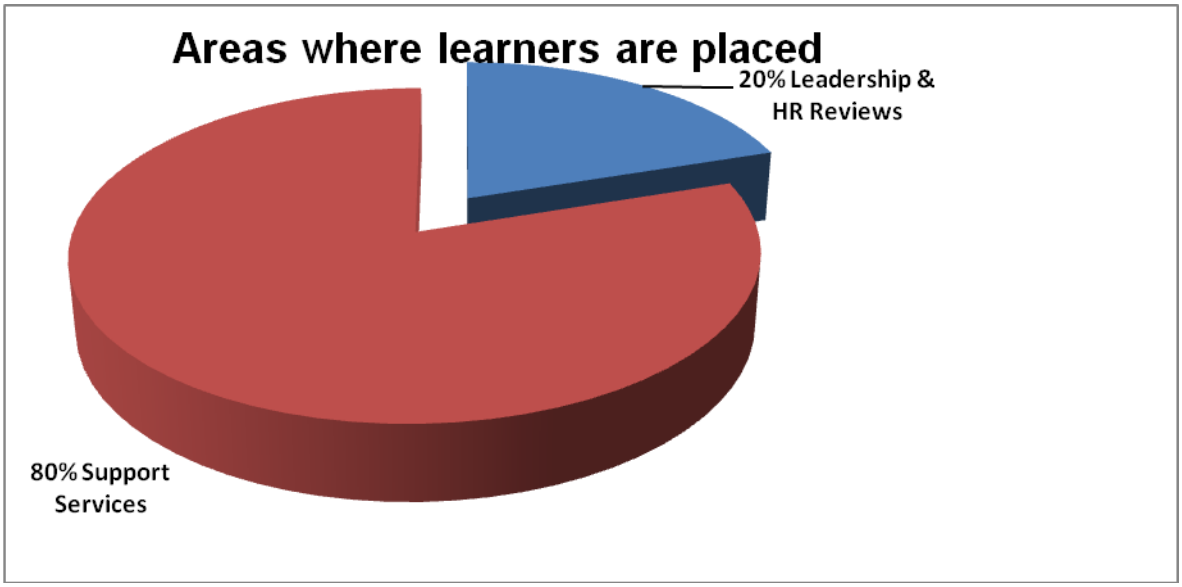
Objective One: To assess the recruitment and selection processes of the learners in determining their placements against the relevant practical experience to be acquired at the PSC and the intended qualification to be obtained.

4.6.1 Interview results with the Learnership Coordinator

The Learnership Coordinator mentioned that the PSC follows the normal recruitment process to attract learners into the organisation which includes the placement of an advert in the newspapers. In this regard, a short list of candidates is drawn up, and only successful candidates are appointed to the Programme. The Learnership Coordinator further mentioned that the PSC's adverts are normally generic and do not include the requirements of specific personal attributes to ensure that the right candidates are appointed and that such candidates would be able to close the organisational skills gap. Furthermore, the advert does not indicate the unit where the learner would be place within the organisation. It is only after the recruitment is finalised that learners are allocated to managers who are interested in accommodating learners within their units.

The Learnership coordinator confirmed that the recruitment of the learners is solely conducted by the officials at the Corporate Services, without involving officials from line function, especially where the learners would be placed at a line function units. The Learnership Coordinator mentioned that in terms of the allocation of the learners within the organisation, eight of them are placed within the Institution Building/Cooperate Services whereas only 2 of them are placed at line function, specifically at the Leadership and Human Resource Reviews. Figure 3 below shows the placement of the learners within the organisation:

Figure 3: Areas where learners are placed within the PSC



The Learnership Coordinator mentioned that the reason for non-placement of the learners in other units of the organisations such as the Labour Relations Improvement, Public Administration Investigations, Professional Ethics, Governance Monitoring and Service Delivery and Compliance Evaluations is due to the lack of buy-in of managers within these sections to accommodate the learners.

4.6.2 Results of the focus group session with the learners

The learners confirmed that indeed they applied to be placed within the Learnership Programme and that due processes of recruitment such as interviews were followed. Furthermore, 100% of the learners informed the researcher that they were inducted into the organisation and how the learnership programme operates. In addition, the mentioned that they have entered into learnership agreements with the PSC.

Objective Two: To establish the kind of support offered to the learners in the form of coaching and mentoring to be able to successfully complete the programme.

4.6.3 Interview results with the Leanership Coordinator

The Learnership Coordinator mentioned that learners are being guided by the managers under which the learners are placed to ensure that they are exposed to relevant activities furthermore the learners are monitored and guided by the mangers in performing their duties. However, the Leanership Coordinator agreed that the PSC does not have mechanism/system (monitoring tool) that assists in determining if learners are indeed exposed to the relevant practical areas that they are supposed to learn about, and that such areas complement the theoretical learning.

Furthermore, the Learnership coordinator informed the researcher that the learners have been allocated mentors. Mentors were identified, inducted into the Learnership Programme and trained on how to mentor the learners. In addition the researched was informed that the learners work under the guidance of the mentors on a day-to-day basis in performing their required activities. When asked about the availability of coaches and their role, the Learnership Coordinator mentioned that there were no coaches at the PSC assigned to the learners.

4.6.4 Results of the focus group session with the learners

The researcher established during the focus group session that mentorship contracts, which are supposed to be signed by the mentor and the mentee, were in place; however, these have not been entered into by the mentor and the mentee (learner). Despite the fact that mentorship contracts have not been entered into, 100% of the learners informed the researcher that they do get support from their mentors. However, when asked about support from their coaches, the all seemed to be confused as they did not know the difference between mentors and coaches.

Objective Three: To establish the availability of institutional and other requirements to ensure that Learnership Programme requirements are met.

4.6.5 Interview results with the Learnership Coordinator

The Learnership Coordinator informed the researcher that there is commitment from the PSC to support the Learnership Programme. However, there were no sufficient human resources to support the programme. As a result, the Learnership coordinator mentioned that whilst she is responsible for the Learnership Programme, she was also responsible for the key functions of Human Resources Development and Performance Management of the organisation, thus leaving her with minimal time to attend to the activities of the Learnership Programme.

