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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Study

The Joint Education Trust (hereafter to be referred to as 'JET') was established in 1992 as a result of a commitment by 14 major South African companies to provide R500 million to solve one of the greatest challenges that the South African democracy would have to face: the challenge of restructuring its educational system, particularly with regard to its disadvantaged population. Rosholt (2001) shows that this was a significant contribution towards solving the socio-economic problems of this country, but that it was not wholly altruistic, for business knew that its future success would rely greatly on a trained and effective management and labour force.

Nonetheless, various political parties and trade unions subscribed to this concept and a body of trustees was drawn from representatives of the companies, communities, major political parties, and trade unions. JET was then entrusted with the responsibility of disbursing the allocated funds as grants to those organizations considered to be playing a crucial role in promoting better educational practices focused on development for all.

The democratization of the country saw an evolution in the South African educational system and labour systems. Education and training were seen as interwoven, and education in particular, perceived to be lifelong. To remain relevant and up-to-date with these developments, JET was bound to expand its areas of focus to include adult education and training, in particular education and training targeting the workforce. The Workers' Higher Education Programme (WHEP) was then established. WHEP became a forerunner in promoting Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), assessor training courses and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) advocacy. WHEP subsequently became known as the Workforce Development Division (WFD) in order to align itself with the ideal of turning workplaces into active areas of learning. This research finds its roots in WFD.

WFD has been very involved and vocal in the promotion of lifelong learning and has since developed innovative products that are utilized in many workplaces. One such programme is the Dipaakanyo¹ Social Plan Programme. This programme was conceptualized out of the need to have a programme to cater for the needs of retrenched or imminently retrenched workers or unemployed people. The WFD Social Plan Package consists of the following steps that can be used together as a total package or, depending on needs, as a combination of a few steps:

i) A skills audit

This seeks to identify the skills and knowledge of the workers who are retrenched or about to be retrenched. This process can include an RPL component where the employee's skills are identified, with attention to gaps in their learning which can then be matched to available education and training opportunities.

ii) The Dipaakanyo Return To Learning Preparatory Programme

This programme is designed to assist and prepare workers for changes that are about to happen or are already happening in their lives due to retrenchment. In dealing with these changes they are advised to focus on where they would like to see themselves after the retrenchment. In the programme they are guided to develop concrete steps that will enable them to reach their desired goals.

iii) Money management workshop

This programme is conducted with the workers to assist them to understand the implications of the choices they will make in managing their retrenchment packages. It also exposes participants of the programme to good money management principles needed in day-to-day life.

¹ *Dipaakanyo* is a Sotho word that literally means 'fixing' or 'preparing'. In this research it is used to mean 'preparation'.

iv) Individual counselling and advising

On a one-to-one basis, a counsellor assists the worker to develop his or her educational or career profile using information from the skills audit and workshops. The worker then makes informed choices in terms of which educational ventures s/he embarks on. The chosen educational programme should be in line with the worker's career objectives, either when re-employed or when s/he sets up his or her own business.

v) Training placement

The worker is then placed into an educational and training institute to equip him or her with the necessary skills required in his or her chosen career path. Monitoring and mentoring happen throughout the period of placement.

vi) Kgatelopele² Work Ethics and Service Delivery Workshop

This is conducted post-placement to facilitate an understanding of how to run a successful business venture (big or small). For workers that are re-employed, this workshop assists them in understanding their roles and functions in the workplace. The workshop emphasizes productivity and quality service delivery.

vii) Coaching and mentoring

This service is offered to assist each individual to ease into his or her new situation by providing the necessary support.

Having outlined the various steps in the social planning process, it is important to mention that this research has focused on evaluating steps two and four, the Dipaakanyo Return to Learning and the individual counselling and advice services. These two services are being

² *Kgatelopele* is a Sotho word which means 'going forward' or 'moving ahead'.

evaluated within the parameters in which they are set and as offered by WFD at JET. From this point forward, these steps as services will be referred to as the Dipaakanyo Programme.

1.2. The Purpose of the Research

Retrenchment has become one of the most common features of the new labour markets. Newspapers highlight these occurrences everyday, with negotiations taking place between unions, workers and employees. The job market is shrinking each year and building the personal capacity to deal with retrenchments has become one of South Africa's most urgent skills training needs. *The Social Plan and Labour Document* was tabled and adopted at the Presidential Job Summit in October 1999 as a means to fast-track the preparation of workers for retrenchment.

The seriousness of the retrenchment crisis has been widely documented and is well known, as are the effects that result in the process. The focus of studies should therefore no longer be on the effects of retrenchments, but rather on whether the proposed Social Plan Programmes introduced to ease the problem, are actually making a difference in the lives of retrenched people. One way of conducting this investigation is to evaluate a Social Plan Programme to see if it is indeed meeting its set objectives. Dipaakanyo is one such Social Plan Programme. To date, no formalized evaluation of the Dipaakanyo programme, and the extent to which it benefits its intended beneficiaries, has taken place. This study attempts to do just that. This research seeks to evaluate the Dipaakanyo programme as to whether it is meeting the needs of its recipients, by investigating the views of programme participants themselves.

The purpose of this study is therefore to examine the perceptions of a selected group of retrenched participants in a Social Plan Programme in the automotive industry in Gauteng. It is hoped that by examining the participant's perceptions, the strengths and weaknesses of the programme can be identified, and recommendations made for changes to the programme.

1.3. The Rationale

The research was important in two ways:

- it made provision for a reflective adult education practice; and
- it provided an opportunity for participants to contribute to curriculum development within the retrenchment context.

1.3.1. Reflective adult education practice

The Dipaakanyo programme was developed and adapted for the South African context through funding made available by the Ford Foundation. It was adapted from an American programme geared towards encouraging adults experiencing changing circumstances in their lives to return to learning as a means to adjust to changing circumstances. WFD has been involved with a number of clients who utilized the programme. In line with JET's beliefs, there is a need to test and re-test our products so that we can ensure that we are effective in meeting the objectives of what our products aim to achieve. It is JET's belief that knowledge is not static and that imparting knowledge is evolutionary in nature, hence the need to evaluate what we do, in order to remain up-to-date.

Since the running of the first Dipaakanyo workshop in 2001, limited assessments or evaluations of what the learners found useful and not useful in the programme have been carried out on the last day of each workshop. Learners are asked through verbal and written evaluations to comment on any aspect of the workshop, either positive or negative. In most cases, it was apparent that learners said what they thought the facilitator wanted to hear. In addition, when it came to the written evaluations, little information was gained – probably as a result of some of the participants' limited writing skills.

The information collected in these evaluations has never gone beyond using a few points from the participants' evaluations as extracts in reports for the clients who send these learners on the course. No detailed information was given to enable an in-depth reflection on the programme and the practice as a whole. For this reason, this study provides an opportunity for a structured reflective evaluation on the programme by its supposed beneficiaries.

Brookfield (1986) encourages all adult educators to become reflective practitioners. A reflective adult educator seeks to probe beneath common-sense assumptions about the participants' perceptions of a learning programme. This is done by investigating the hidden dimensions of these perceptions and by uncovering the strengths and weaknesses of the programme by engaging the participants in a structured reflective evaluative process. The strength of the training programme can therefore be attributed to the significance or meaning that its participants attach to it. In conducting this study, one of the objectives is to understand the meaning of Dipaakanyo from the participants' point of view, in order to facilitate holistic adult education practices.

1.3.2. Curriculum in context

As adult educators, one of the most crucial functions we perform in the learning process is that of learning materials design. I am passionate about learning material design and this comes across in my choice of the topic. This is in acknowledgement of the belief that Social Plan Programmes are neither devised nor implemented in a vacuum. Instead, context is vital.

Brookfield (1986) shows that learning is cyclical in nature, as it relates to the interactions people undertake with each other in a learning cycle. Adult learning programmes, like Social Plan Programmes, are often designed far removed from the context of the people for whom they are created. The cycle usually starts at the organizational level by perceiving what curriculum designers consider to be learning needs for a certain group.

Curriculum designers go on to design and facilitate programmes around their perceived needs. Organisations tend to forget that the cycle is not complete without feedback from the participants of the programme, as these are the ones who actually *experience* the programme.

Evaluating the programme from the perspective of its participants offers a potential way forward for contextualizing the curriculum. As adult educators – in particular, learning materials designers – our learning programmes can only remain relevant and current if we involve learners. It is through the eyes and experience of learners that training programmes come alive. The recipients of programmes create meaning from what we are trying to impart in the learning process. That way, curriculum meets context and learning takes place as it is relevant to the target group.

In conclusion, involving our programme participants in evaluating programmes frees us from the uncritical adoption of the so-called “effective” learning strategies that we design. We begin a reflective process which allows us to recreate and reinvent strategies that take into account contextual realities that expand the possibilities for the improvement of learning. In particular, we should remember that, as adult educators, the roles we play are social constructs – reflecting ideologies that may prevent us from understanding the implications of power relations within the delivery of Social Plan Programmes.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

In light of the fact that the job market is shrinking each year and that building the capacity to deal with retrenchments has become one of the most urgent skills training needs in South Africa, the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) began a process to look at how best to save jobs in this country. This process also examined how best to manage down-scaling and retrenchments, and culminated in the Presidential Job Summit held in October 1999, when the then Minister of Labour, Mr Membathisi Mdladlana, formally adopted and launched the social and labour plan.

The Dipaakanyo programme was developed by JET to address the needs of retrenched or imminently retrenched workers, with particular attention to assisting them to acquire skills that would lead to re-absorption into the labour market. This programme was developed in line with the objectives of *The Social Plan and Labour Document*. To reiterate, this research seeks to evaluate the Dipaakanyo programme from the perspectives of the participants of the programme by examining the following:

- The strengths/benefits of the programme
- The weaknesses/challenges of the programme
- Recommendations for the adaptation and improvement of the programme

In examining these three elements, the broader approach to social planning in this country will be indirectly critiqued as well.

2.2. Orientation to the literature review

When one looks at the aims and objectives of this research as stated in the purpose statement, a number of questions could arise. This literature review in section 3.1.1

relates to the aims and objectives of the research and seeks to answer some of these questions. It attempts to define the origins of Social Plan Programmes within the context of retrenchment. This is done by looking at some of the theories to which their existence is aligned. The literature review also seeks to examine the relationship between adult education and Social Plan Programmes to give a conceptual background to the questions that are being asked in the research. The literature review further examines participants' perspectives on adult education and their role in evaluating such programmes.

This literature review has been organized into four themes, and these will assume the following structure:

Theme One	Why Social Plan Programmes?
Theme Two	What are Social Plan Programmes? What are their aims and what processes do they follow?
Theme Three	The role of education in Social Plan Programmes
Theme Four	Participants' perspectives on Adult Education Programmes

2.2.1. Theme One: Why Social Plan Programmes?

Social Plan Programmes are being implemented in South Africa against a backdrop of changing skills development needs and a policy framework that has evolved over the last ten years. The National Skills Development Strategy document of 2001 notes that labour needs have changed significantly over the last 20 years with the advent of ‘flexible specialization’, which requires workers to be innovative and able to respond to changing external conditions.

The National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) and National Skills Development Acts were introduced in 1997 and 1998 respectively. The former notes that South Africa is at the bottom of a league of 47 countries based on levels of economic literacy, its education system, unemployment levels, skilled labour and the availability of information technology skills (2001: 12). It also acknowledges the need for workers in South Africa to have a much higher level of skills than is presently evident (2001: 12).

According to the South African Reserve Bank *Quarterly Bulletin* of March 2002, the advent of globalization has meant that knowledge and information have become more important than cheap labour and material inputs in ensuring competitiveness and economic success. Blumenthal (2002) further shows that shifts in the global economy have had implications for education and training in South Africa. Industries require a skilled labour force that is able to employ new technologies, add value to goods and services and be able to respond to the need for continuous innovation.

In order to remain abreast with these changes, the Department of Labour has enacted various policies aiming to address the human resource development needs of the country, including the Skills Development Levy Act (SDL), the Skills Development Act (SDA), The National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and most importantly, the Social and Labour Plan as part of job creation initiatives (in collaboration with other Ministries). In addition to the funds which are directed to Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), industries have earmarked funds for worker re-training.

According to Labourwise (2005), an online labour relations service, workers require broad problem-solving skills and the ability to understand the entire production process (as opposed to the assembly line-type specialization which dominated for much of the twentieth century). In addition to technical competence, workers must also acquire generalized, unspecified, non-dedicated skills which can be used in problem-solving and can be transferred from one setting to another.

Research carried out by the Member, Education, Communication and Advice (MECA), a unit of business services group NMG-LEVY, shows that an average of 380 000 workers in South Africa can expect to be retrenched each year. In their survey of 1988, 760 employers indicated that 380 000 jobs had been lost to retrenchment. Ten years later, in 1998, MECA conducted another survey, this time with half of the original sample (360 companies), and the results showed that 380 000 jobs were lost to retrenchments. These retrenchments are happening in a country already plagued by high rates of unemployment.

The NSDS notes that unemployment is at 25% or 37% (depending on the definition of unemployment used). In addition to changes in the world of work, the sectors in which job creation is likely to happen are also changing. The NSDS notes that there has been a decline in the number of jobs in agriculture and mining, a slight increase in the manufacturing sector and a significant rise in jobs in the financial sector (NSD, 2001: 13). Small, medium and micro industries accounted for 42% of the GDP in 1997 and are seen as a significant growth area for the economy, while 72% of private sector enterprises employ four people or less (NSD, 2001: 25). Hence there is a clear need for strategies that will deal with retrenchments in a constructive way. This is the reason for developing Social Plan Programmes.

Unfortunately, less than one in ten employees earmarked for retrenchment will receive adequate preparation in the form of Social Plan Programmes, says Hill (2002). The need for such programmes has remained consistently high for more than a decade and with retrenchments increasing in numbers the need for Social Plan Programmes is even more crucial.

When Social Plan Programmes are implemented it is important that vital skills and experiences are not lost. It is equally important that Social Plan Programmes be implemented to enable retrenched workers to keep their self-esteem and self-confidence intact. By engaging retrenched workers in Social Plan Programmes they are awarded an opportunity to re-focus and re-enter the economy in whichever way is most relevant for them; either via re-employment or self-employment. According to Hill (2002), the fact that more employees are now aware of their rights and insist on fuller consultation before retrenchment, means that a much more holistic approach to Social Plan Programmes can be adopted.

