

https://dspace.org/

Internships & intentions: A grounded theory study of a South African government graduate internship programme

Hendricks, Sumaya

2024
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/45018
Hendricks, Sumaya. (2024). Internships & intentions: A grounded theory study of a South African government graduate internship programme [PhD thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg]. WIReDSpace. https://hdl.handle.net/10539/45018

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Internships & intentions: A grounded theory study of a South African government graduate internship programme

Sumaya Hendricks

A thesis submitted to the Wits School of Education, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2024

ABSTRACT

The researcher used a grounded theory approach to understand the factors which affected intern learning on a graduate internship programme run by the South African government, with a focus on one national government department. In particular, the focus was on understanding how factors worked to create a disjuncture between the intended and experienced curriculum. To conduct this research, interviews were conducted with interns who completed their internship in the 2018-2021 period; HR officials; and mentors – all of whom were based in the department of focus. This was complemented with document analysis and intern demographic data. While the interest in this subject matter was from a learning perspective, this programme is also a labour market intervention to help alter the bias towards these young, black and unemployed graduates who are the target audience of this programme. In this study, the central phenomenon that emerged is that of *Curricular fission* which is a metaphor to describe a situation in which various factors worked to create a rupture between what interns were intended to learn compared to what they actually learned. In short, the metaphorical large atom which caused the fission were institutional, individual and task related factors with these factors preventing interns from moving from legitimate peripheral participants to full participants. Institutional factors operated at the level of the department, individual factors concerned the individual - whether that be the intern themselves; the government officials that interns reported to; or other people interns interacted with - while task related factors were related to the tasks allocated to interns, which had a direct bearing on intern learning. While the interns had control over some of the factors, many were 'beyond' their control which reinforces the view of learning as being shaped, hindered or aided by factors beyond the learners themselves. With a situation of curricular fission characterising the overall intern learning experience, the programme could be considered a form of 'warehousing' which in a South African context carries a transformation component arising from the 'special' burden that workplaces have in addressing the bias towards black graduates.

Keywords

Workplace curriculum; Workplace learning; Graduate internship; Government internship programme; Intern learning; Intended curriculum; Grounded theory

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.



Sumaya Hendricks

9 March 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents, Fuad and Mimona Hendricks. If completing this brings them joy in any way, then all the years invested were worthwhile. Thank you for your unwavering love and support. I constantly feel uplifted by your prayers, and I am grateful to the Almighty Creator for blessing me with the privilege of being your daughter.

This thesis would not have come to fruition without the support of my dear husband, Sizwe. He provided constant motivation, encouragement, and invaluable advice. Your brilliance motivates me to strive for excellence. I love you dearly.

To my beloved son, Hakim Thembekile, may this work inspire you and fill you with pride one day. You are my most precious gift.

To my cherished siblings, Fatima, Qutb, and Towfiq, along with your spouses and dear children; to my beloved parents-in-law, Terry and Dali; and to my friends, who are like family – I am deeply grateful for your unwavering support, love, and prayers.

The guidance provided by my supervisors, Dr. Lynn Hewlett and Prof. Volker Wedekind, was invaluable. Thank you for your time and expertise.

I am indebted to the Nelson Mandela Foundation for being an exceptionally supportive employer throughout this journey.

Lastly, I acknowledge that it is only through the will of the Almighty that all things are made possible. **Allahu Akbar**

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 Background 1
1.1.1 Why this subject matters? 1
1.1.2 Why a Grounded Theory Approach? 3
1.2 Research Question 8
1.3 Structuring a Grounded Theory Study 10
CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY 16
2.1 Government's Graduate Internship Programme 16
2.1.1 Overview of programme intake 16
2.1.2 Overview of government policy on interns 18
2.2 Graduate Unemployment in South Africa 24
2.3 Formal, informal and non-formal learning 29
2.4 Workplace learning 34
i. What can people learn in the workplace? 38
ii. How can people learn in the workplace? 41
2.5 Workplace curriculum 46
2.6 Factors Affecting Workplace Learning 50
Summary 65
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY 67
3.1 Introduction to grounded theory 67
3.2 Philosophical foundations 69
3.3 Usage of Theory 73
3.4 Methods central to grounded theory 76
3.4.1 Constant comparison 77
3.4.2 Theoretical sampling 80
3.4.3 Theoretical sensitivity 87
3.4.4 Memoing 89
3.4.5 Coding 91
3.5 Ethics 98
3.6 Data generation 103
3.7 Methods and procedures 109
3.7.1 Phase 1 109
3.7.2 Phase 2 114
3.7.3 Phase 3 116