The Learnership Coordinator further mentioned that due to the lack of a proper project plan, and resources to ensure the implementation of such plan, the programme could not be completed during the first twelve month of 2008 as required. This necessitated the renewal of the learnership contracts with the PSC during 2009. In 2009, the same trend continued where the learnership period expired without the appointment of a training provider. Again, this necessitated a second renewal of the learnership contracts. The third contracts of the current intake of learners were signed in February 2010, and are due to expire at the end of March 2011, with the service providers being appointed in May and June 2010 respectively. The Learnership Coordinator mentioned that theoretical learning by the service provider only commenced in August 2010

4.6.6 Results of the focus group session with the learners

During the focus group session with the learners, it emerged that there were learners who left the programme since 2008 intake and were replaced by new ones. Reasons for their departure were not known. Furthermore learners that are still part of the Programme, and who were admitted to the programme in both 2008 and 2009 expressed a lot of frustration at the lack of progress and the continuous renewal of their contracts. Some of them expressed that the situation has hampered opportunities for them to acquire skills and enable them to be employed. They further mentioned that they remained with the programme as they have limited options through which they could acquire skills.

One hundred percent (100%) of the learners were however happy that they have been allocated resources such as computers to communicate and also do their work. During the focus group session, the visually impaired learners and those with physical challenges mentioned that their specific needs in terms of, for instance, a television reader, magnifying glass, as well as easy access to bathrooms have been taken into account and provided.

Objective Four: To determine if the Learnership Programme is achieving its intended objective of providing opportunities for the learners to acquire both experiential learning and a formal qualification.

4.6.7 Interview results with the Learnership Coordinator

The Learnership Coordinator informed the researcher that the learners were benefiting from the programme, both from the organisational learning and the theoretical learning. According to the Learnership coordinator, this was based on the fact that learners were participating in work activities and they were enrolled for the theoretical learning.

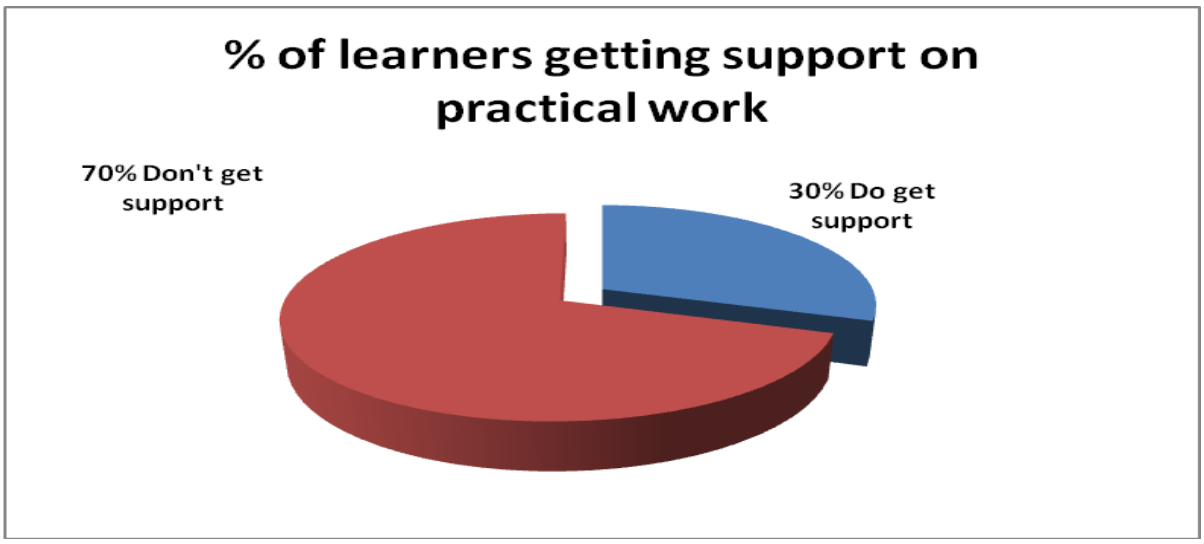
4.6.8 Results of the focus group session with the learners

During engagement with the learners, they informed the researcher that they were frustrated and that since joining the programme, they have probably been assigned only three tasks to perform, whilst they spent the majority of time doing nothing. Learners were of the view that exposure to organisational learning was very minimal and therefore they used their own initiative to look for work or tasks they could perform as it was difficult to be assigned duties.

Discussions with the learners further revealed that officials were very impatient with the learners who took time to understand the practical work, as a result they were ignored, and the focus would be on those who showed better performance the first time around. Furthermore, officials were seen to be more comfortable with certain learners as they would constantly assign work to them. In cases where some learners were seen to be battling, no time was spent with them to assist them in their tasks. Learners with visual challenges also mentioned that they were often overlooked, particularly since they would take longer to

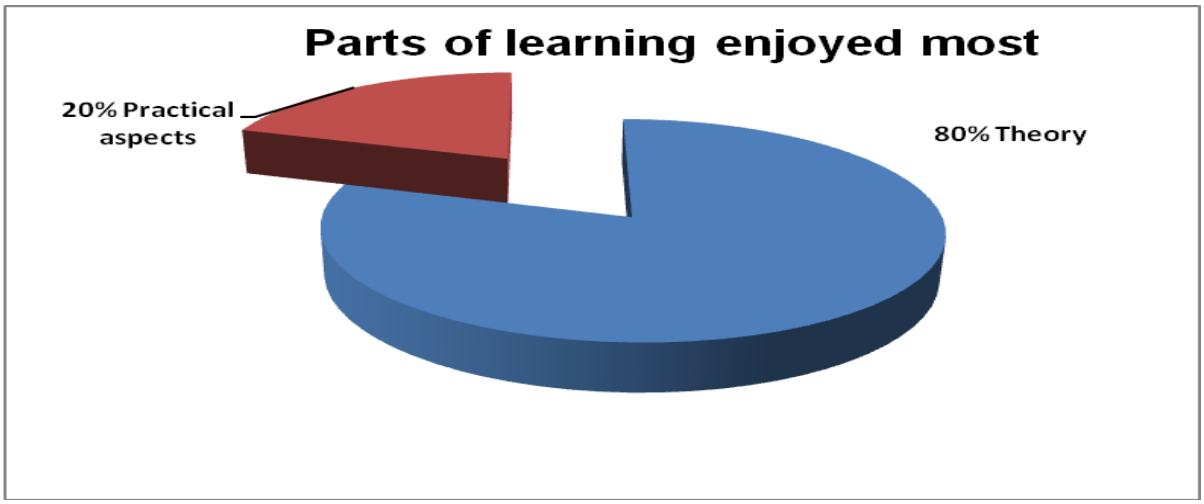
complete tasks. Figure 4 shows the percentage of learners receiving support on their practical work.