2.2.2. Theme Two: What are Social Plan Programmes? What are their aims and what processes do they follow?

What is the origin of Social Plan Programmes? They are an expansion of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs). Joubert (1994) and Sithole (2001) note that, over the last 70 years, when the first EAP was developed, many EAPs have tended to focus on dealing with stressful workplace dynamics. Some have even used this model to understand the effects of the changing workplace on workers. Ray (1998) and Blumenthal (2002) argue that rapid technological advances and changing workforce dynamics, such as ageing and more diverse workforce compositions, impact upon people within the organization and, as such, until recently, EAPs have been instrumental in assisting those workers still in the workforce, including those who lose their colleagues to retrenchment.

However, widespread industrial re-structuring has demanded a shift from the impact of retrenchments on those who survive and remain employed to those that have to leave the company. According to Joubert (1994), EAPs in South Africa have not really been oriented to deal with the effects of retrenchment and workers losing their employment. Furthermore, Joubert (1994) and Modise (2002) suggest that EAP programmes should include counselling to deal with the emotional traumas, identification of alternative employment, skills training, business training and financial management.

Social Plan Programmes were developed as a result of observations in the workplace. The National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), in particular, was instrumental in developing a Social and Labour Plan process in this country.

NEDLAC is an organized forum that joins governmental departments – Labour, in particular – with employers and community groups at a national level, to discuss issues of social and economic policy that promote the goals of economic growth and social equity. As a forum, NEDLAC started a process to look at how best to save jobs in the face of retrenchments in this country. This culminated in the Presidential Job Summit held in October 1999, when Government formally adopted and launched the Social and Labour Plan. The Plan noted that:

- growth and job creation are an urgent priority;
- the social plan approach aims to avoid job losses and employment decline wherever possible; and
- there will nevertheless be instances in which large job losses are unavoidable. In such cases the social plan approach will seek to actively manage retrenchments and to ameliorate their effects on individuals and local economies.

The NEDLAC partners further agreed that the burden of employment decline should not be borne by the affected individuals and regions alone. Rather a social plan approach should be adopted which helps to re-integrate retrenched people into the economy, and which helps to revitalize affected local economies.

The NEDLAC parties also committed themselves to the following principles, which are definitive of a social plan approach:

- A social plan approach is applicable where there is a threat of large-scale retrenchments which will impact on sectoral, regional or national interests.
- The social plan approach aims to ameliorate the social and economic impact for individuals, regions and the economy.

- A social plan approach promotes negotiation about threats to employment security and measures which can be taken to avoid employment decline.
- A social plan approach is essential in cases where there is a reasonable possibility that alternatives could be developed to save jobs.

In simple terms, what, then, is a Social Plan Programme? It is a tool that arises from the analysis of problems affecting employees and employers who are about to be retrenched or have just been retrenched in a particular company or setting. The tool makes it possible to explore appropriate solutions and to impart these in a planned way. Stewart (2000) shows that the main objective of Social Plan Programmes is to deal with retrenchments: before they happen and when they are inevitable.

Further, Social Plan Programmes assist in dealing with affected workers in a manner that is as humane as possible. However, they also acknowledge that whilst it is important to look at the human factor, equally important is the regeneration of the local economies of retrenched workers in order to create new job opportunities. This then becomes a challenging point – as it often the most difficult to achieve and at the same time, the most neglected.

Stewart (2000) shows that a Social Plan Programme comprises a basket of instruments which require collaboration of nearly all government departments, as well as the participation of enterprises and unions on a voluntary basis. There was agreement between NEDLAC and the Department of Labour on the need for additional services to be offered to retrenched workers. The additional services listed include some of the following:

- Group and individual counselling to assist workers in dealing with the emotional impact of retrenchment and in adjusting to new conditions.
- Skills assessment and awarding of credits for prior learning to facilitate new employment through the awarding of formal qualifications where appropriate.

- Assessment of potential and development of a career plan in order to help workers to identify their options and assist them in the choices they have to make between further skills training; small, micro and medium enterprise (SMME) training; and/or finding new employment.
- Training and re-training of workers in line with the NSDS, to facilitate the channelling of retrenched workers into employment.
- Placement services through which retrenched workers can be placed in institutions of learning or new positions of employment.

In line with the guidelines tabled by *The Social and Labour Plan Document*, JET developed its own Social Plan Programme to encompass a holistic approach to retrenchment. The primary activities of WFD in using the Dipaakanyo Return To Learning Programme are to facilitate the provision of skills training to retrenched workers, which will ease their re-entry (or entry) into formal training institutions, and to provide them with the new skills required to become economically active once more³.

‘Fixing’ or ‘preparing’ is the loose literal translation of the Sotho word *Dipaakanyo*. The programme was given this name because it is designed to assist retrenched workers in understanding the changes they are going through and to give them the information they need during the transition period. Dipaakanyo also assists retrenched workers in drafting personal development plans to access further education and drawing up plans to find alternative employment opportunities at a time when major changes plague or will plague their lives.

The Dipaakanyo programme helps retrenched workers to set clear career and educational goals, informed by their skills and capabilities as well as by information about the changing world of work, the South African economic climate and issues in the educational arena. The WFD social plan package consists of products that can be used together as a total package, or selectively based on the needs of the client. They are:

³ In this context, the term ‘economically active’ refers to individuals being able to generate income to sustain themselves and their dependents through employment in either the formal or informal sectors or by initiating their own businesses (micro industries).

i. A skills audit

This seeks to identify the skills and knowledge of the workers who are retrenched or about to be retrenched. This process can include an RPL component where the employee's skills are identified, with attention to gaps in their learning which can then be matched to available education and training opportunities.

ii. The Dipaakanyo Return To Learning Preparatory Programme

This programme is designed to assist and prepare workers for changes that are about to happen or are already happening in their lives due to retrenchment. In dealing with these changes they are advised to focus on where they would like to see themselves after the retrenchment. In the programme they are guided to develop concrete steps that will enable them to reach their desired goals.

iii. Money management workshop

This programme is conducted with the workers to assist them to understand the implications of the choices they will make in managing their retrenchment packages. It also exposes participants of the programme to good money management principles needed in day-to-day life.

iv. Individual counselling and advising

On a one-to-one basis, a counsellor assists the worker to develop his or her educational or career profile using information from the skills audit and workshops. The worker then makes informed choices in terms of which educational ventures s/he embarks on. The chosen educational programme should be in line with the worker's career objectives, either when re-employed or when s/he sets up his or her own business.

v. Training placement

The worker is then placed into an educational and training institute to equip him or her with the necessary skills required in his or her chosen career path. Monitoring and mentoring happen throughout the period of placement.

vi. Kgatelopele⁴ Work Ethics and Service Delivery Workshop

This is conducted post-placement to facilitate an understanding of how to run a successful business venture (big or small). For workers that are re-employed, this workshop assists them in understanding their roles and functions in the workplace. The workshop emphasizes productivity and quality service delivery.

vii. Coaching and mentoring

This service is offered to assist each individual to ease into his or her new situation by providing the necessary support.

However, whilst it is becoming clear what Social Plan Programmes are and which processes they follow, Roberts (2002) shows that – in their implementation – the design and steps suggested are often not followed; namely, that employers should take care of their workers when they are just about to be or are already retrenched. Roberts (2002) shows that employers are not legally bound to implement social plan programmes when retrenching. This is why they often adopt the quickest possible route, which is usually not in the best interest of retrenchees.

2.2.3. Theme Three: The role of education in Social Plan Programmes

Little has been written about Social Plan Programmes and their relationship to education. Most of the studies that are available on retrenchment have had a sociological stance,

⁴ Kgatelopele is a Sotho word which means ‘going forward’ or ‘moving ahead’.

examining the impact of retrenchment on the broader economy and not necessarily on the retrenched workers and their communities. One study that improved my understanding of the social impact of retrenchment on communities and workers was a study conducted by Seidman (1993) in collaboration with the Free State Goldfields Mines. Her study highlighted that the effects of retrenchment on African workers were exacerbated by decreasing job opportunities, lack of access to land, education, skills and social services.

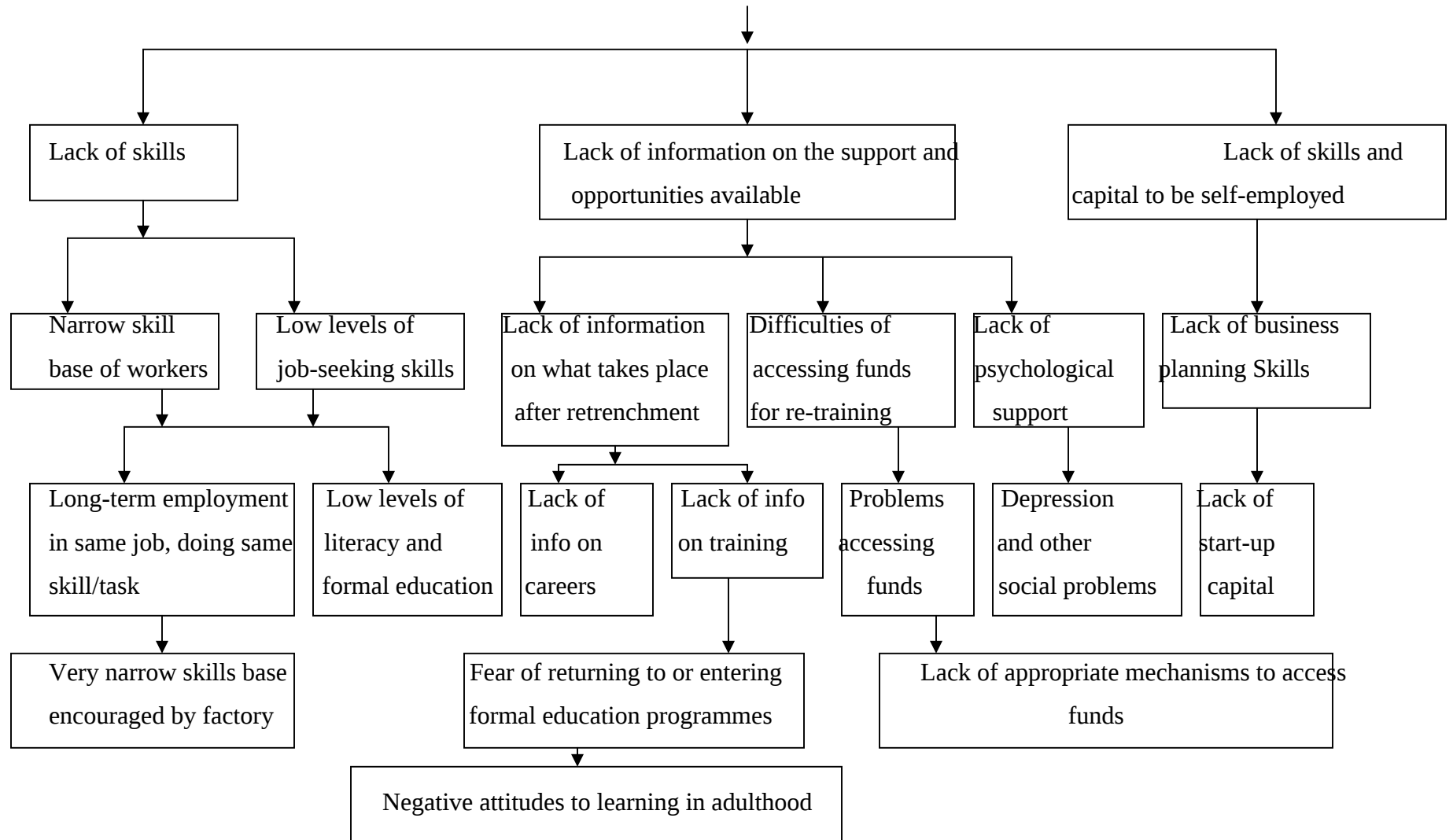
Tshabalala (1994) claims that retrenched workers often feel frustrated and hopeless. Todes (1998) argues that retrenchments may lead to changes in traditional family relations and perception of cultural roles, where men have traditionally been seen as the breadwinners. Most recently, Ngonini (2001) studied the effects of retrenchments on migrants from the Transkei and their survival mechanisms, and found that retrenched workers experience loss of dignity, failure in setting up their own small sustainable businesses, and living in conditions of absolute poverty. Ngonini, Tshabalala and Todes concluded their research with recommendations for implementing Social Plan Programmes to deal with all of the possible impacts on retrenched workers even before the retrenchment takes place.

In reading and reflecting on these studies, it became clear that Social Plan Programmes have an adult education agenda that is very clear. Whether one is dealing with the psychological factors, the economic factors or the social factors, the unifying common denominator is education, in particular adult education. These can best be summed up by means of the 'retrenchment problem tree' that is outlined on the next page.⁵

⁵ 'Retrenchment problem tree' compiled by Jennifer Roberts, an employee at JET, for her report on WSP Project Evaluation, 2002

The Retrenchment Problem Tree

Many retrenched workers do not become economically active again



The retrenchment problem tree tries to identify the factors contributing to retrenchment problems and to demonstrate the inter-relationships between these factors. If the problem tree is read in conjunction with an analysis of the Social Plan Programme objectives (previously outlined), two discrete but inter-related problems are highlighted:

- the need for the re-training of retrenched workers and the need to address the negative effects of retrenchment; and
- the lack of appropriate educational programmes that successfully link the world of work with education and skills training provision.

In examining these factors it is by no means original to assert that education has a key and essential role to play in Social Plan Programmes. Education in this sense is aimed at developing the capacities latent in people and to coordinate their expression for the enrichment and progress of society.

Education may be seen to release capacities, develop analytical abilities, and improve confidence, willpower and goal-setting. On the other hand, education may be viewed in a holistic sense, to include the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes as encompassed in capacity-building through education. All these competencies – when achieved in an individual – instil the vision that will enable that person to become a self-motivating agent of social change, serving the best interests of the community. This, in essence, is what social plan programmes endeavour to do.

What about Social Plan Programmes and their relationship to adult education? One thing that has remained constant over the years is that there is no single explanation or theory of adult education. This is because adult education as a concept is too complex for it to be attributed to one theory. The next section will look at several of these theories; how they relate to adult education; and, in particular, how they relate to the Dipaakanyo programme.