Figure 4: Percentage of learners receiving support on practical work



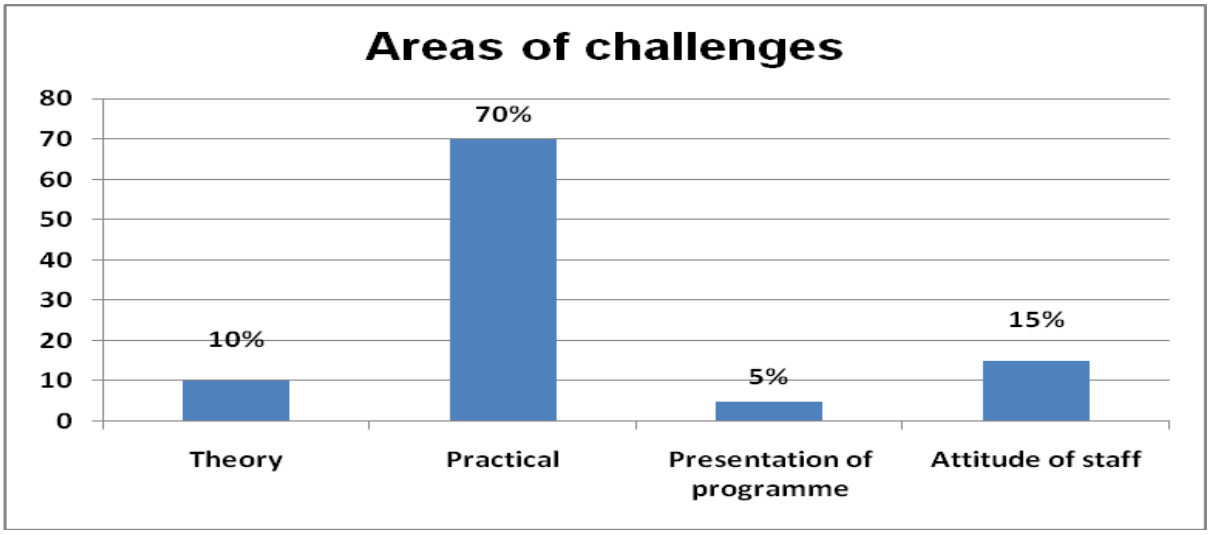
With regards to the theoretical learning, the learners mentioned that since the appointment of the education training providers they have attended one learning session and have been assigned tasks. They further mentioned that they were excited about the theoretical learning as they could receive feedback about their performance. Figure 5 shows the rating on the parts of learning enjoyed most by the learners.

Figure 5: Parts of learning enjoyed most by the learners



When asked about the area of learning they enjoyed most, i.e. organisational or theoretical learning, the learners mentioned that they enjoyed the theoretical learning as it was easy to deal with assignments, unlike the organisational learning where the learning was minimal. Figure 6 shows overall the views of the learners with regards to where challenges were experienced with the programme, with practical learning as the most challenging area of learning (70%), followed by the attitudes of staff at 15%, theoretical learning at 10% and the presentation of the programme at 5%.

Figure 6: Areas of challenges with the Learning Programme



In general, all learners were of the view that the PSC is prioritising the internship programme as opposed to the Learnership Programme, with most interns being advanced in terms of learning and involvement in the organisational work. Most of the learners were also of the view that the benefit of the Learning Programme was not enough, that they were not taken seriously, and that they were attached to the PSC Learnership Programme because they did not have other means to acquire skills.

Objective Five: To determine if the Learnership Programme has afforded the learners an opportunity to acquire skills to enable them to be employed.

4.6.9 Interview results with the Learnership Coordinator

According to the Learnership Coordinator, since 2008 the Learnership Programme has not awarded any qualification and experiential learning that has enabled any of the learners to complete the programme and as a result, none of the learners have secured employment. According to the Department of Labour, a Learnership Programme should run for a period of 12 months with the hope that the learners would acquire skills (through the organisational and theoretical learning) which would culminate in a qualification and improve their chances of employment (DoL, 2001).

4.7. CONCLUSION

Chapter 3 has shown how research was undertaken. Key to this chapter is the understanding of the theory of research, the research design implemented in the study, and the research methodology which included the sampling and data collection methods. The chapter also provided insight into the primary data that was collected. Through the application of the above-mentioned research methodology, the researcher was able to arrive at the findings of the study. The findings of the study are discussed in detail in the following Chapter with further analysis.

CHAPTER 5. FINDINGS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. The chapter commences with the contextual background of the institution, namely, the Public Service Commission (PSC), its mandate and role in government, the PSC's key areas of work, and the need to build skills around these areas in order to enable it to achieve its mandate. Furthermore, the chapter provides some insight into the PSC Learnership Programme from the researcher's knowledge of the Programme and continues to presents the findings of the study.

The findings are presented according to themes; namely, structures supporting the Learnership Programme, recruitment of the learners, support offered to the learners, availability of resources, acquiring of skills through the Programme, and overall assessment of the Programme. All the above-mentioned themes were used to guide the researcher in addressing the objectives of the study.

5.2. THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa acknowledges the democratic principle of subjecting government structures to checks and balances (RSA, 1996). The purpose thereof is to ensure that, amongst others, there is accountable, competent, open and efficient public administration. To this end, the Constitution provides for the establishment of an array of democracy-supporting institutions (RSA, 1996). The key objective of these institutions is to reinforce Constitutional democracy.

These institutions are established according to Chapter 9 of the Constitution and are expected to exercise their powers and functions without fear and favour (RSA, 1996). According to the Constitution, these institutions are independent and accountable to the National Assembly (RSA, 1996). In addition, Chapter 10 of the Constitution specifically provides for the establishment of the Public Service Commission (PSC) (RSA, 1996).

Whilst it is the only institution established within Chapter 10 (of the Constitution) which focuses on Public Administration, its independence and status is the same as that of the Chapter 9 institutions (RSA, 1996).

The PSC derives its mandate from Sections 195 and 196 of the Constitution, which is to improve public administration (RSA, 1996). In particular, the PSC's mandate is to contribute towards maintaining an effective and efficient public administration that is able to deliver services and provide a better life for all South African citizens (RSA, 1996).

- The powers and function of the PSC as outlined in the Constitution are to:

- Promote the constitutionally prescribed values and principles governing public administration in the public service.

- Investigate, monitor and evaluate the organisation and administration, and the personnel practices of the public service.

- Propose measures to ensure effective and efficient performance within the public service.

- Give direction aimed at ensuring that personnel procedures relating to recruitment, transfers promotions and dismissals comply with the constitutionally prescribed values and principles.

- Report in respect of its activities and the performance of its functions, including any findings it may make and directions and advice it may give, and to provide an evaluation of the extent to which the constitutionally prescribed values and principles are complied with; and either of its own accord or on receipt of any complaint –

- Investigate and evaluate the application of personnel and public administration practices, and report to the relevant executive authority and legislature;

- Investigate grievances of employees in the public service concerning official acts or omissions, and recommend appropriate remedies;

- Monitor and investigate adherence to applicable procedures in the public service; and

- Advise national and provincial organs of state regarding personnel practices in the public service, including those relating to the recruitment, appointment, transfer, discharge and other aspects of the careers of employees in the public service (RSA, 1996).

Acting in accordance with its mandate, the PSC does not provide direct services to the public and therefore generates outputs, mostly in a form of research reports with recommendations aimed at improving the performance of the public service. In essence, the PSC's contribution to an effective and efficient administration can only be realised through the use of such outputs by government institutions. The PSC has identified six key performance areas which guide its activities and the production of outputs. Such key performance areas, as shown below, are important in ensuring that the mandate of the PSC is executed:

Table 2: Six Key Performance Areas of the PSC

KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS	CRITICAL FUNCTIONS	OUTPUTS
Labour relations Improvement	Enhance public service labour relations and management practices. Investigate grievances of public servants.	Advice (make recommendations) on dealing with grievances and complaints, produce fact sheets on grievances and complaints, , research reports on labour relations subjects
Public administration Investigations	Undertake investigations into public administration practices	Recommendations for resolving allegations and complaints investigated by the PSC, complaints trend analysis report, report on financial misconduct, other thematic investigative reports
Professional ethics	Promote a high standard of	Efficient National Anti-Corruption

	professional ethics in the Public Service. Undertake anti-corruption activities	Hotline, fact sheet on NACH cases, administer the financial disclosure framework, research reports on ethics or corruption related subjects, serve as secretariat for the National Anti-Corruption Forum
Governance Monitoring	Improve governance practices in the Public Service.	Annual State of the Public Service (SOPS) Report, evaluation of the compliance of departments with the nine constitutional values, programme evaluations
Leadership and Human Resource Reviews	Promote a high standard of public service leadership and encourage best practices in human resources policies	Human Resources Management support tools or instruments, HRM review reports, monitor compliance by Head of Departments (HoD) with the requirement to submit performance agreements, facilitate the HoD evaluation process, evaluations of leadership practices
Service delivery and compliance evaluations	Improved service delivery practices in the Public Service	Annual Citizen Satisfaction Surveys, inspections of service delivery sites, support the Public Service with implementation of the Citizens' Forum guidelines and public participation practices, reports on adherence to the Batho Pele policy

(Adapted from PSC)

The above-mentioned key performance areas, as outlined with their functions and outputs, are critical to the functioning of the PSC. According to the PSC's Human Resources Plan, and in line with the PSC's Work Place Skills Plan, it is important that officials within the PSC are equipped with the following competencies to enable them to effectively carry out the activities of the PSC and to achieve the key performance areas:

- Research.
- Report writing.
- Forensic investigation.

- Labour relations management.
- Leadership.
- Performance management
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Human resources development and management
- Financial management
- Knowledge of Public Service Regulatory Framework (PSC, 2010: 8).

Like many other government institutions, the PSC, as an organ of state, has embarked on the implementation of a Learnership Programme which aims to provide school leavers those and employees without qualifications an opportunity to learn towards a profession. The overall aim is to afford them an opportunity to acquire skills and enable the school leavers to enter the workforce.

5.3. THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME AT THE PSC

The Public Service Commission started implementing its first phase of the Learnership Programme in 2007. Unfortunately not much was documented of this phase of the Learnership Programme. However, the researcher established that the intake during this phase included both employees of the PSC and some school leavers. Furthermore, whilst the PSC has not been able to trace the school leavers after completing the programme, the PSC employees that were on the Programme had successfully completed the Programme and were awarded their qualifications. During 2008, the PSC continued with the second intake of learners with 10 of the learners being recruited to join the Learnership Programme. Only school leavers were recruited to this phase of the Learnership Programme. The

contracts/agreements of these learners were renewed in 2009, and again in 2010, which implies that to date the learners are still with the PSC since their admission in 2008.

This chapter discusses the rationale behind this continuous renewal of contracts and also identifies the success and challenges of this programme. Furthermore, the researcher has established that of the six key strategic priority areas of the PSC, only two learners have been place in these areas, whilst eight of them have been placed with support services in the organisation. This chapter further highlights the rationale behind such arrangement. In addition, the study will assess the general implementation of the Programme, and in this regard, attention will be on the structures supporting the Learnership Programme, recruitment of the learners, support offered to the learners, availability of resources, acquiring of skills through the programme, and overall assessment of the programme.

5.4. KEY FINDINGS

The following section presents the findings of the study. Themes were developed and used for presenting the findings. The themes emanate from the objectives of the study and each theme is linked to a particular objective.

5.4.1 Structures supporting the Learnership Programme at the PSC

Objective Three: To establish the availability of institutional and other requirements to ensure that Learnership requirements are met.

The success of any programme depends on how well it is institutionalised within the organisation. For instance, it is critical that structures are put in place to support the programme and its implementation, the structures should have a clearly defined mandate, a budget allocation should be made in order to undertake the activities of the programme, reporting lines of the structures must be clear, and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the programme should also be put in place.