Dewey (1916) defines education as a continuous reconstruction or reorganisation of experience. He says that education adds to the meaning of experience, which increases the learner's ability to direct the course of subsequent experience. On the whole, Dewey (1916) sees education as a necessary instrument for man's actualization of himself and as a lifelong process; it is not "static" cold storage. Social Plan Programmes are therefore educational programmes borne of the need to reconstruct one's life after retrenchment.

Social Plan Programmes have their origins in the human capital theory, according to which "education is not a form of consumption, but an investment" (Schultz 1961, 2). Haggstrom et al (1966) highlights that the purpose of adult education is not to transmit knowledge and skills:

“[b]ut rather the development of assumptions of knowledge and skill which enable those educated to define their situations clearly enough to allow action to proceed (Haggstrom et al, 1966: 151)”.

Learners become 'human capital' and the function of adult education becomes that of developing human (as distinct from natural or technological) resources.

Social Plan Programmes are also closely related to modernization theories of development. Modernization theories of social and economic development follow functionalist or consensus assumptions, which state that societies need to have harmony among their various components. According to Schelkie (2003) this assumption leads to the belief that modern capitalist economies demand special characteristics in their culture and the structure of social relationships. For example, family systems are assumed to change toward a narrow conjugal form, and away from extended structures, in order to accommodate the individualism and occupational flexibility that is demanded by a modern complex economy undergoing continual transformation.

Human capital theory states that people invest in themselves by acquiring education and reap the benefits as a result. These benefits could range from getting a better job to

starting a new, self-sustaining business. This leads to economic growth as educated people are more productive and are better able to participate in individual and technological changes.

In line with this thinking, this paper takes the view that education should be used to promote social change, and the result of the learning that has taken place should be evident in bringing about changes in the social order. Mezirow's (1991) theory of perspective transformation illustrates this, for he believes that when people free themselves from habitual ways of thinking and acting, they become involved in "perspective transformation". This process involves individuals in transforming their social consciousness and focusing on the experiences at hand. In the case of social planning, individuals realize that there is life beyond retrenchment and that there are other means to earn a livelihood.

Freire (1972a, 1972b and 1974), in his conscientization model of education, advocates raising critical consciousness in adults so that they will be able to perceive their existential realities and take action towards remedying their situations. In this theory, adult education should, in both content and methodology, be an instrument of equipping students to adequately grapple with the issuing problems of existence and recreating the situations through action and reflection. Freire (1974) sees education as the "practice of Freedom". He therefore observes that:

[t]he education our situation demanded would enable men to discuss courageously the problems of their context - and to intervene in that context; it would warn men of the dangers of the time and offer them the confidence and the strength to confront those dangers instead of surrendering their sense of self through submission to the decisions of others. By predisposing men to re-evaluate constantly, to analyze "findings," to adopt scientific methods and processes, and to perceive themselves in dialectical relationship with their social reality, that education could help men assume an increasingly critical attitude towards the world and so to transform it (Freire, 1974: 33-34).

Like Freire, Nyerere (1979:49-52) advocated education for self-reliance, seeing education as developmental in nature. For Nyerere, development was transformative, in that education developed man who then transformed his society.

Both Freire and Nyerere conceived education as a necessity for making man realize himself and effectively exist in society. In this theory, adult education is about emancipation and should lead to empowerment. Learning does not happen in isolation from the world in which the learner lives, but it is related to that world and affected by it. Choices about what to learn, access to learning opportunities and how to learn (e.g. collaborative learning vs. individual learning) are functions of the socio-cultural environment.

In social planning, this means looking at the skills an individual already has to determine what further training they can enter. It can also mean being able to analyze the needs of the community and to use those in guiding retrenched as to what skills to learn for absorption into the workplace. In short, knowledge is out there not to be discovered, but to be created from interpretation and re-interpretation in light of new experiences (Mezirow 1998). The revised meaning results in what Mezirow calls a “perspective transformation”, characterized by more inclusive, discriminating, permeable and integrative perspectives.

Critical theory focuses on the social context. It goes a step further to uncover oppressive forces that could hinder individuals from developing to their full potential. Critical theorists attempt to find ways to empower people both individually and collectively to change the oppressive conditions of their lives (Merriam, 1995). In communities that evolved and survived to meet certain needs, like mining towns, Social Plan Programmes would see it as essential for the social context to change in order for it to remain functional. For example, can a mining town be transformed into a tourist attraction that can create opportunities for the retrenched? This notion would require a social plan

design that takes into account the fact that new skills would then have to be transferred to the community as a whole.

Gravett (2005) quotes Merriam and Brockett who define adult education as follows:

“Adult education ...activities intentionally are designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles or self perceptions define them as adults (Merriam and Brockett 1997: 8).”

In this instance, Social Plan Programmes have the purpose of re-orienting retrenchees to their changed circumstance. Gravett (2005) points out that adult education needs to be contextualized – taking into account the interplay between context (including the educational setting and the learner’s social cultural situation and experiences), the learner, the envisaged learning outcomes and the learning process.

Gravett (2005) further asserts that learning in an educational context is not incidental but purposeful, implying “specific outcomes, expectations and standards”. That learning must not only be meaningful to the individual, but also of value and worth from a societal perspective. It follows that educators need to approach their teaching task as the creation of a context conducive to worthwhile and meaningful learning and as a process of facilitation, guiding and mediation of this learning. Both this process and the creation of an environment conducive to learning demand an understanding of what the learning process entails.

The role of adult education in Social Plan Programmes therefore becomes one of making learners critically aware of how and why their assumptions about the world constrain the way they see themselves and their relationships. The adult educator becomes the mediator of learning, who assists the learners to interpret, assess and give meaning to life events and experiences as they unfold either through reading or discussions.

From a constructivist perspective, as argued in Gravett (2005), learners are not passive beings that respond to “stimuli” and learning is not a process of perceiving and recording ready-formed and pre-packaged knowledge stored in the brain for later retrieval. Instead, learning is an active process of constructing meaning and transforming understanding in interaction with the environment. Meaning is arrived by building relationships between information and facts and one’s existing knowledge – resulting in coherent knowledge structures. This implies that knowledge is constructed by the individual but precipitated and influenced through social interaction and collaboration.

Social constructivists claim that the meaning-making activities of the individual do not take place in isolation, but are shaped by the context, culture and tools used in a learning situation. Therefore, learning is social.

The learner is not passive in the learning process; rather, he or she is constantly actively engaged and participating in the learning process. The educator makes meaning by giving adult learners practical knowledge which is relevant and applicable to their lives and, more importantly, by imparting skills that will assist in day-to-day problem-solving. As Knowles (1980) points out, the developmental process acknowledges that individual learners will make the right decisions for themselves if given the necessary information and support.

2.2.4. Theme Four: Participants’ perceptions on Adult Education Programmes

In order to promote adult education, direct learner involvement in sharing their perceptions validates programmes. It also increases efficiency and effectiveness in the promotion of learning. Learner participation encourages self-reliance, self-determination, self-dignity and self-confidence, while also creating possibilities for self-help, advocacy and movement towards social change.

Knowledge is related to power in the sense that true knowledge can free an individual or group from the oppressive force of power. Along with the realization that knowledge is

created to serve the interests of certain individuals and groups above those of others, comes an awareness of one's own ability to participate in the creation of knowledge that serves interests more democratically.

The Dipaakanyo programme being evaluated in this research is grounded on the social principles of active citizenship, equality and informed decision-making on the one hand; and the principles of adult education and learning based on the belief of shared knowledge and active participation on the other.

The evaluative nature of the research has a strong leaning towards the perceptions of the programme participants, as opposed to the perceptions of the facilitators of the programme. The aims and objectives of conducting the evaluation this way are to obtain assistance in making the programme more relevant by incorporating the participants' views. The evaluation is participatory in nature and empowers the participants by acknowledging that they have the capabilities to contribute towards knowledge creation (Kassam and Mustafa, 1982; 71). Tandon (1998) asserts that participatory research puts the researcher and the participants in the research at an equal footing. He further shows that the participants become researchers in their own right, as they partake in answering questions that form part of their experiences.

It therefore becomes clear that there are benefits to be derived from the contributions of everyone involved in the learning cycle. This includes the contributions of the learners in our training programmes. Saddington (1989) affirms that in the adult education setting, learners have a joint responsibility for the learning experience; that the learning process is incomplete without feedback from the learners.

Brookfield (1985) shows that for training programmes to be regarded as adult education programmes, the developers of these programmes should have a willingness to encourage critical reflection of these programmes from the participants of the programme. Central to this approach is the opinion that:

“[l]earners on such courses would have to be sceptical of definitive principles of practice offered by leaders, and they would have to be encouraged to view conventionally accepted wisdoms, and apparently exemplary work behaviours, as relative and provisional” (Brookfield, 1985:46).

Brookfield (1985) goes on to show that the involvement of programme recipients becomes crucial in defining what goes into the programme; hence, the learners contribute new knowledge for the practice of adult education. As the learners reflect on the programme and its meaning for them, they add to a body of knowledge, their level of understanding is heightened and further learning occurs. They become reflective practitioners in their own right. In conducting participatory evaluations, we engage in a humanistic facilitation of learning in which our learning programmes begin to reflect and meet the needs of our programme participants. This facilitation is one in which adult educator and programme recipient grow together in a satisfying but challenging learning experience.

Gravett (2005) refers to this mutual relationship between facilitator and learner as a “dialogue”. She states that it is fundamentally not a specific communicative form of question and response, but that it essentially refers to a respectful relationship with participants – both the facilitator and the learner: thinking, inquiring and reasoning together. This view of dialogue is summarized by Burbules (1993:19) in Gravett (2005), as follows:

[It is] a kind of social relation that engages its participants. A successful dialogue involves a willing partnership and cooperation in the face of unlikely disagreements, confusion, failures and misunderstandings. Persisting in this process requires a relation of mutual respect, trust and concern - and part of the dialogic inter-change often must relate to the establishment and maintenance of these bonds. The substance of this interpersonal relation is deeper and more

consistent, than a particular communicative form it might take (Burbules, 1993:19).

Dialogue as a communicative relationship is characterized by the following:

- The typical tone of the dialogue is exploratory and interrogative.
- The purpose of the dialogue is to break through, to examine and validate new insights.
- The dialogic process implies cooperative and reciprocal inquiry through questions, responses, comments, reflections, observations, redirections and building statements that form a continuous and developmental sequence.
- It requires a commitment to dialogue. This commitment does not necessarily precede the dialogue, but is gradually established through the creation of a context that fosters engagement in the educational setting.
- The dialogue is marked by an attitude of reciprocity among participants, underpinned by the interest, trust, respect and concern they share for one another even when disagreeing or encountering misunderstandings.

Because of the mutual relationship, the resulting dialogic facilitation is neither content-, learner-, nor teacher-centred – but learning-centred. The aims of the dialogue become those of “enabling and fostering active intersubjective meaning-making and...providing opportunities for articulation and social confirmation of the knowledge that is constructed” (Garrison and Archer 2000 in Gravett 2005). The facilitator and the learners become jointly responsible for yielding a process in which all will grow.

Knowles’ (1980) humanistic philosophy (drawn from the humanistic psychology of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow) emphasized that individuals must be able to make free choices about their lives and their learning, and that these important areas of their lives must be controlled and directed by themselves. Another extremely significant point is the emphasis Knowles placed on the importance of experience in adult learning:

...to an adult, his [sic] experience is him. He defines who he is, establishes his self-identity, in terms of a unique set of experiences... He has a deep investment in the value of experience. And so, when he finds himself in a situation in which his experience is not being used, or its worth is minimized, it is not just his experience that is being rejected (Knowles, 1980:44).

This therefore means that in asking the recipients of our training programmes to evaluate the programme, we value their experiences as they engage with the programme.

Brookfield (1986) proposes that engaging learners in learning activities is one way of helping them to cope with life events. According to Knowles (1980), when a life change occurs, the need for some adaptation produces, for some adults at least, a heightened readiness to engage in an educational activity. The resulting activity may be directly related to the change event and the relation may or may not be recognized by the individual. Social planners should focus development programmes, whether community development, literacy classes or social plan programmes, in such a way that they help learners to bring about improvement in the conditions in which people live.

Rogers (1992) stated that adult education is a process by which adults who are adapting to changes in their circumstances engage in structured programmes of learning in a planned and purposeful way to develop themselves and better improve their standing in society. When viewed this way, learning clearly has a social dimension or context. We learn from and alongside other people in all of our social relationships.

Another way of looking at social context and learning lies in the social purpose for which people learn. These may be collective: to advance the interest of a particular group, such as an excluded social minority or a community; or to raise the level of awareness and consciousness of a particular section of society.

In fact, education to achieve social end is as old as education itself. This then becomes the true sense of social planning. Planning becomes social when social variables (i.e. variables expressing the conditions in which people live) are put in place of the final aims

of development plans. Social Plan Programmes should therefore be designed to do just that: bring about changes that will facilitate development and the re-adjustment of people's lives at various levels.

2.3. Closing Remarks

This literature review has attempted to illuminate the major themes of this study. It has highlighted how Social Plan Programmes came into existence to deal with the ever-increasing problem of retrenchment. Moreover, it has outlined the theories that ground Social Plan Programmes, as well as what these Social Plan Programmes are and what processes they follow. The review also linked the role of education to Social Plan Programmes and along the way, to the role of participants' perceptions of adult education programmes.

Furthermore, this literature review has attempted to share how the Dipaakanyo programme aims to address a complex social problem. In order for Social Plan Programmes to be successful, the effects (both attitudinal and behavioural) that result from attending such programmes must to be shared – especially among the participants themselves. This is something that is neither easy to achieve nor easy to measure, especially as there is no set standard for individual perceptions, but sharing these perceptions may lead to a better understanding of the Dipaakanyo programme and the birth of new ideas to be used in adapting the programme.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. Introduction

This chapter is aimed at providing the reader with insights into the research design and methodology adopted for this particular study. It highlights my philosophical approach to adult education and research, and how this has in turn influenced my choice of research design and methodology. This chapter also outlines the procedures that were followed in conducting the research. It has been organized into the following five subheadings:

1	The aims of the research project and research questions
2	My philosophical approach to adult education and research
3	My research strategy and approach - methods and techniques
4	Issues of validity and reliability
5	Ethical considerations

3.2. The aims of the research project and the research questions

The purpose of this research was to examine the perceptions of a selected group of retrenched participants in a Social Plan Programme in the automotive industry in Gauteng. It was hoped that by examining the perceptions of the programme from the participants' point of view, the strengths and weaknesses of the programme would be identified. It was also my hope that the findings of this research would facilitate an adaptation of the programme so as to enable the programme to remain current and relevant. The research project was therefore important for me in that it made provision

for a reflective adult education practice, and for the development of a social plan curriculum informed by the context of the retrenched workers. This was arrived at by answering the following research questions:

- What were the benefits of the Dipaakanyo programme for the retrenched?
- What problems/difficulties were experienced by the retrenched with the Dipaakanyo programme?
- What suggestions did they have in terms of adapting and improving the programme?