The study found that whilst there was commitment to support the Learnership Programme by the PSC, there were no solid institutional structures in place, such as a learnership management committee. Tasks such as developing the project plan of the programme and communication strategy were undertaken on an *ad hoc* basis by officials within the Cooperate Services of the organisation.

The day-to-day activities of the Learnership Programme are under the guidance of the Learnership Coordinator who was employed as an Assistant Director: Human Resources Development and Performance Management. It was found that the official has other key performance areas within her responsibility, such as the organisational human resources development and the implementation of the performance management system, in addition to coordinating the Learnership Programme. Therefore, in light of the above-mentioned demands, the Learnership Coordinator confirmed that whilst attention is given to the activities of the Learnership Programme, activities around the Human Resources Development and the implementation of the Performance Management System took precedence over the coordination of the learnership activities.

The study further found that in the absence of formal structures such as a learnership management committee to guide the activities of the programme, a proper project plan could not be constructed prior to the recruitment of the 2008 learnership intake. For instance, when the learners where brought into the organisation in 2008, an education training provider had not been appointed. As a result, the learners completed their learnership term without exposure to the theoretical learning for the entire period. This necessitated the renewal of their learnership contracts with the PSC during 2009. In 2009, the same trend continued where the learnership period expired without the appointment of a training provider. Again, this necessitated a second renewal of the learnership contracts. The third contracts of the current intake of learners were signed in February 2010, and are due to expire at the end of March 2011, with the service providers being appointed in May and June 2010 respectively.

It has been established that a number of learners have left the programme since 2008 and were replaced by new ones. Reasons for their departure are not known. During the engagement with the learners that are still part of the programme, those who were admitted

to the programme in 2008 expressed a lot of frustration at the lack of progress and the continuous renewal of their contracts. Some of them expressed that this has hampered an opportunity for acquiring skills and that with such skills they possibly would have been employed by 2010.

They further mentioned that they remained with the Programme as they have limited options through which they could acquire skills. The continuous renewal of the Programme (three times) reflects a lack of leadership of the Learnership Programme and that the PSC was possibly not ready during 2008 and 2009 to implement the Programme. As indicated earlier, a Learnership Programme is designed to run for a period of 12 months, with systems for providing both the practical and theoretical learning in place (DoL, 2001). Therefore, failure to put such systems in place during the commencement of the intake in 2008 shows that the Programme was conducted haphazardly without any linkage between practical learning and theoretical learning.

The physical capacity to ensure that learning is facilitated and that the assessment thereof is undertaken is critical in the implementation of the Learnership Programme. In addition, the availability of resources, such as computers and work space, is important in creating an environment which is conducive to learning. The study found that all learners have been allocated sufficient work space. Furthermore, all learners have been allocated resources such as computers to communicate and also do their work. The study also found that five of the learners were visually impaired, whilst two of them had physical challenges. The researchers' observation of the learners' work space shows that their specific needs in terms of for instance, a television reader, magnifying glass, as well as easy access to bathrooms have been taken into account.

5.4.2 Recruitment of the learners

Objective One: To assess the recruitment and selection processes of the learners in determining their placements against the relevant practical experience to be acquired at the PSC and the intended qualification to be obtained.

The study found that the recruitment of the learners follows the normal PSC recruitment processes of putting an advert in the newspapers with the intention of attracting suitable candidates. An interview process is then entered into by the PSC, a short list of candidates is drawn up, and then only successful candidates are appointed to the programme. When asked about the recruitment process with regards to information pertaining to, for instance, the specific required personal attributes to ensure that the right candidates are appointed and that such candidates would be able to close the skills gap, it was found that the PSC's adverts are normally generic and do not include the requirement of specific personal attributes.

In addition, the study found that the activities of recruiting the learners is only conducted by the officials at the Corporate Services, without involving officials from line function, particularly when the learners would be placed at a line function unit. Without involving officials from the line function units in the drafting of the advert or interview process, the Corporate Services of the PSC run the risk of finding themselves in a situation where line function officials feel that the learners are imposed on them and that Corporate Services does not recruit suitable candidates that have the potential to learn.

Furthermore, the recruitment and placement of the learners at the PSC is guided by the PSC's learnership policy which states that the focus will be on the critical areas of the PSC where there is a clear skills demand to support the strategic objectives and the employment equity plan (PSC, 2006:5). According to the PSC's Human Resource Plan, the PSC's strategic focus areas, which are shaped and dictated by government priorities, are:

- Labour relations improvement.
- Public administration investigations.
- Professional ethics.
- Governance monitoring.

- Leadership and human resources reviews.

- Service delivery and compliance evaluations.

- Institutional building or Corporate Services (PSC, 2010:6).

The first six identified areas are strategic and core to the functioning of the PSC in executing its mandate. The seventh is aimed at providing strategic support to the first six areas to ensure that the PSC is able to carry out its mandate effectively and efficiently. In essence, the ability of the PSC to carry out its mandate effectively relies on the ability of sound human resources that have the required skills, capacity and competencies within the first six areas; i.e. the key performance areas of the PSC. On the other hand, Institutional Building or Corporate Services provides services such as communication, information technology, finance, procurement and human resources services to the organisation to ensure that the core functions are carried out.

The findings of the study show that of the 10 learners currently at the PSC, eight of them are placed in Institutional Building/Corporate Services, with only two of them placed at Leadership and Human Resources Reviews. Therefore, the placement of the learners is biased towards building capacity for the organisational support services, as opposed to building skills towards the performance areas of the organisation. According to the Learnership Coordinator, there has been minimal support from line function units in accommodating learners within the key performance areas of the organisation, hence the majority of them are placed at Corporate Services. The researcher also established that of the eight learners placed within Institutional Building, two of them were initially placed with Service Delivery and Quality Assurance. However, after receiving complaints from the learners about lack of involvement in the activities of Service Delivery and Quality Assurance, the learners were then transferred to the support services areas.

The Learnership Coordinator further confirmed that key officials in the six key performance areas of the organisation have not been active in identifying strategic areas upon which learnerships must focus to ensure that the right organisational skill gaps are addressed by the Programme. In essence, learners are not perceived as resources that would contribute

to bridging skills gaps in the organisation. It was further found that line function managers prefer to work with candidates that have experience and knowledge of the work, rather than spending time in transferring the skills to the learners as this is perceived to be time consuming. The findings suggest that there is lack of communication or common vision about the main purpose of the Learnership Programme within the organisation, and therefore the programme is seen as a Corporate Services initiative which is not benefiting the entire organisation.

As required by the PSC Learnership Policy, the study has established that all the learners have entered into learnership agreements (PSC, 2006: 7). The Learnership Policy further states that a learnership agreement/contract has to be entered into by the learner, employer and the education and training provider (PSC, 2006:7).

The constant renewal of the programme from 2008 to 2010, due to lack of an education training provider, suggests that the 2008 and 2009 contracts were only entered into and signed by the employer and the learners; hence the learning during this period was focused on workplace learning only.

5.4.3 Support offered to the learners

Objective Two: To establish the kind of support offered to the learners in the form of coaching and mentoring to be able to successfully complete the programme.

It is critical that a number of key partners are identified and capacitated within the organisation to support the learners during the learning process. These implementation partners play an important role in ensuring that workplace learning is facilitated. These would include the mentors, coaches and assessors.

Managers under which the learners are placed have a responsibility to ensure that the learners are exposed to relevant activities, and are monitored and guided in performing such duties. In this regard, the Learnership Policy states that managers must identify strategic areas upon which the Learnership Programme must focus (PSC, 2006: 4). According to the Learnership Coordinator, the PSC does not have a mechanism to determine if learners are

indeed exposed to the relevant areas that they are supposed to learn about. This implies that managers in the Corporate Services responsible for the eight learners, and managers in the Leadership and Human Resources Reviews where two of the learners are currently placed, are not monitored to establish if they are engaging the learners for the purposes of the Learnership Programme. The absence of periodic monitoring of the activities of the learners may suggest that learners spend most of their time either loitering or not involved in activities that would contribute to the acquirement of skills within the organisation.

The process of mentoring and coaching plays a huge role in any skills enhancement programme, including the Learnership Programme. In this case, mentors are officials who do not have expertise on the subject and their role is to provide support, advice and counselling the learner to successfully complete the Learning Programme. On the other hand, coaches play a direct role of facilitating the learning process by providing content-specific expertise (Hattingh, 2006:64). When asked if the learners have been allocated mentors, the Learnership Coordinator mentioned that mentors were identified, inducted into the Learnership Programme and trained on how to mentor the learners.

Furthermore, the Learnership Coordinator mentioned that the learners work under the guidance of the mentors on a day-to-day basis in performing their required activities. When asked about the availability of coaches and their role, the Learnership Coordinator mentioned that there were no coaches at the PSC assigned to the learners. Such a finding brings a huge confusion regarding the role of mentors and coaches in the Learnership Programme within the PSC. For instance, Hattingh (2006: 64) argues that a mentor's role is to provide support, advice and counselling for the learner to complete the Learning Programme, but would not have expertise of the area of learning. Coaches, however, would play a direct role in facilitating the learning process by providing content-specific expertise, guiding and coaching the learner to practically perform the required duties on a day-to-day basis (Hattingh, 2006: 64). The confusion of roles between mentoring and coaching is likely to affect the Programme as coaches will be seen mentoring as opposed to coaching the learners in performing the required tasks.

In addition, the study established that mentorship contracts, which are supposed to be signed by the mentor and the mentee, are in place; however, these have not been entered

into by the mentor and the mentee (learner). The purpose of the mentorship contract is to recognise the developmental needs of the learner and specify the expected deliverables (DPSA 2006:7).

5.4.4 Acquiring skills through the Programme

Objective Four: To determine if the Learnership Programme is achieving its intended objective of providing opportunities for the learners to acquire both experiential learning and a formal qualification

Acquiring skills through the theoretical and the practical learning of the programme is the important part of implementing a Learnership Programme. Such skills would be used to close the skills gap and also to provide the learners with better opportunities for employment. According to the Learnership Coordinator, learners were benefiting from the programme, both from the organisational learning and the theoretical learning. However, engagement with the learners revealed that some of them were frustrated as they mentioned that since 2008, they have probably been assigned only three tasks to perform, whilst they spent the majority of time doing nothing. Learners were of the view that exposure to organisational learning was very minimal and therefore they used their own initiative to look for work or tasks they could perform as it was difficult to be assigned duties.

Discussions with the learners further revealed that officials were very impatient with learners who took time to understand the work, as a result they were ignored, and the focus would be on those who showed better performance the first time around. Furthermore, officials were seen to be more comfortable with certain learners as they would constantly assign work to them. In cases where some learners were seen to be battling, no time was spent with them to assist them in their tasks. Learners with visual challenges also mentioned that they were often overlooked, particularly since they would take longer to complete tasks. These findings confirm that indeed coaching of the learners is not effective.

In general, all learners were of the view that the PSC is prioritising the internship programme as opposed to the Learnership Programme, with most interns being advanced in terms of learning and involvement in the organisational work. Most of the learners were also of the

view that the benefit of the Learning Programme was not enough, that they were not taken seriously, and that they were attached to the PSC Learnership Programme because they did not have other means to acquire skills.

With regards to the theoretical learning, the learners mentioned that since the appointment of the education training providers they have attended one learning session and have been assigned tasks. They further mentioned that they were excited about the theoretical learning as they could receive feedback about their performance.

When asked about the area of learning they enjoyed most, i.e. organisational or theoretical learning, the learners mentioned that they enjoyed the theoretical learning as it was easy to deal with assignments, unlike the organisational learning where the learning was minimal. At the time of conducting the study, it was difficult to assess whether learners were acquiring skills through the theoretical learning as they had just attended one session of the theoretical learning. However, at the moment the findings show that the acquiring of skills through workplace learning was not easy for the learners, despite the fact that some of them have been around since 2008.

5.4.5 Overall assessment of the programme

Objective Five: To determine if the Learnership Programme has afforded the learners an opportunity to acquire skills to enable them to be employed.