3.3. My philosophical approach to adult education and research

Most adult educators, as career guides and counsellors in education or as facilitators of adult education, will have a set of guiding principles which underlie their practice. These principles include, among others, beliefs about people and how to interact with and relate to them. The principles utilized are supported by certain personal values, which then dictate what we consider to be right or wrong; important and unimportant. These personal values, when viewed communally, form part of a world view and become a way of seeing and doing things. They also become the cornerstones, the foundations of the practice, and the way in which we engage with adult learners.

In this case, the philosophical approach to adult education and research was greatly influenced by the context within which I practice. Coming from a social work background and, in particular, the sub-field of community development, I found myself practicing as a facilitator of adult education in communities that are poor, have low literacy levels and seem in most cases to be cut off from the wider social context. Interactions with people in these communities have shaped me and, to a large extent, have influenced my world view of adult education.

As an adult educator, my theory and philosophy of education lean towards Humanism. The foundation of this philosophy is the belief that *ukufunda akupheli* – that ‘learning

does not end'. As Bartolome (1994) shows, learning is a lifelong process grounded on experience that is acted upon to create constant functionality of the learning process. From this point of view, education becomes life itself. It is a means to assist individuals to become fully autonomous and achieve self-actualization.

My belief is that, in learning to learn, we begin from the premise that each encounter we have with others is a learning experience. This is supported by Knowles (1980), who shows that the change to self-directed learning in adulthood aids learners to internalize the concept that learning and intellectual development are an integral part of life. Through daily interactions with others, we unlearn what we thought we knew. We learn new things. We relearn what we once thought we might not need. We use knowledge gained from life experiences and knowledge acquired from other sources. The relationship between education and the social context is therefore intertwined and complementary in nature. Because this is the case, the primary responsibility of the facilitator becomes one of facilitating the learning process, by selecting appropriate learning activities and encouraging application of the context.

This is also the premise I adopt in community development projects in which the aim is to assist communities to question the status quo of issues as they stand. In the process of this dialogue, as community members question various issues, they come up with solutions that are sustainable and that bring about changes within their communities. As a researcher, the same position is adopted.

Rogers (1951) shows that the facilitator's (and therefore my own) role is to make learning easier by helping the learner to explore activities in ways that are both comfortable and challenging. The role is to assist the participant either in the learning situation or in the research process, to interpret, assess and give meaning to life events and experiences through reading or discussions. The learner is not passive in the learning process but is rather constantly actively participating.

Adams and Schvaneveldt (1991:12) show that the main aim of research is to create information, in the form of data that can be used to provide a better understanding of problems and thereby improve the quality of programmes. These should take into account the life and general condition of the community within which the study takes place.

Brookfield (1986) emphasizes the importance of basing our learning programmes on both felt needs (wants and desires of the learner) and prescribed needs (what the educator identifies as lacking in a situation). The effectiveness of the programme then depends on it being grounded on real-life experiences and concerns in real-life settings.

In choosing to conduct a qualitative evaluation of a programme that affects retrenched workers, I seek to understand the social effects of retrenchment and how the retrenched workers view the programme that is designed to assist with their transition. The participants' view was therefore what shaped the reality of the retrenchment problem (Cohen and Manion, 1994:26), in relation to the Dipaakanyo programme.

My philosophy and values around research have been greatly influenced by Crookston's (1972:12) views on academic advising. This researcher's adapted definition of research can best be summed up as follows:

Research is a developmental process that assists research candidates to reflect on and contextualize their experiences and draw out the learning that comes out as they share their experiences with the researcher on a particular subject that affects their lives. The process is concerned not only with gathering data but also with facilitating the research subject's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioural awareness, problem solving, decision making and evaluation skills. It is an educational process by which the subject realizes their maximum potential through communication and information exchange with the researcher. It is based on the understanding that the process is ongoing, dynamic and multifaceted with the responsibility of keeping it going resting on both the researcher and the subject. The researcher-subject relationship

is equal. The role of the researcher in the process is to facilitate communication and co-ordination of learning experiences through a process of reflection and reviewing on both sides. (Definition adapted from Crookston, 1972.)

My adult education, research approach and philosophy led me to conduct a qualitative evaluative study.

3.4. My research strategy and approach - methods and techniques

General strategy and approach

This research adopted an exploratory qualitative approach in the form of an evaluation. What is evaluation? According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), an evaluation is the systemic assessment of the worth or merit of some object. However this definition does not seem to capture the whole essence of evaluation as there are many types of evaluations that do not necessarily result in an assessment of worth or merit. There are descriptive studies, implementation analyses, and formative evaluations to name but a few. Better perhaps is a definition that emphasizes the information processing and feedback functions of evaluations.

My definition of evaluation will therefore be 'the systematic acquisition and assessment of information to provide useful feedback about some object'. Both definitions agree that evaluation is a *systematic* endeavour and both use the deliberately ambiguous term 'object' which could refer to a programme, policy, technology, person, need, activity, and so on. My coined definition emphasizes *acquiring and assessing information* rather than *assessing worth or merit* because all evaluation work involves collecting and sifting through data, making judgments about the validity of the information and of inferences that derive from it, whether or not an assessment of worth or merit results.

What then are the aims and goals of evaluation? According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), the generic goal of most evaluations is to provide "useful feedback" to a variety of audiences including sponsors, donors, client-groups, administrators, staff, and other relevant constituencies. Most often, feedback is perceived as "useful" if it aids in

decision-making. But the relationship between an evaluation and its impact is not a simple one - studies that seem critical sometimes fail to influence short-term decisions, and studies that initially seem to have no influence can have a delayed impact when more congenial conditions arise. Despite this, there is broad consensus that the major goal of evaluation should be to influence decision-making or policy formulation through the provision of empirically-driven feedback.

For the purposes of this research a qualitative approach to evaluation has been adopted. The qualitative approach emphasizes the importance of observation, the need to retain the phenomenological quality of the evaluation context, and the value of subjective human interpretation in the evaluation process.

This approach also renders it participatory in nature. As the term suggests, the approach emphasizes the central importance of the evaluation of the participants, especially clients and users of the programme or technology. Client-centred and stakeholder approaches are examples of participant-oriented models, as are consumer-oriented evaluation systems.

In agreement with Creswell (1998), my understanding of the knowledge of the meaning of the Dipaakanyo programme will be derived from the “participants” through the interactions that will take place between us. Knowledge will result from the meanings that research participants make of the Dipaakanyo programme.

The other reason for choosing this approach is that it will deepen my understanding of my experiences, and the experiences of the research participants, as we “engage[e] together to explore significant aspects of the programme for improvement of life and to transform the programme itself so as to meet the purpose of the programme more fully (Reason and Bradbury, 1994:1)”.

This research is also an outcome-based evaluation. Outcome-based evaluations investigate whether a programme or technology causes demonstrable effects on specifically defined target outcomes. In this research I will be examining whether the

perceptions of the recipients of the Dipaakanyo programme match with the aims of the programme.

It is hoped that through outcome-based evaluation, information will be collected that will assist in making decisions about the programme. The evaluation will identify the benefits and the challenges of the programme for participants. McNamara (1998) shows that outcome-based evaluation facilitates questioning within the organization to see if programmes bring about the desired outcomes.

Methods and techniques

In terms of methods and techniques, three critical research questions were asked. These questions are outlined in the table below:

Critical Questions	
Critical Question 1:	What did you find beneficial in the Dipaakanyo Social Plan Programme?
Critical Question 2:	What problems or difficulties did you experience with the Dipaakanyo Social Plan Programme?
Critical Question 3:	What suggestions and recommendations could you make in order to adapt or improve the Dipaakanyo Social Plan Programme?

During the training and counselling sessions, I noted that many participants were not comfortable expressing themselves in English and I felt that the data would be of a better quality if participants could speak languages in which they felt more confident.

Therefore, in all the methods and techniques used, room was made to accommodate participants who preferred to articulate themselves in their own language. The following methodologies were used to answer these questions:

- ***Documentary review/analysis***

Evaluation forms that had been completed in the workshops were used to give an indirect view of the programme from the participants' perspective. These were completed whilst the programme was still fresh in their minds.

- ***In-depth semi-structured interviews***

Interviews were held with five people. Three of these were male and two were female. These were chosen from the bigger study population. Bell (1993:94) suggests that using a structure in an interview establishes a framework beforehand which sets out the parameters and scope to be covered. This in turn simplifies the data analysis process in the later stages. Merton and Kendall (1994) in Cohen and Manion (1994:289) show that there are four unique characteristics that are present in structured interviews and these are summarized as follows:

- The person that is being interviewed is known to have been involved in a particular situation.
- The researcher has arrived at a set of hypotheses relating to the meaning and effects of the specified elements.
- The researcher has the opportunity to construct the interview schedule, identifying major areas of inquiry.
- The actual interview is focused on the subjective experiences of the people who have been exposed to the situation.

The questions used in the interview were all open-ended. Cohen and Manion (1994) summarize the advantages of this as follows: "[o]pen-ended questions are flexible; they

allow the interviewer to probe so that they may go into depth if they choose or to clear up a misunderstanding (1994: 277).”

In conducting interviews, provision was made for people to detail critical incidents in their experiences and learning through the Dipaakanyo training programme. These critical incidents were moments that stood out in their learning and they provided explanation as to why these stood out.

In order to facilitate the participation of as many people as possible in the interviews, interviews were held soon after the focus group discussions. People were already at the venue as the project manager had scheduled a meeting with them, and it became worthwhile for them to receive an update on the programme and the payment of an allowance. Special attention was paid to providing sufficient food for the participants, as well as transport money for the day.

- ***Focus group discussions***

Kreuger (1988) defines a focus group as “[a] group of individuals selected and assembled by the researcher to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research (1996:499).” In the case of this research, the point of discussion was participants’ perceptions of the Dipaakanyo programme. Group discussions were facilitated using open-ended questions which were asked in a way that triggered discussion among the participants.

The following then forms the strategy that was used in data collection:

Question 1: Why was the data being collected?	
1)	To determine what the retrenched workers found to be beneficial in the Dipaakanyo Social Plan Programme (the benefits/strengths of the programme).
2)	To determine where the retrenched workers experienced difficulties in using the programme (what was not beneficial/the weaknesses of the

Question 1: Why was the data being collected?	
	programme).
3)	To get recommendations and suggestions on how to adapt and improve the programme.

Question 2: What was the research strategy?	
1)	Document review (analysis): Participants from various Dipaakanyo programmes completed evaluation forms that captured what was beneficial in the programme, where the difficulties were and what recommendations they had to improve the programme.
2)	Focus group discussions: The focus groups were used to explore in-depth sections of the programme through group discussions, highlighting perceptions of the Dipaakanyo programme.
3)	Semi-structured interviews: Interviews were held with five candidates. The questions that were used in the interviews were all open-ended. In conducting the interviews provision was made to allow people to detail critical incidents in their learning experiences in the Dipaakanyo training programme. These critical incidents were moments that stood out in their learning, and explanation as to why they stood out was requested.

Question 4: How many of the data sources were accessed?	
1)	Document review (analysis): Evaluation forms from three Dipaakanyo workshops with an average of about 25 evaluations in each batch were used. The report written by the facilitator on each of these workshops was also used as a source.
2)	Focus group discussions: Two Focus group discussions were held with ten members in each group. This changed from the original plan which was only one focus group because the researcher felt the responses she got in the first focus group were not sufficient.
3)	In-depth interviews: Five past course participants were interviewed. Three were male and two were female

Question 5: Where was the data collected?	
1) Document review/analysis:	JET head office in Braamfontein, JHB.
2) Focus group discussions:	JET site office in Mamelodi, Pretoria.
3) In-depth interviews:	JET site office in Mamelodi, Pretoria.

Question 6: How often were the data collected?	
1) Document review/analysis:	Once-off exercise that took a month
2) Focus group discussions:	Two once-off sessions that took place on two separate half-days
3) In-depth interviews:	Five individual sessions/one per participant

Question 7: How was the data collected?	
1) Document review/analysis:	Transcribed notes
2) Focus group discussions:	Transcribed notes on flip charts and in notebooks, and tape recordings. Discussion to follow the structure of the pre-prepared focus group questionnaire (see Appendix A).
3) In-depth interviews:	Transcribed notes on a pre-prepared interview schedule (see Appendix B) and tape recordings were used.

Question 8: Justify why this plan of data collection was chosen (Why was this the best way of collecting data for the critical question?)	
1) Document review/analysis:	Previous evaluations provided feedback in terms of how the participants perceived the programme just as they finished attending it. At that moment the learning event was still fresh in their minds and they could still relate to the programme. This gave richness to the collected data, as well as a fresh perspective of the programme. This also served as secondary and indirect evidence of the participants'

Question 8: Justify why this plan of data collection was chosen (Why was this the best way of collecting data for the critical question?)	
	perceptions of the training programme. The facilitators' end-of-workshop report was used to cross-reference participants' views with the facilitators' observations.
2) Focus group discussions:	The focus groups facilitated the collection of data on a wide range of information in a short time. Using the focus group elicited a multiplicity of views and emotional processes in a group context. The social gathering also facilitated interactions which stimulated debates on the various identified topics. It seemed as though the interactions in the group were the crucial feature of the focus group because the interaction between participants highlighted their first-hand experience of the views of the subject under discussion in relation to their world. The interaction also enabled the participants to ask questions of each other as well as re-evaluate and reconsider their own understandings of their specific experiences.
3) In-depth interviews:	The people that were interviewed had been retrenched and had undergone the Dipaakanyo programme. The interview was semi-structured to avoid pre-conceived ideas. I had a chance to probe initial responses in the interview and created opportunities for the participants to give the data a deeper meaning. This served to highlight both the areas of strengths and weakness in the programme.