The findings of the study show that the PSC Learnership Programme is not cost effective, particularly because the current intake of learners has been with the PSC since 2008, and therefore in some instance the PSC has invested in these learners for longer than expected without any results. According to the Department of Labour, a Learnership Programme should run for a period of 12 months with the hope that the learners would acquire skills (through the organisational and theoretical learning) which would culminate in a qualification and improve their chances of employment (DoL, 2001).

In addition, as a result of the constant renewal of the programme since 2008, the PSC has not recorded learners who have successfully completed the Programme. Failure to

complete the Programme is probably because the PSC seems disorganised in putting systems together, hence the continuous renewal of contracts. The study found that since 2008, no qualifications have been issued to the learners and no learners have been employed either in the PSC or elsewhere as a result of the Learnership Programme.

5.5. CONCLUSION

The context of the environment in which the study was undertaken, as well as the skills requirements to undertake its activities, have been demonstrated in this chapter. Furthermore, the findings of the study highlight a number of challenges regarding the management and coordination of the programme. These have, unfortunately impacted negatively on the success of the programme. The findings further show that the programme's outputs and outcomes have not been achieved as a result of the challenges facing the programme. The following chapter outlines a number of recommendations for addressing the challenges facing the implementation of the Learnership Programme within the Public Service Commission.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. CONCLUSION

South Africa's challenges with regards to the skills shortage have necessitated a fresh approach in addressing skills constraints and improving opportunities for employment. As one of government's flagship programmes to address the problem of the skills shortage and maximising employability of its citizens, a Learnership Programme was introduced as an intervention that combines vocational education and training in order to establish a linkage between structured learning and workplace experience, with the overall goal of obtaining a formal registered qualification with the South African National Qualification Framework.

To this end, government has put in place a number of institutions such as SETAs, SAQA and the Department of Labour to ensure that the Programme is well guided. In addition, a supporting legislative framework, such as the Skills Development Act, Skills Development Strategy, and Skills Development Levies Act, have been put in place to support government's vision of building skills through initiatives such as the Learnership Programme. Chapter 3 of the study explained the importance of the governance mechanisms, including various role players to ensure the successful implementation of the Programme. The literature also showed how the Programme was developed and the key steps for consideration during implementation of the Programme. The following section provides the conclusion of the study as per each objective of the stud:

Objective One: To assess the recruitment and selection processes of the learners in determining their placements against the relevant practical experience to be acquired at the PSC and the intended qualification to be obtained.

The study concludes that the PSC Learnership Programme does not give attention to the recruitment of the learners in ensuring that candidate with, for instance, the required personal attributes are appointed. Furthermore, the recruitment process does not guide the placement of the learners within the organisation in line with the skills requirements of the organisation to support the core business. In this regard, the study revealed that the majority

of the learners were placed at the Institutional building/Cooperate services, something which contradicts the PSC Learnership policy which states that the recruitment and placement of the learners will focus on the critical areas of the PSC where there is clear skills demand to support the strategic objectives and employment equity plan of the PSC. The non-involvement of the line function units in the recruitment of the learners, and their unwillingness to accommodate the learners in their work, is a huge negative contribution in the step towards the country's vision of building skills through vocational education.

Objective Two: To establish the kind of support offered to the learners in the form of coaching and mentoring to be able to successfully complete the programme.

Overall, the study shows that there is confusion within the PSC in terms of executing the coaching and the mentoring functions of the learners. In this regard, the study shows that officials that are supposed to be the direct coachers of the learners, thus tasked to facilitate the learning process by providing content specific expertise, guiding and coaching the learners to practically perform the required duties on day to day basis were instead mentoring the learners. The support offered to the learners in the form of coaching is minimal if not non-existent, thus making organisational learning difficult.

Furthermore, the PSC does not have a monitoring and evaluation/assessment tools to determine the activities of the learners and ensuring that they spend time doing what would contribute to the successful completion of the programme. Such a tool would be used to identify if the programme is experiencing challenges so that immediate action is taken.

Objective Three: To establish the availability of institutional and other requirements to ensure that Learnership Programme requirements are met.

The study has revealed that whilst there is commitment to support the Learnership programme, there are no solid institutional mechanisms in place. The implementation of this Programme is without a proper project plan that would guide its activities. To this end, the programme is placed under the guidance of the Learnership Coordinator who is solely responsible for it. The Learnership Coordinator was found to be heading the Human

Resource Development and Performance Management within the PSC and therefore the Learnership programme is an *adhoc* task. As a result of such arrangement, the Learnership Programme has lacked strategic direction and this has left the programme to be renewed on several occasions without the learners achieving the requirements thereof. It was however positively noted that the physical requirements such as work space, resources such as computers and aids for the those with disabilities were provided to enable them to learn appropriately.

Objective Four: To determine if the Learnership Programme is achieving its intended objective of providing opportunities for the learners to acquire both experiential learning and a formal qualification.

Acquiring experiential learning through the Learnership programme within the PSC was found to be challenging as many learners found it difficult to be allocated tasks, with some citing that since 2088 they have been assigned only three tasks to perform. This is exacerbated by the fact the officials are impatient with learners who took time to understand work. Obtaining formal qualification was also found to be a challenge as since 2008 the programme has not awarded any qualification.

Objective Five: To determine if the Learnership Programme has afforded the learners an opportunity to acquire skills to enable them to be employed.

Opportunities for employment through the Learnership Programme can only be achieved once the incumbents have successfully completed the programme and in the process acquired the necessary skills and qualification. As a result of the lack of training service provider to provide theoretic learning and the lack of support to acquire experiential learning, the study shows that none of the learners have been able to complete the programme and as such none has secured employment which would have been attributed to the Learnership programme at the PSC. The constant renewal of the learnership contracts has resulted in low morale amongst the learners, and they expressed dissatisfaction with the learning progress.

6.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study it is recommended that:

- A management structure such as the Learnership Management Committee (LMC) must be put in place to develop a proper project plan and a communication strategy for the Learnership Programme. The LMC should also solicit the buy-in of line function managers in the implementation of the programme. The LMC must report to the head of the organisation.

- An additional management component, including a dedicated project manager, must be appointed to manage the operations of the Learnership Programme. The project manager must work under the guidance of the LMC. Consideration should also be given to outsourcing the management component to lessen the workload of the Programme for internal staff members.