Construction of the research sample

In the initial stages 50 people agreed to participate in the study. However when it was time to conduct the study most of these people were unavailable. The sample was constructed by profiling the participants and then selecting a group that represented the total participant population in terms of age, gender and educational levels.

Unfortunately the research sample does not mirror the population sample as closely as desired, because:

- some participants dropped out;
- very few female participants were on placements at the institutions I consulted and some had not been placed; and
- some of the participants with higher qualifications had already found alternative employment and were not available.

The sample population had a higher mean age and lower educational qualifications than the population of the course participants. However it was possible to get two groups of ten participants for the focus group discussions. Of the five participants for the interview three men were randomly selected and the two women chosen were selected simply because they were the only ones who were available. The research sample that was used can be broken down as follows:

Gender	Number in sample
Males	3
Females	8

Age groupings	Number in each age group
Less than 30 years	3
30 to 35 years	8
35 to 40 years	11
40 to 50 years	1
50 years and above	3

Educational levels	Number in each age group
No formal education	3
Std 1 to 3	7
Std 3 to 5	10
Std 5 to 8	3
Matriculated	2

Skills training for which participants were enrolled	No. in focus groups
Auto-electrical	4
Electrical appliances	2
Welding	3
Motor mechanics	5
Carpentry	4
Plastering / Bricklaying	2
Plumbing	3
Catering	2

Documentation and presentation of research findings

Since the approach to the study was qualitative in nature, the data that was gathered is exploratory in nature. The interviews and the focus group discussion were recorded on tape. These were then transcribed and the transcriptions were edited and summarized. To make sure that the essence of what was said had been captured, the summaries were then organized into similar categories. This is what Hycner (1985) calls “[c]lustering units of relevant meaning” and “determining themes from clusters of meaning”. In fact, Hycner (1985) also has guidelines that mirror the process which was followed as listed below:

- Transcription
- Bracketing and phenomenology reduction
- Listening to the interview for a sense of whole
- Delineating units of general meaning
- Delineating units of meaning relevant to the research question
- Training independent judges to verify the units of relevant meaning
- Eliminating redundancies
- Clustering units of relevant meaning
- Determining themes from clusters of meaning

- Writing summaries of each individual interview (the same goes for each individual's input in the focus group discussions)
- Returning to the participants with the summary of themes, conducting some verification
- Modifying themes and summary
- Identifying general and unique themes from all
- Contextualization of the themes
- Providing a composite summary (Hycner, 1985:279-303).

These are the steps that were adopted and the developed categories were then analyzed according to common themes and emerging patterns in relation to the research questions. These were laid out in terms of how frequently they appeared and in some cases the actual voices of the participants have been highlighted.

The research findings and this report were intentionally developed in a way that is appealing and understandable to all the stakeholders in the research; that is, JET and the research participants.

3.5. Issues of validity and reliability

Three main techniques were used to ensure reliability and validity. These were:

1. A triangulation of methods – The technique of triangulation, which is the use of more than one method of data collection, is an essential way of making sure of the integrity of qualitative research, as it is acknowledged that no one method is reliable in providing depth and accuracy.

Document analysis, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews were used to investigate the main questions of the research. This enabled me to cross-check the data that was gathered against each method.

2. Peer examination - In the collection of the data, I solicited the services of the project manager of the Ford Project at JET as an observer. In analyzing the data I cross-referenced with her to check if what had been said in the focus groups and the interviews was captured correctly.

When the findings were completed, they were passed on to her for comment and input. This was followed by member validation.

3. Member validation - According to Maxwell (in Bickman and Rog, 1998: 94), using member validation is one way of making sure that you do not misconstrue the meaning of what the research participants have said and their perspective of the subject of discussion.

After transcribing the data for the interviews the researcher phoned each one of the research participants to check if what had been captured covered what they had communicated in the interviews.

However a major challenge to the validity of the study was the fact that only a few steps of the social planning process come under evaluation in the study, leaving out other steps that impact on the effectiveness of the intervention. Inter-relationships with other training providers, like colleges, were not explored and neither were the participants' perceptions of these programmes.

3.6. Ethical considerations

Each participant in the research received a letter that explained the aims and the purposes of the study. Provision was made to accommodate the literacy levels of the participants by providing a letter that was written in Sesotho. The letter had a consent form attached to it and participants were asked to sign it as evidence of their agreement to be part of the study population (see Appendices C and D). Prior to the letters being sent, I communicated with the project manager to ascertain the literacy levels of the participants. The project manager's report was that the participants could read and write.

I also communicated with the participants on issues of confidentiality. It was made clear in the same letter that participation was voluntary and that whatever information they communicated to me could never be traced back to them. They would remain anonymous. To ensure this confidentiality I communicated the findings of the research to the participants. When the analysis was complete, they noted that no name was mentioned in the report.

3.7. Limitations of the study

However, there were limitations to this study and these must be acknowledged. This study was conducted across one sector of the economy, the automotive industry, and is therefore not representative of other economic sectors in the country.

The use of translations in in-depth interviews and focus group discussions might also have altered the meaning of what the researcher sought to establish, and as such, the findings may be compromised.

Finally, the various methods used in the research were intimidating to the participants at times. Careful planning and implementation were required to reduce anxiety.

3.8. Closing remarks

This chapter has shown the approach that was adopted for this research. I shared my personal philosophy and how this influenced the choice of the approach, methodology and techniques that were used in the study. The research methodology and strategy has been summed up graphically in a diagram on the following page.

3.9. The Research Design Table

The Research Questions	Sources of Information	Methods of Data Collection	Validity and Reliability	Methods of Data Analysis
<u>Research Aims</u> To examine the perceptions of a selected group of retrenched participants in a social plan programme in the automotive industry in Gauteng. <u>Research Questions</u> 1) What were the benefits of the Dipaakanyo programme for the retrenchees? 2) What problems/ difficulties had been experienced by the retrenchees with the Dipaakanyo programme? 3) What suggestions could be offered by the retrenchees in terms of the adaptation and improvement of the programme?	1) Past Dipaakanyo course participants' evaluations. 2) 5 in-depth interviews with past course participants with critical incidents during interviews 3) 2 focus group discussions with 10 past course participants each	<u>Evaluation Method</u> Qualitative Evaluation Method <u>Research Methods</u> 1) Document Analysis 2) In-depth Individual Interviews 3) Focus Group Discussions	1) Triangulation 2) Audio Tapes 3) Flip Chart Notations 4) Member Validation Checks 5) Peer Examination	<u>Descriptive Analysis</u> Summaries of : A) Document Analysis B) Interviews and Critical Incidents C) Focus Group Discussions <u>Interpretive Analysis</u> A) Themes B) Sub-Themes

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

The aim of this research was to examine the perceptions of a selected group of retrenched participants regarding a social plan programme at Ford Motors in Mamelodi, Pretoria. The research questions were as follows:

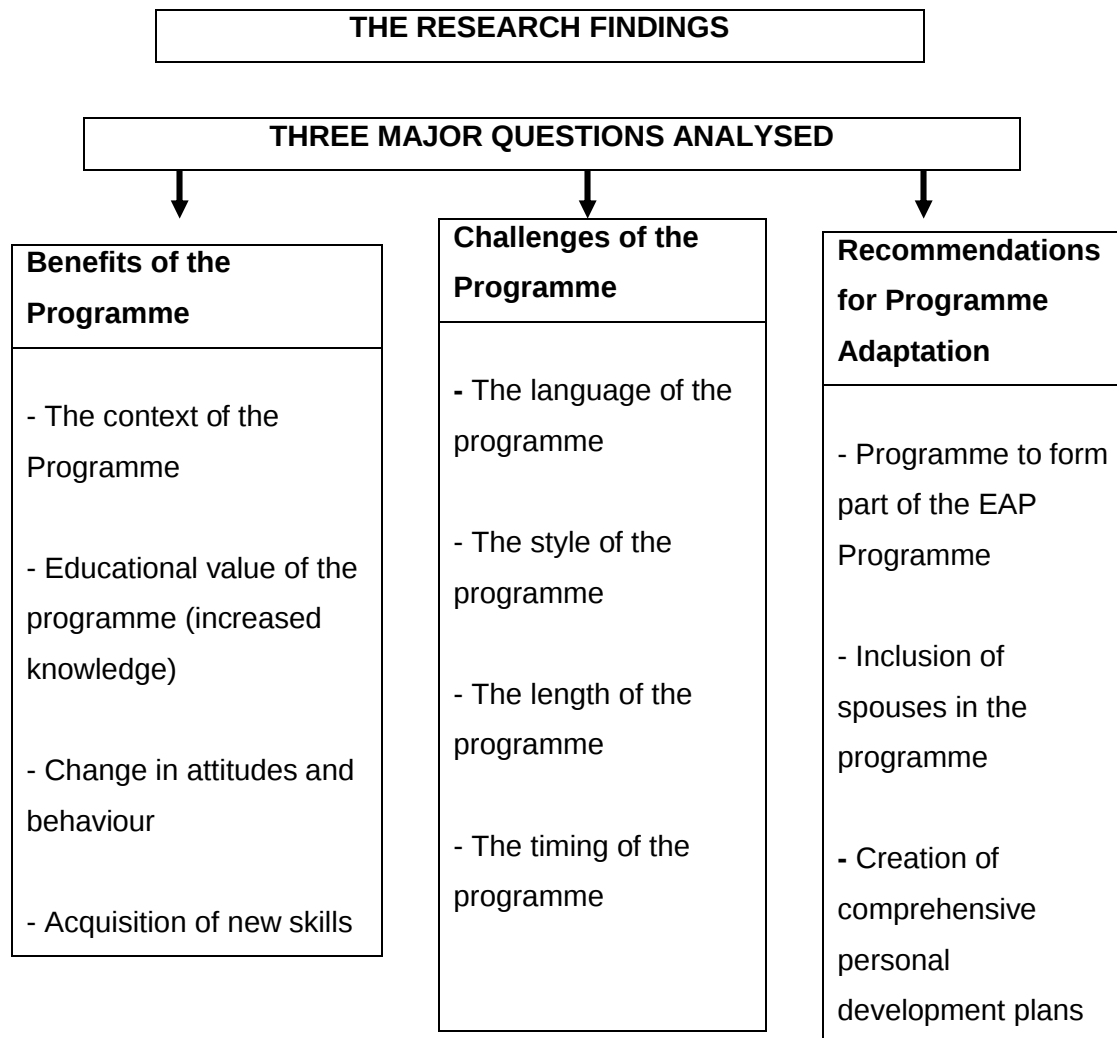
1. What were the benefits/strengths of the Dipaakanyo Social Plan Programme?
2. What were the challenges/weaknesses of the programme?
3. What recommendations for adaptation or enhancement of the programme could participants make?

It is important to note upfront that in the focus group discussions there were those who did not want to contribute anything at all at times, as they felt they did not have anything to say.

In looking at the research questions themselves, all the participants shared and responded to the first question in the affirmative; that the programme was beneficial for them. When it came to the second question about three people in each focus group felt that there were no weaknesses in the programme. Most of the other participants felt that what the others described as weaknesses could be recommendations for improving the programme.

When it came to making recommendations, all participants contributed fairly to what they thought should change and they were in agreement most of the time.

The findings of the research are hereby presented in the order of the research questions with each question having sub-themes as follows:



4.2. The Benefits/Strengths of the Dipaakanyo Social Plan Programme

All the participants of the research were asked if they had found the Dipaakanyo Training programme beneficial. All of them said it was beneficial. The findings around the benefits and strengths of the programme were ranked according to the frequency of the themes which were then categorized and grouped in the following areas:

- the context of the programme;
- the educational value of the programme (increasing knowledge);
- change in attitudes and values; and
- acquiring new skills.

4.2.1. The context of the programme

The participants reported that the major strength and benefit of the Dipaakanyo programme was that it was well-situated within the South African context. The information contained in the programme is accurate and relevant to the South African labour market. Participants found that this helped them in locating themselves within the challenges that the country as a whole is facing.

One participant said, “*Kebe ketoma kuboa ka diseconomy*: It was the first time I had ever talked about the economy...the initial discussions in the programme focused around the changes that have taken place in this country and as such it was easy for me to see why there are so many retrenchments...that for me proved that this was not just my problem, but a problem for other workers in the country and many other countries for that matter.”

Another participant pointed out that, “... *programme enna ebua ka Africa borwa*: This is a South African programme...discussing South African problems meant that in working through this programme we were bound to come up with solutions that were real...solutions that could work for us in our current situations.”

Another participant said, “The programme related to the real issues that we are facing...The programme is South African and it’s about South African issues.”

Having a programme that talks to everyday issues was seen as a major strength as it located the programme in a familiar context and was therefore relevant for participants.

This sentiment was echoed in the end-of-course evaluations and reports that were written by the participants soon after the workshop was completed. As noted in one evaluation form, “...one major strength of the programme is that it is well-researched such that it uses examples that are contextualized to the situations of the recipients of the programme...” Another facilitator said, “...the workshop became alive the moment statistics were revealed, examples were given...people’s faces lit up and you could see that they could relate to these facts...it was all familiar territory...it made them appreciate the work that had gone into the development of the materials to make it really South African.”

Further learner evaluation forms contained the following comments:

- “The examples are real and it felt like someone was listening to my conversations with my next-door neighbour...”
- “I found the programme beneficial as it helped me understand change as it is happening in the country and why these changes are taking place.”
- “This programme was powerful in that it talked to issues that were bothering me in my country at the moment...I could relate to the points of discussion therefore it was so easy for me to become part of the programme and to benefit from it.”

These comments from documents, interviews and focus group discussions serve to demonstrate one of the major strengths the programme: that it is well-researched and based on scenarios that participants can identify with and relate to.

4.2.2. The educational value of the programme

Another aspect that came across from the three methods of collecting data used in the study was that the programme has educational value in terms of the workshop being able to increase participants' knowledge.

The participants saw the workshop as providing them with opportunity to learn new ideas. A number of them said the programme enabled them to understand their world better and see how it related to other systems: "*kebe kesatsibi kgori nto tse diatsamaelana* [I did not know that these things were related globally]". For them, the educational value was learning how different factors relate to one another.

One of the participants said, "The programme was very enlightening for me as I learnt how things like fuel prices impact on the labour and economy of the country...even the issue of retrenchments becomes related to that." Another summed this up by saying, "I never really knew how things fit together until now, going through the programme...I have learnt how politics affect how people live, what jobs they go into...and how so many things are actually related."