- Line function managers must be involved in the recruitment of the learners, from the drafting of the advert, interview process and other assessments processes; particularly where learners will be placed with them directly. They must further be encouraged to embrace the programme.

- A tool must be developed to continuously monitor and assess the learning progress of the learners to determine if they are benefiting from the workplace learning. This could be done though regular panel assessments and practical knowledge tests.

- Learnership Programmes should be biased towards addressing the skills needs of the organisation, in line with the strategic objectives of the organisation. In this regard, line function managers should be key in determining the skills shortage, hence Learnership programme to address such skills

- Role clarification should be established between coaches and mentors to ensure that these roles are performed appropriately. Both mentors and coachers should be appropriately trained to effectively execute their duties.

In conclusion, the study has provided answers to the research questions raised in Chapter 1. For instance, the implementation of the Learnership Programme within the PSC has not been centred on providing the relevant practical experience that is complemented by theoretical learning; hence the continuous renewal of the learnership contracts. Whilst the acquiring of theoretical knowledge only commenced few months ago, the acquiring of practical skills in the organisation has been minimal, with some learners only assigned a few tasks since 2008. As a result of the above-mentioned challenges, the implementation of the Programme has not yielded positive results in terms of the learners obtaining a qualification and being employed, which both could be attributed to the lack of skills and experience acquired through the Programme.

6.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

This study was conducted at the Public Service Commission (PSC), therefore it would have been helpful if it had been conducted on a larger scale, including a number of national and provincial departments in the public service. The findings of such a study would be able to provide stakeholders, such as Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority (PSETA), with a better picture of the implementation of the Programme in the public service. In addition, the following could be considered as possible areas for research on the Learnership Programme:

- The cost-effectiveness of implementing the Learnership Programme.

- A case study on the curriculum development for a Learnership Programme.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A QUESTIONNAIRE: RESPONDENT= LEARNERSHIP COORDINATOR

A. Recruitment of the learners

1. With regard to the recruitment and placement of learners, the PSC policy states that the focus will be on the critical areas of the PSC where there is a clear skills demand to support the strategic objectives and Employment Equity plan. How do you ensure that you recruit the suitable candidates to the Learnership Programme?

……..

2. List the challenges facing the learnership programme in the area of recruitment.

……

3. Kindly identify the areas/ profession of work within the PSC that the learners are learning towards?

Area of work	Please provide statistics
Leadership and human resource reviews	
Labour relations improvement	
Governance monitoring	
Service delivery and compliance evaluations	
Public administration investigations	
Professional ethics	
Support Services (including Finance, Communications, Human Resources and Information Technology)	

4. What informed the choice or the prioritisation of these areas?

……

5. Have learnership agreements been entered into with the learners and service provider (request for proof)?**(please tick)**

Yes	
No	

6. Kindly explain how:

6.1 The workplace learning is imparted to the learners?

……..

6.2 The theoretical learning is imparted to the learners?

……..

B. Support offered to the learners

1. Kindly describe the role of line function in assisting the learners in the learning process.

……

2. Have mentors been allocated to the learners?**(please tick)**

Yes	
No	

2.1 Are the mentors trained in both theory and practice of mentoring? **(Please tick)**

Yes	
No	

2.2 Have the mentors entered into a contract with the mentee (learner)? (request proof) **(Please tick)**

Yes	
No	

2.3 Are the learners benefiting from the mentorship programme? **(Please tick)**

Yes	
No	

2.3.1 If yes, explain the benefits of the mentorship programme

……

2.3.2 If no, kindly explain the challenges experienced in the mentorship programme

…….

3. Have the learners been allocated coaches? **(Please tick)**

Yes	
No	

3.1 Do the coaches have an understanding of the qualification the learners are learning towards? **(Please tick)**

Yes	
No	

3.2 Kindly describe the involvement of the coaches in the theoretical and the practical learning of the learners.

……

4. List the challenges facing the Learnership Programme in the areas of support.

……

C. Availability of resources and conducive learning environment to the learners

1. Have the learners been allocated office space to work? **(Please tick)**

Yes	
No	

2. Have the learners been allocated computers and other resources to enable them to work efficiently? **(Please tick)**

Yes	
No	

3. Does the programme have learners with disabilities and if so, have their needs been considered?

D Achieving the objectives of the programme

1. Is the Learnership Programme supplemented by theoretical learning? **(Please tick)**

Yes	
No	

2. Who provides the theoretical aspect of the learning?

…….

3. List the mechanism that the PSC has put in place to assess that both the theoretical and practical learning leads to skill acquisition by the learners?

……

4. How many learners have entered the programme since its inception?

…….

5. How many learners have successfully completed the programme on time?

……..

6. How many learners failed to complete the programme on time and what were the reasons for not completing on time?

……..

7. How many learners have received their qualifications?

……..

8. How many learners have been employed in the fields within which they have acquired the qualification?

……

9. How many have been employed by the PSC?

……..

10. List the challenges facing the programme in the area of imparting skills to learners.

……..

11. List the challenges facing the programme in the areas of employability of the learners.

……..

Appendix B QUESTIONNAIRE: RESPONDENTS= LEARNERS

1. Have you signed a Learnership contract? **(Please tick)**

Yes	
No	

2. What is your area of study within the Learnership Programme?

……..

3. Is the theoretical learning related to the practical learning (what you are assigned to do on daily basis)? **(Please tick)**

Yes	
No	

4, How do you perceive the learning approach used in the programme?

……..

5. Which areas do you experience challenges with? (**Please tick)**

Theoretical aspects of learning	
Practical aspects of learning	
Presentation of the programme	
Other (please specify)	

6. Which part of learning do you enjoy most?

……..

7. Do you get support in the form of:

7.1 A mentor? **Please tick**

Yes	
No	

7.2 A coach **(Please tick)**

Yes	
No	

8. Are the supervisors (line function managers) assisting you in the learning process (**Please tick)**

Yes	
No	

9. List the skills that you have acquired through the programme.

……..

10. Have these skills assisted you to understand and perform your duties better? **(Please tick)**

Yes	
No	

11. Generally, what challenges have you experienced with the Learnership Programme?

……..

12. What ways would you suggest to improve the implementation of the Learnership Programme?

……..