Another group of responses seem to indicate that the programme emphasized the strong link that education has with the provision of service. This group of respondents saw the workshop as providing them with a range of educational tools that would ensure their survival in their communities and the promotion of the effective use of resources within these communities.

As one participant put it, "Discussions like (sic) getting the information you need were very educational for me...I did not know that I could actually use my own community to access information and to actually use the same community as a major resource...for me this has been one educational aspect of the workshop. Another participant said "I have learnt so much. Educating myself about how to set realistic goals was something new for

me...If things are well-planned, they can be achieved...this workshop has left me free...I am using education as a tool to face the future with confidence.”

The third group of participants’ responses indicate that, for them, the strength of the programme lay in its developmental approach. The programme involved not only one person but the community as a whole. To quote this participant, “*After iretrenchment ndibe ndiyoyika ukuvela emphakathini kodwa ngemva kokuattender lena I programme ndiye ndacingi ukuba lena iprogramme ikhuthaza intuthuko nokuthi ikamva lethu lise kusebenziseni nomphakathi* [I feared being seen in public after retrenchment but after attending the programme I saw that the future lay in developing together with the community]”.

These participants saw the workshop as being broader than educational, in the sense that it could bring about change in them as individuals and communally as a group. The workshop provided them with a wide range of experiences. The learning was not just bound to the workshop but rather continued beyond the classroom setting. To quote from what participants said, “The experiences and sharing in the workshop enabled me to develop as a person in that I could relate these new experiences to other settings beyond the workshop...” and “My experiences in the workshop can be tapped into at any time when there is need to utilize them...the programme has brought about personal growth for me.”

4.2.3. Change in attitudes and values

One aspect that was dominant in the research was that of a change in attitudes and values. The participants explained that getting the letters to say they were being retrenched was one of the most horrifying experiences they had ever had, but that the Dipaakanyo training programme helped them to deal with these horrors. As one participant said, “I was shattered when I got that letter...however, when the training programme came along I was helped to realize that I have so much more in my life outside of Ford Motors...Getting to realize that was such a boost for me”.

This participant went on to say that since attending the Dipaakanyo training programme she found that she could talk openly to strangers; a thing she had never done in the past. She also explained how, after she was retrenched, she was so depressed she could not leave the house. The programme helped her to see that she had a purpose in life and that others could benefit from her presence: “My outlook to life totally changed. There was meaning to life and there are other values than working for Ford Motors”.

Other participants also echoed these sentiments, expressing the view that their attitude towards life had changed since attending the programme. One participant said, “I thought that with retrenchment I had reached the end of my road. I wished that God could just take me [I wished that I could die]. I sat at home day in, day out, and that was so difficult. How could I sit there the whole day looking at my wife, my children and my grandchildren, knowing that I was feeling [like] a useless person? There was nothing that I was bringing into the home for them...but after attending the Dipaakanyo programme I realized how...valuable I was to my family. Being a breadwinner was just an addition to the worth and value I already had in my family.”

One aspect that was viewed as a reason for the change in attitude was the fact that the programme was offered to the participants as a group. In the words of one of the participants, “When you are sitting there at home, the tendency is to feel that one is all alone.....but coming together as we did gave comfort to all of us”. The power of the collective sharing of experiences during the training programme itself was a boost to the egos and self-esteem of the participants.

This is supported by the programme evaluations that were analyzed. These evaluations indicate that in the initial stages of the programme, the participants were reserved and were not willing to share experiences. However, towards the end of the programme, there was an evident change in the attitudes of the participants. They reported on the positive feedback that they received from one another, as this extract from an evaluation form shows, “The workshop has assisted in developing my confidence because my co-learners

tell me things that I never realized I was good at. Other things I just took them for granted. Clearly my confidence is growing...I even offer to share my experiences. This feedback that I am receiving warms me up as it means I am becoming a better person in this workshop.”

The findings reveal that issues of change in attitudes and increased self-esteem arose out of sessions that assisted participants to identify their strengths and weaknesses. The participants said that these issues were not discussed superficially, but that they went into the depth: “The identified strengths were capitalized on to translate them into actionable goals that I could immediately start working on.”

Another said, “The sessions in the programme and the approach used by the facilitators treated us as equals; we were seen as being able to contribute in a meaningful way to building knowledge. Suddenly we felt like we were experts in our own right.”

The programme evaluation reports reinforce this: “The evaluations indicate that in these sessions the participants had become comfortable with the presentation style and content of the participant workbook”. One participant said “When it was time to knock off at exactly 16h00 I did not want to leave and looking around me everybody else was not in the mood for leaving...we were all so relaxed and willing to share experiences”. Another participant said, “It felt like this was really our workshop...we were responsible for the learning that was taking place.”

One of the participants echoes his appreciation of the role the programme played in his life, by reflecting on how he felt after the programme: “I was elated and motivated just from knowing and being assured of the role the programme was fulfilling in achieving my dreams...through self-reflection everything became clearer to me...the self-pity stages were gone”.

Another participant said in terms of attitude, “This was evident post-course in the business consortiums that had been formed during the duration of the programme...these are still up-and-running to date. These goals were set on target and served to confirm that changes can happen. There was more that could be done beyond retrenchment”.

One major area of benefit was the change in values. Most of the respondents said that the thought of their returning to learning was very daunting until they realized that it was a different kind of learning; not what they had experienced when growing up. One participant said “Education took a different meaning for me...there was value to this kind of learning...it is learning that is linked to a livelihood...at this point I was highly motivated and prepared to go back to school...my home was ready for me to set up a learning environment”. They also reflected on the fact that the programme had taught them the importance of communicating with their families, who then provided them with much-needed support.

From many of the responses, it was clear that individual counselling sessions had a lot to do with changes in attitude and values as people got the attention that no-one had given them prior to the programme. This was one element that frequently came up as one of the strengths of the programme.

4.2.4. Acquisition of new skills

The research findings revealed that, more than anything else, the Dipaakanyo programme helped the participants to acquire new skills. At the top of the list of skills acquired were problem-solving skills. As one participant put it, “The various case studies that were used in the workshop were about people needing to make changes in different circumstances. This taught me so much on the skill of problem-solving...it even tapped into my own problem-solving skills that I had left latent for so long”.

Another said, “One skill I learnt for sure in this programme was how to solve problems...I have learnt there is always a solution to a problem...I learnt that one needed to unpack the problem, then create possible solutions. From the possible solutions one needed to pick up one that would work best...there is always a solution, no matter how bleak things may seem”.

Negotiation and collaboration were named as skills that participants had learnt in the programme. The participants indicated that the programme benefited them in developing allies. One participant said, “It became clear for me that there were a lot of things that could be done if one has this skill...now I look for opportunities to introduce myself to others in the community...largely because I now know how to communicate with others and benefit from the associations...the workshop was brilliant in giving me that skill.”

Another skill that the participants felt they had learned in the course was good communication skills. Participants said that, generally, their cultures had taught them various ways of communicating: “The wife always has to listen to what the husband says...In this workshop I have learned that I can listen to my wife as an equal or to my child for that matter...There is wisdom in stopping and listening to other people’s ideas...Getting the right information before making a decision is very important”.

Participants pointed out that another skill they had learnt through the programme was how to “sell [market] themselves”. It was clear from their responses that the programme had assisted them in identifying their capabilities. They were now a position to articulate what they were good at.

One participant had the following to say “Going through activities that encouraged me to look at what skills I already had, helped me to be in a position to appraise myself, which was something I could never have done before the programme. *Ke tlo tseba kuitekisa* [I now know how to sell my self to a possible employer]”.

The fact that the participants were able to choose a skills programme related to their skills and capabilities was beneficial in that it pointed them in a direction that assisted them to become active citizens again, contributing to the economy and being gainfully employed. This was attributed greatly to the individual counselling sessions they had received. As this participant remarked, “The individual counselling sessions gave me an opportunity for a heart-to-heart discussion towards a workable career...”

4.3. The Challenges and Weaknesses of the Dipaakanyo Programme

In response to questions about the challenges or weaknesses of the programme, participants' initial response was everything about the programme had been fine. After much probing they were able to share some of what they considered to be the weaknesses or challenges of the programme.

4.3.1. The language of the programme

The language in which the programme's training materials were written is English. The medium of instruction is English. Due to the varying literacy levels in the groups, some participants found English satisfactory whilst others found it challenging to follow. Even though the facilitators used the spoken languages of the group, the language issue remained a challenge. Facilitators used a variety of languages in the sessions, which caused the sessions to take longer than planned. This caused frustrations for those who felt they had been delayed. It created difficult group dynamics that facilitators had to deal with. Sometimes the meaning of what was meant to be conveyed was lost in translation.

Some of the participants felt that the material developers and facilitators had been insensitive as they had made the assumption that everyone in the programme understood English. As one participant commented, "*Batho ba babanakgana kguri kgaufela kgaruna retseba sekqua* [It was clear that they thought we all understood English]. Even though the facilitators had been accommodating with the languages in the discussion, I still felt left out because I could not pick up the manual and read it for myself..."

Another participant said, "*Diboka tsabona tsena bedikgatla empa kesabona kguri diringi* [The training manuals looked very interesting]. You could see they had been developed simply, with fewer words. They had lots of pictures but still the language that was used was English and I could not read and understand what was written."

For others, the frustration of the language was more evident when it came to group work. Those that could read the English wanted to move on with the task that had been presented to them, without translating for others. Those that had low levels of literacy could not participate fully as they had not understood what was being discussed. When they tried to read passages and then translate, the time that was allocated for the session was used up.

One participant said, “As soon as we went to do activities in groups, I told those that had been in my group that I could not read or write...I felt really exposed in a bad way as people lost patience to explain and translate things to me...At one point I even stopped participating...However, the facilitator was quick to pick up on this and changed the groups now and again, so that I got a chance and worked with others who were more patient with me”.

4.3.2. The methodology/facilitation style of the programme

Another of the challenges pointed out by participants was closely related to the previous discussion. A variety of methods and activities were used in the sessions. Some of the activities required participants to work independently. Some of the activities required reading and writing. Where participants were unable to read and write such activities were a challenge for them.

As one of the facilitator reports shows, “Not having enough information about the educational levels of my participants proved quite challenging at times...especially where participants had to work on individual activities and they could not write...Either I had to ask someone to work with them or I had to sit down with a group of them and help them through the activity...It was not easy”.

One participant said, “I opened the page from seeing the pictures, but from there I was stuck as I could not read or write”.

Another said, “The activities used to facilitate learning in the programme varied...However I felt embarrassed at times when the facilitator had asked for people to volunteer to read...I knew it could never be me volunteering to read as my reading was so bad.”

Another participant said, “I envied those that had gone to stand in front and present what had been discussed in the group...I knew that could never have been me as I could not read what had been written by the others...This change in the way they facilitated was intimidating for me”.

4.3.3. The length of the programme

Another aspect of the programme mentioned as a challenge was the length or duration of the programme. The participants felt that the programme had been packed into too short a period. They felt that the programme would have been more effective if it had been spread over a longer period of time. They also felt if it had been given more time, various aspects of the programmes would have been dealt with in more detail.

The participants’ responses indicated that if the programme had been held over a longer period, participants would have gotten more individual attention. A longer period of time could also have given the participants a chance to implement some of the concepts they had learnt, with facilitators mentoring and supporting them.

The following are some of the things the participants said:

- “At the end of each day I felt so tired. Each day was just too packed with information”.
- “Just as I was getting to understand the concept and trying to relate it to other examples a new subject was introduced...I would have liked to be given an

opportunity to practice the skills I had learnt first before moving on to the next set of skills”.

- “The course was too packed in a short space of time for me to absorb what was really being discussed here...some of us are good at learning, going back and thinking about what has been learnt before being introduced to a new topic.”
- “...so much in a short space of time...It could have been good for us to learn one thing in enough time to reflect on it...”

4.3.4. The timing of the programme

Another challenge was the timing of the presentation of the programme. Participants felt that bringing the programme to them long after they were retrenched and after they had used up their retrenchment packages, was not a good idea. The programme would have been more effective if it had been presented to them before the retrenchment took place so that they could then use the skills provided in a more effective way.

One participant said, “All the solutions to the many questions I had been toying with in the last few months had suddenly been presented in the programme...I had already started doing things wrongly and had to undo all that and start afresh with new insight into the matter”.

Another said, “This is too little, too late...some people calling themselves financial advisors have already messed up my life...Thank God I had not invested all my money. I can use the little money that is left using the information I obtained in the programme”.

These sentiments were echoed by a number of participants who felt that the programme was not simply a retrenchment programme, but rather a life skills programme that could have been useful throughout their lives. As one participant said, “This kind of programme was actually ideal for equipping people with skills throughout one’s working life...it

should not have waited to be given to people at the end of their working lives...Some of us are old now; it should have come earlier. I could have done a lot of things differently”.

It is important to note at this point that whilst this challenge does not directly link to the programme itself, it does have an effect on the effective delivery of the programme as a whole.

4.4. Recommendations for the Adaptation of the Dipaakanyo Programme

When this question was posed to participants their responses were closely linked to the challenges. The recommendations were more in line with possible solutions to the challenges.

4.4.1. Programme to form part of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

The participants felt that the Dipaakanyo programme would be best implemented if it were situated within Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs). They said that not only did the programme address retrenchment or unemployment problems, but it had also been useful in sensitizing them to likely feelings and problems that arose in everyday life. The following were some of the aspects that participants felt had worked well:

- communication skills in relation to relationships in the workplace and outside;
- money management skills which would teach them how to use, save, and invest money; and
- employee development: the development of skills in other areas based on specific interests.

For the participants, the Dipaakanyo programme would be more comprehensive if it took these into consideration. They indicated that if this was done, the programme could work well with the unemployed.

The participants felt that locating the Dipaakanyo programme within the broader EAP context would also help in pitching the facilitation at the appropriate level. The reason for this was that the facilitator would have access to some of the following information:

- the age of participants;
- the areas of their previous work experience; and
- their level of education.

Participants felt that having this information would enable the facilitator to be better prepared so that s/he could use examples that would be relevant to the participants.

4.4.2. Inclusion of spouses in the programme

Some responses gathered from participants in the programme suggested the inclusion of spouses in the Dipaakanyo programme. Participants said that if the programme had been presented earlier in the retrenchment, and had spouses been part of the programme, many personal and family problems could have been averted. Some of the participants reported that they no longer had good relationships with their spouses and attributed the strained relationships to their retrenchment.

As one participant put it, “If my wife had been through the programme, in particular the counselling sessions, she could have shared her fears as well.” Another said, “I would have continued with the counselling if my wife had been involved. She could have understood why I had gone back to school and why I had been involved in a skills programme. If she had attended the course she could have understood that I was trying to be a man again”.

The participants indicated that, while having spouses in the programme during its entire duration could be unfeasible, the programme organizers could set aside a few days where spouses could attend. Participants indicated, on the whole, that had their spouses

attended, they could have been sensitized to some of the problems faced by retrenchees when returning to their so-called “normal, everyday situations”.

4.4.3. Creation of comprehensive Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

While short courses or skills training of three to six months’ duration were most commonly selected by retrenched workers, in some instances they wanted to take up long-term training. These programmes were year-long and sometimes even longer. However, because programme selection had not been clearly explained to the participants, their choices were ‘thumb-sucked’ in most cases. They chose short-term courses because they were not well-informed.

The participants’ recommendations in terms of the right to choose any programme, short-term or long-term, was that these choices should be matched to individual profiles. The participants felt that whilst the Dipaakanyo programme endeavoured to assist them to draw up Individual Development Plans (IDPs), these plans were not comprehensive and came in too late. The fact that they were not comprehensive resulted in training programme selections that were not relevant for some of the participants.

Participants said that if the Dipaakanyo training had been part of the EAP programme this could have been averted, as individual skills could have been matched to relevant programmes. Where additional entry requirements were made these could have been fast-tracked through RPL. Participants also felt that a carefully constructed IDP might include more than a single training programme or course or a training provider. Participants recommended that a close link with outside training providers be maintained.

4.5. Closing remarks

The responses to the research questions provided rich and diverse responses. The responses obtained from the different methodologies used in the research were congruent, making it easy for the researcher to identify commonalities that could be clustered

together. Whilst the general responses were positive in nature, participants provided debates which gave way to the recommendations presented above. The next chapter provides a discussion of these findings.

5. FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

The first chapter of this report introduced JET Education Services and the Dipaakanyo Social Plan Programme. The purpose of the research was to investigate the perception of the participants of the programme as to what they saw as the benefits and challenges of the programme. The rationale for conducting the research was a reflective adult education practice and provision for participants to share in the development of curricula.

The second chapter of the report reviewed the prevailing literature around the following themes:

1. What is a Social Plan Programme? A social plan was described as a tool used to try and alleviate the negative effects of retrenchment. It was stated that there are various components in the process, across the spectrum of individual counselling, money management, business set-up and skills development.
2. Under the heading, ‘The Role of Education in Social Plan Programmes’, it was explained that adult education has a major role in achieving social policy goals. Various theories of adult education were discussed in relation to social plan programmes.
3. Participants’ perspectives on adult education programmes were discussed alongside issues of education and learning, dialogue between facilitators and learners, social context and social interactions.

The third chapter look at the research design by examining the research question, my philosophical approach to adult education, the research strategy and methods and techniques that were used in the collection of data. Issues of validity, reliability and ethics were also discussed.

The fourth chapter discussed the research findings. The benefits of the programme were highlighted as the context of the programme and the educational value of the programme as it worked to increase knowledge and new skills. Changes in attitude and behaviour were also seen as having been a benefit of the programme. Challenges centred on the language, style, length and timing of the programme. Recommendations for the programme were: the inclusion of social planning into EAPs, the inclusion of spouses into the programme and the creation of comprehensive IDPs.

The final chapter concludes with a discussion of the issues that emerged from the findings of the research. These issues have been linked back to the literature review that was discussed earlier on, in relation to the findings of the research.

5.2. Summary of the research results

The research results have shown that the participants found the Dipaakanyo programme beneficial after retrenchment. The programme assisted the participants to contextualize retrenchments; it facilitated a change in attitudes and assisted them in acquiring new skills. The results also showed that there were challenges relating to the programme. These challenges were in terms of the language, style, length and the timing of the programme. The findings showed that the participants recommended the following for programme adaptation; the programme to form part of the Employee Assistance Programme, inclusion of spouses in the programme and a larger part of the programme to assist individuals in the development of comprehensive personal development plans.

5.3. Why Social Plan Programmes?

When looking at the findings it is interesting to note that participants show a clear need for Social Plan Programmes. It is also interesting to note that the participants see the Dipaakanyo programme as a tool that enabled them to understand the changing economic climate and at the same time comprehend why there were retrenchments and how these could be located in the larger economic global arena.

Retrenchment is a reality faced in all world economies; hence a programme that prepares people for such eventualities is a necessity. The research findings highlight that a well-constructed Social Plan Programmes should enable people to understand the changing economic climate and give them tools that enable them to be innovative in responding to changing external economic conditions. The research participants found the Dipaakanyo programme to a large extent to be a satisfactory tool.

It is important to note that the findings point out that the social planning tool should not just be used “at the end” (when workers are retrenched), but all the time. It should be used to facilitate ongoing discussion between workers’ representatives and employers about the future of their organisation or industrial sector. When used this way, the social planning tool could assist in developing long-term strategies that would help to reduce job losses. Furthermore, this constant dialogue would create an environment for consultative decision-making, ensuring that all parties are kept informed of issues relating to job security so that they can develop and implement job retention strategies.

As South Africa faces the changing skills development needs of the labour market, Blumenthal (2002) shows the need for a shift in education and training. Social Plan Programmes can be utilized to implement relevant skills training that relates to the desired skills of the nation. That will constitute a pro-active step in dealing with the skills problem that the country is facing, while at the same time engaging more meaningfully in the National Skills Development Strategy.

The research findings show that the Dipaakanyo programme assisted the participants in acquiring new skills. For some of the participants these skills were top-up skills from the skills they had already; for others, these were scarce skills – and this is taking place in a country where skills shortages have recently necessitated the launch by Government of the Accelerated and shared growth initiatives for South Africa (AsgiSA) and the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA). If South Africa’s economy is to grow at a competitive rate, the most fatal constraint to shared growth is skills. Hence, the need for

comprehensive Social Plan Programmes to build skills that will allow the country to participate in the first economy.

The findings of the research show that well-implemented Social Plan Programmes can contribute to curbing the problem of unemployment by creating alternative work opportunities. This is in line with the findings tabled in the National Skills Development Strategy which show that, along with unemployment, small, medium and micro industries account for 42% of GDP and are seen as a significant growth area for the economy (NSD, 2001: 25). If Social Plan Programmes are implemented in a constructive way in dealing with retrenchments, other forms of employment can be created.

Kasworm and Marienau (1977) posit that the viability and the competitive edge of many companies depend on a knowledgeable and skilled workforce. Professional associations and related continuing professional education programmes are also encouraging continuous learning in order to meet the rising standards of performance dictated by advances in technology and knowledge. This is confirmed by the research findings which show that Social Plan Programmes should form part of EAPs.

This is interesting in the sense that Social Plan Programmes were conceptualized *from* EAPs to begin with, but the research participants see a separate concept that has to deal with the effects of retrenchments. The reality, though, is that since Social Plan Programmes are predominantly aimed at providing life skills for survival after employment, they should be implemented throughout an employee's working life – to help them to understand the world of work and to prepare them for how the skills they have learnt can best be utilized outside of the work environment.

The principles of Social Plan Programmes seemed to be idealistic in nature: whilst all possible negotiations can take place to try and save jobs, it is not always possible to reach that consensus. It is also never easy to develop alternatives. It is possible that using Social Plan Programmes as part of EAP programmes can assist in the decline of job losses – particularly in the sense that continuous assessments of employees' skills, as well as top-

up training, will try to meet the rising standards of performance dictated by advances in technology and knowledge. This would also work hand-in-glove with the HIV/AIDS employment strategies.

As part of EAP programmes, social planning can then keep a record of what skills are in place and what the career plans or paths for various individuals are. That way, it will be easier to groom and train for the succession of workers who may no longer be able to work due to ill health.

In particular, the findings reveal that participants in the research found that the Dipaakanyo programme helped them with strategies to develop businesses that could be utilized in their local communities. This made them feel as though they had a purpose in their communities; an avenue which they thought had been closed when they were retrenched.

5.4. What Processes Do They Follow?

Having tried to define what Social Plan Programmes are, it is logical to discuss what processes they follow. NEDLAC and the Department of Labour show that whilst the principles outline a bigger scope of what Social Plan Programmes stand for, the following are some of the objectives of Social Plan Programmes:

- i. Group and individual counselling to assist workers in dealing with the emotional impact of retrenchment and adjusting to new conditions.
- ii. Skills assessment and awarding of credits for prior learning, to facilitate new employment through the awarding of formal qualifications where appropriate.
- iii. Assessment of potential and development of a career plan in order to help workers to identify their options and assist them in the choices they have to make between further skills training, SMME training and or finding new employment.
- iv. Training and re-training of workers in line with the National Skills Development Strategy, to facilitate the channelling of retrenched workers into employment.

- v. Placement services where the retrenchees could then be placed in institutions of learning or new positions of employment.

The rationale in conducting this research has been to solicit participants' perceptions of the Dipaakanyo programme in order to inform its adaptation and improvement. I then tried to match these perceptions with set process objectives of Social Plan Programmes.

There is enough evidence in the responses that were collected to indicate that the Dipaakanyo programme to a large extent meets the objectives. Participants cited in numerous ways how individual counselling helped them to deal with their emotional turmoil. They also talked of how they benefited from the skills training and how this helped them to find alternative means of employment.

Skills assessment and the awarding of credits for prior learning and assessment of potential and development of a career plan are closely related. The findings of this study points to the need for these to be carefully worked out. Whilst there were assessments conducted in the programme leading to skills placements, participants felt that these need to form part of comprehensive Individual Development Plans (IDPs). Proper qualifications or unit standards related to the specific sector or field need to be utilized. Using set standards would also ensure their mobility on the national registration database. Participants' skills and abilities could then be recognized even beyond their current jobs.

While RPL stands as one of the key principles of the NQF, its implementation in various settings has been very slow. Utilizing RPL in the social plan process would ensure worker recognition and mobility on the National Learner Database, which would be a boost for individuals to participate in RPL ventures.

Training and re-training of workers in line with the National Skills Development Strategy and placement services were achieved as all the participants in the research had been placed into skills programmes and are, as such, participating in the National Skills Development Process. However, for this to be really meaningful, the choice of courses and their durations should link with the relevant educational levels of the participants.

5.5. The Role of Education in Social Plan Programmes

Achieving social policy goals has been among the chief purposes for adult education in South Africa. The research findings confirm that education has a big role to play in Social Plan Programmes. As outlined in the ‘retrenchment problem tree’ in Chapter Two, most retrenched workers fail to become economically active again because of three main reasons:

- i. lack of skills;
- ii. lack of information on support and opportunities available; and
- iii. lack of knowledge of how to utilize the retrenchment package in becoming self-employed or investing.

These causes all suggest an educational agenda. Haggstrom et al (1966) highlights that the purpose of adult education is not only to transmit knowledge and skills, “[b]ut rather the development of assumptions of knowledge and skill which enable those educated to define their situations clearly enough to allow action to proceed (p. 151)”.

Looking at this definition, in conjunction with the research findings, it is clear that education has the power to enable people to see beyond the obvious. There were a number of instances in which participants cited the fact that taking part in the Dipaakanyo programme assisted them to understand their situation and enable them to develop realistic goals.

In line with modernization theories of development, education used in Social Plan Programmes should be an investment in the recipients of the programme. The research findings seem to indicate that undergoing this educational programme has, to some extent, assisted with bringing about changes, noting that the participants understood their setting as part of a wider context.

This brings about another discussion where critical theories come into play, as they focus on social context and how the power of the collective brings about changes in prevailing conditions. The findings of the research show that the Dipaakanyo programme brought about collective thinking and mobilized some people to enter into joint ventures to better their lives.

Education in this instance helped the recipients of the programme to assess their lives in terms of who they were, what skills they had, and where they could take those skills (either by topping up current skills or enhancing them with other skills, like management, for example). The Dipaakanyo programme assisted the participants in interpreting their situation and giving it meaning in the current stages of their lives. For some, it meant acquiring skills on how to set up businesses; for others, it assisted in with setting up their own businesses.

Osuji (1984) shows that, if we accept that adult education is an enabling factor, we need to ask ourselves whether it is just a pill that once taken perpetually immunizes one against ignorance. That is very far from the truth. For instance, if one goes through the formal system and attains a doctoral degree, one has not attained all the education one needs, and may even relapse in one's knowledge after some time. Osuji (1984) goes on further to point that every person, no matter their level of education, needs adult education of one type or another. Hence, adult education is basically defined as any education programme designed for people regarded as adults in their communities; that is, designed for people who are mentally mature and are socially responsible.

Functional adult education aims at developing individuals' mental capacities and communicative powers, as well as their technical and vocational capacities. It offers educative functions to broad sectors of society. Thus, adult education is a great means of integrating participants with their communities, resulting in their attainment of self-fulfilment. But adult education is just one aspect of learning. The continuing aspect is as wide as the world itself. When people drop out of the formal system at whatever level, they should ideally drop into the adult education or non-formal education at an

appropriate level. That is, on dropping out from any level, one continues his education through adult education.

The findings of the study concur with this in the sense that the Dipaakanyo programme is not just applicable to retrenchments. Its application goes far beyond just 'fixing' the retrenchment programme. Thus the programme is functional in developing individuals. This becomes evident as shown by the findings that participants talk about changes in behaviour and attitude as being some of the benefits of the programme.

Osuji (1984) shows that mental maturity and social responsibility are among adults' characteristic features. It is through adult education that adults are helped to be mentally articulate so as to be able to understand issues and judge rightly, and are enabled to perceive reality and creditably discharge their social roles as fathers, mothers, parents, uncles and leaders. In the case of the Dipaakanyo programme, the findings show that the participants found the programme as beneficial in assisting them to redefine their roles, for example, as 'father' when the position of 'bread-winner' was lost.

Hence, in the recommendations made by participants, the inclusion of spouses in the programme featured. Thus, one could assert that the whole society has constituted schooling through which adults continuously learn to be themselves and attain fullness in all its ramifications. That is, in every section of society, different and necessary adult education programmes are continuously offered to adults.

Thus, the role of adult education towards attainment of fullness and life fulfilment could be described in different ways. It could be conceived as 'a second chance' or remedial to those who missed the opportunity for formal education. In this particular case, it is a second chance at being economically active again. The Dipaakanyo programme could then be described as complementary or supplementary, depending on the angle used to view it. The programme could play a complementary role because it stabilizes one's educational attainment, as it provides constant refinement of knowledge and skills. On

the other hand, it plays a supplementary role as it takes over from where the formal system stopped.

5.6. Participants' Perspectives on Adult Education Programmes

One of the most frequently mentioned characteristics of adult education is the fact that it should be collaborative or participatory in nature (Brookfield 1986). Support for collaboration and participation in adult learning is based upon a philosophical approach to adult education emerging from the Progressive Education Movement, one of several movements upon which adult education's philosophical foundations are based (Elias & Merriam 1980). Seeking perspectives on adult education is grounded in these characteristics of adult education.

Professional development in adult education includes personal development in getting to know what factors promote learning. Being aware of these factors will enhance our competence and effectiveness in promoting learning. Gaining participants' perspectives on adult education programmes will therefore assist educators in promoting learning, as it offers a chance to review what goes into the learning programme.

Brookfield (1985) shows that for training programmes to be regarded as adult education programmes, the developers of these programmes should have a willingness to consider a critical reflection of these programmes from the participants of the programme. Central to this approach is the opinion that:

Learners on such courses would have to be sceptical of definitive principles of practice offered by leaders, and they would have to be encouraged to view conventionally accepted wisdoms, and apparently exemplary work behaviours, as relative and provisional (Brookfield, 1985:46).

The findings of the research show that participants were willing to offer a critique on what was beneficial and challenging for them in the programme. Participants also offered

recommendations in terms of what should go into the programme and how the programme could better be implemented. In this way, it can be said that the participants have contributed in terms of the knowledge of what they think will be appropriate for people in a similar position as themselves. This enriches the programme in that its design becomes one that is informed by people who have experienced it first-hand. This is in line with what Knowles (1980) shows in terms of participants of adult education being able to share their experiences with others – thereby directing the direction that the education venture should take.

The findings of the research reveal that the participants of the programme benefited from the way the programme was facilitated. They showed that the facilitators of the programme accorded the participants respect, which made them feel as though they were experts in their own field (in this case, that of retrenchment).

This, in essence, is collaborative learning. Both facilitators and learners become active participants in the educational process. For participants, the hierarchy between the facilitators and learners was eliminated. A sense of community was created and the ensuing knowledge was *created*, not *transferred*. Knowledge, from the participants' view, was considered to be located in the community rather in any one individual.

Collaborative learning assumes that knowledge is socially, rather than individually, constructed by communities of individuals and that the shaping and testing of ideas is a process in which anyone can participate (MacGregor, 1990; Novotny, Seifert & Werner, 1991). Furthermore, it stresses the importance of common inquiry in learning: a process through which learners begin to experience knowledge as something that is created rather than something that is transmitted from the facilitator or teacher to the learner (Sheridan 1989). The findings of this study show that participants' ideas were made to be of value and as such the programme became important to them as it accommodated their knowledge.

Lave (1996) argues that it is not enough to “add situated contexts to learning experiences... A more promising alternative lies in treating relations among people, tools,

activity, as they are given in social practice”. Theories of context-based learning provide a powerful and democratic way of viewing knowledge production. Knowledge, skills and abilities of those who have what Lave (1988) refers to as “just plain folks” are valued. Viewing knowledge and learning through this allows adult educators and programme designers to create or enhance contents for adult learning, so that learners can share in the design, process and evaluation of their learning activities.

In this study, the information shared by the participants will affect programme review and adaptation. Lastly, the real promise of context-based learning is that the knowledge of “just plain folks” is valued, thus enhancing the knowledge and development of adult learning theory.

On the other hand, there is social learning. Societies learn functional adaptation in order to survive in a changing environment; individuals must learn social roles in order to be members of a society. Failure to learn, in turn, means that society itself will not survive and that individuals will come to play unusual or dysfunctional roles. The relationship between the individual and society is more complex. It should be understood as involving interaction and mutual influence.

All aspects of the individual are, to some degree, a reflection of the social structure. But this is not merely an acquisition, or a receptive process, since this social self affects the manner in which persons perceive and interpret their experiences in social living. Says Jarvis et al (1998:14), individuals actually modify what is received and it is the changed version that is subsequently transmitted to other people in social interaction.

The idea of a social self means that all of our learning takes place in an interaction between ourselves and others, and in the context of prevailing beliefs and attitudes – what we call the ‘culture of society’. This is not a one-way transaction, but it does make socialization a primary function of learning.

In the research findings, participants were of the opinion that adult education should be about helping them to cope with changing circumstances in their lives. These changes required some reflection on their part and changes in their social structures. For some, it meant that they would never be employed by someone else and became self-employed; for others, it means becoming an employer and opening a new business. All these changes challenged prevailing social beliefs and attitudes. Brookfield (1986) proposes that engaging learners in learning activities in this way is one way of helping them to cope with life events. The structure provided by the training programme is planned and purposeful because it is informed by what the recipients want to achieve at the end of the programme.

However, this does not mean that emotional and social context are ignored in the learning process, because learning has to be understood in the context of cultural orientations embodied in our frames of reference. The findings of the research show that, for the participants of the Dipaakanyo programme, one aspect that was important to them was the individual one-on-one advising and counselling session. The programme helped them to deal with their 'injured' emotions, while the educational opportunity presented them with a platform to deal with negative emotion.

As Daloz (1986:1999), quoted in Gravett (2005) shows, there is interplay between education and development and students often are in developmental transition, looking to education to help them make sense of lives whose fabric of meaning has frayed. The transformational learning process is intuitive, holistic and contextually-based.

In addition, certain aspects of the process, such as working through feelings, seem to be more significant to change than other aspects. Taylor (2000), quoted in Gravett (2005), reports that without the expression and recognition of feeling, participants will not begin critical reflection. In other words, transformation learning is a complex process, involving thoughts and feelings.

5.7. Conclusions

Adult education programmes and Social Plan Programmes, like the Dipaakanyo programme, should be evaluated so as to hold them accountable for their performance. Adult educators' evaluation and understanding of programme performance needs to be broad enough to accommodate the varied needs and wants of adult learners within the varied contexts of their communities. Adult educators need to value the achievement of both policy goals and learner goals. To understand the true benefits of programmes, adult educators need to pay attention to the varied outcomes in learners' lives and their impact on learners' communities. True evaluation of programmes cannot be tied to a few limited measures; instead, adult educators need ways of identifying what is working as well as what is not.

If policymakers, human resource practitioners and adult educators want to address social plan programmes in ways that take into account the varied goals and life contexts of retrenchees, they need a new approach to accountability. Whilst Social Plan Programmes are designed to deal with the problems of retrenchment, a major dichotomy remains unanswered in their design. Whose interest do these programmes serve: the employers' or the employees'? Whilst the design itself seems to indicate taking care of the employees, does the practice, in reality, look into questions of interest and power? In reading and reflecting on Social Plan Programmes it is clear to me that when employers are not legally bound to provide this service, the process and the steps may be followed haphazardly. This then renders the whole process futile. There is a need to engage Government and Labour in discussions about what Social Plan Programmes should aim to achieve. Furthermore, there is need for a common framework to be developed which will be used to define, track and document the application of Social Plan Programmes for reporting results to policymakers.

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7. APPENDICES

7.1. APPENDIX A: Focus Group Discussion - Questions for Discussion

Dipaakanyo Social Plan Programme Participants' Evaluation

Focus Group Discussion Questions for Discussion

**Focus Group Discussion
led by: Violet Chisulo**

Date: _____

DIPAAKANYO PARTICIPANTS' PROGRAMME EVALUATION

**Registration Details of Focus Group Members
(To be completed by each group member)**

Gender: _____

Age: _____

Home Language: _____

Highest Level of Education: _____

Date of Retrenchment: _____

Dipaakanyo Course Attended: _____

Training Course Completed: _____

Focus Group Discussion held at _____

Date of Focus Group _____

Signed by Researcher: _____

Signed by Participant: _____

- 1) What were your expectations of the Dipaakanyo training programme when you were invited to attend the course?**
- 2) Did the course meet these expectations? (Please explain your answer.)**
- 3) What did you find beneficial in terms of the Dipaakanyo Programme as a whole?**
- 4) What did you find beneficial in terms of the following? (Include critical incidents narration where necessary as we go through these.)**
 - a) Understanding change in your own lives and within a broad social context;**
 - b) Developing skills in goal-setting and decision-making;**
 - c) Identifying your educational and vocational strengths, interests and challenges;**
 - d) Articulating your own preferred learning/career direction;**
 - e) Making sound personal development plans based on genuine opportunities for education, work and social activity;**
 - f) Identifying and developing the life skills needed to succeed in your chosen educational/career path or in setting up your own business;**
 - g) Individual counseling and advising.**
- 5) What did you find challenging about the Dipaakanyo programme as a whole?**
- 6) What did you find challenging in terms of the following? (Include critical incidents narration where necessary as we go through these.)**
 - a. Understanding change in your own lives and within a broad social context;**
 - b. Developing skills in goal-setting and decision-making;**
 - c. Identifying your educational and vocational strengths, interests and challenges;**

- d. Articulating your own preferred learning/career direction;**
 - e. Making sound personal development plans based on genuine opportunities for education, work and social activity;**
 - f. Identifying and developing the life skills needed to succeed in your chosen educational/career path or in setting up your own business;**
 - g. Individual counseling and advising.**
- 7) What recommendations would you make in order to improve the programme?**
- 8) General notes and comments:**

Thank everyone for their participation.

7.2.APPENDIX B: Interview Schedule

DIPAAKANYO PARTICIPANTS' PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Interview Schedule

Gender: _____

Age: _____

Home Language: _____

Highest Level of Education: _____

Date of Retrenchment: _____

Dipaakanyo Course Attended: _____

Training Course Completed: _____

Focus Group Discussion held at _____

Date of Focus Group _____

Signed by Researcher: _____

Signed by Participant: _____

What were your expectations of the Dipaakanyo training programme when you were invited to attend the course?

Did the course meet these expectations? (Please explain your answer.)

What did you find beneficial in terms of the Dipaakanyo programme as a whole?

9) What did you find beneficial in terms of the following? (Include critical incidents narration where necessary as we go through these.)

a. Understanding change in your own lives and within a broad social context;

b. Developing skills in goal-setting and decision-making;

c. Identifying your educational and vocational strengths, interests and challenges;

d. Articulating your own preferred learning/career direction;

e. Making sound personal development plans based on genuine opportunities for education, work and social activity;

f. Identifying and developing the life skills needed to succeed in your chosen educational/career path or in setting up your own business;

What did you find challenging about the Dipaakanyo programme as a whole?

What did you find challenging in terms of the following? (Include critical incidents narration where necessary as we go through these.)

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h. Developing skills in goal-setting and decision-making;

i. Identifying your educational and vocational strengths, interests and challenges;

j. Articulating your own preferred learning/career direction;

k. Making sound personal development plans based on genuine opportunities for education, work and social activity;

l. Identifying and developing the life skills needed to succeed in your chosen educational/career path or in setting up your own business;

What recommendations would you make in order to improve the programme?

General notes and comments:

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Thank you for your participation.

7.3.APPENDIX C: Letter of Consent

I, _____

have read and understood the letter of consent that explains the research and what will be required of me. I hereby agree / do not agree (make a circle around your choice) to participate in the focus group discussion / interview (make a circle around your choice).

I understand that in agreeing to participate I am giving Violet Chisulo permission with regard to the following:

- to ask me questions in relation to the research she is undertaking;
- to record on flip chart, note book and tape recorder any information that I will give her as her data; and
- to use the data drawn from this session for purposes of analysis and interpretation for her research and for future adaptation of the Dipaakanyo social plan programme.

I also understand that in agreeing to participate in the programme I have the following rights:

- to withdraw from the research programme should I wish to do so at any time;
- to remain anonymous and to have my identity protected and not disclosed to any outsider or reader of the research;
- to view and comment on the data and the analysis and interpretation that has been made before the research is published or submitted.

Signed by participant: _____

Signed at: _____

Date: _____

Researcher name in print: _____

Signed by researcher: _____

Date: _____

7.4.APPENDIX D: Letter of Notification of Research Project

Dear candidate,

My name is Violet Chisulo. I am an employee of JET Education services and currently, I am also enrolled as a student at the University of the Witwatersrand. As fulfillment of the requirements of my Masters Degree I have to complete a research project. I have chosen and located my research project within my work context, so that it will be beneficial for me in terms of my school work and beneficial to JET in terms of programme evaluation and development. The research that I have chosen is an evaluation of the Dipaakanyo Social Plan Programme that you attended at the beginning of the year.

JET Education Services delivered the programme to you at the beginning of the year in Mamelodi, Pretoria. This programme was planned for you by Ford Motors after your retrenchment to assist you with skills to re-enter the labour market. In order for JET to know that this programme meets the needs and educational requirements of retrenched workers, only people who have attended this programme, such as yourself, can help us. Together with your project manager we have identified you as one of the people who can assist us in gathering the relevant information. The information you will share with us will assist us to evaluate the programme and learn some lessons that will help us make the programme a better one for future course participants.

The following questions will be used to help us gather information:

- What was beneficial to you in attending the Dipaakanyo programme?**
- What were the challenges presented to you by the Dipaakanyo programme?**
- What recommendations would you offer in terms of making the programme more beneficial?**

To enable me to collect and keep relevant data, I am going to be using past course evaluations, interviews with 5 people and a focus group discussion with 15 people in the group. I would like to take a record of all the information that you will be sharing with me. This information will be captured on flip charts, in a notebook and recorded on tape recorder. This will be done so that I do not misrepresent the information you are going to share with me. The research findings will be communicated with you at a presentation that will be organized by JET before the submission of the final report. In writing up the report itself no personal names will be mentioned, so your identity will never be revealed at any time. A copy of the final report will be made available at our offices in Mamelodi should you

wish to have a look at it. The information that will be collected will be kept in strict confidence at JET offices in Braamfontein.

Even though you have been selected to participate in this project, participation is not compulsory. Should you wish to participate in the project please complete the provided consent form to indicate your acceptance to take part in the project. Even after acceptance should you wish to withdraw you are free to do so.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Violet Chisulo