Summary 117
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS 118
4.1 Intern demographics and programme selection 118
4.1.1 How were interns selected for the programme? 118
4.1.2 Who were the interns on this programme? 119
4.2 What was the intended and experienced curriculum? 126
4.2.1 What was the intended curriculum? 126
4.2.2 What was the experienced curriculum? 130
4.3 How did interns learn? 140
4.4 What were the factors that affected workplace learning? 144
Learning factors 145
Context factors 155
Additional factors from Eraut's typology 170
4.5 Other (intern support group) 175
Intern support group 175
Summary 177
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION 180
5.1 The intended and experienced curriculum 181
5.1.1 The intended curriculum 181
5.1.2 The experienced curriculum 185
5.1.3 Alignment and misalignment between the intended and experienced curriculum 187
5.2 Emerging theory 198
5.2.1 Part 1: Curricular fission 198
5.2.2 Part 2: Factors Affecting Workplace Learning 203
5.3 Intern support group 225
Summary 227
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION 229
6.1 Research contribution 233
6.1.1 Methodological contribution 233
6.1.2 Theoretical contribution 236
6.2 Research limitations 238
6.3 Future research 241
6.4 Policy and praxis implications 242
6.4.1 Individual factors 242
6.4.2 Institutional factors 243

6.4.3 Task related factors 244
6.5 Reflections 245
REFERENCES 247
APPENDICES 260
Appendix 1: Interview schedule for individual intern interviews 260
Appendix 2: Interview schedule for HR officials 263
Appendix 3: Interview schedule for mentors of interns 264
Appendix 4: Participant information sheet (past interns) 265
Appendix 5: Participant information sheet (mentors/supervisors of interns & HR staff) 267
Appendix 6: Consent form (past interns) 269
Appendix 7: Consent form (mentors/supervisors of interns & HR staff) 271
Appendix 8: Quotes related to management of interns 272
Appendix 9: Quotes related to learning culture 282
Appendix 10: Breakdown of interviews and dates 290

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Public Service Recruitment Numbers 18
Table 2: Formal, informal and non-formal learning 31
Table 3: Three Forms of Informal Learning 32
Table 4: What Is Being Learned in the Workplace 40
Table 5: Typology of Curriculum Presentations 47
Table 6: Follow-Up Notes and Questions from Memo 85
Table 7: Level of Theoretical Sensitivity 88
Table 8: Number of Codes From First Eight Interviews 93
Table 9: Actions Taken to Anonymise Data 101
Table 10: First 18 Groups Created 110
Table 11: Groups After Adding Eraut's Three Typologies to Data 112
Table 12: Intern profiles 124
Table 13: Dimensions of the Experienced Curriculum 130
Table 14: Dimensions of the Experienced Curriculum 133
Table 15: Learning Methods 140
Table 16: Intended curriculum from the perspective of policy makers and Human Resource officials 183
Table 17: Evolution of Factor Typology 204

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Merlini et al.'s (2021) core category - Growing Through Relationship 5
Figure 2: Gül et al.'s (2022) Core Category - I Felt Like A Bird In A Cage Abandoned in a Hospital 6
Figure 3: Unemployment Rate by Education Level and Age Group (Q1, 2019) 26
Figure 4: 3-P model 36
Figure 5: A Schematic Representation of Learning in International Practice Placement Education 44
Figure 6: The Conceptual Framework of Student Knowing in Workplace Practice 45
Figure 7: Curricular Spider Web Perspectives 49
Figure 8: Factors Affecting Learning in the Workplace (Earlier Version) 51
Figure 9: Factors Affecting Learning at Work: The Two-Triangle Model 52
Figure 10: Summary of Factors Influencing Work-Related Learning 53
Figure 11: Interplay of Theoretical Sampling And Constant Comparison 81
Figure 12: Interplay of Grounded Theory Methods 84
Figure 13: Memoing as a lubricant for the grounded theory 'machine' 90
Figure 14: Coding and Re-Grouping Process 97
Figure 15: Institutional Breakdown of Interns 121
Figure 16: Degree Type of Interns 121
Figure 17: Summary of intended curriculum and its impact, as envisioned by policy makers 181
Figure 18: Reported Learning Mechanisms and Learning 185
Figure 19: Fission Process 199
Figure 20: Curricular Fission 201
Figure 21: Categories and Sub-Categories of the Factors That Affect Workplace Learning 202
Figure 22: Interplay of Factors 225

GLOSSARY

BB2E	Breaking Barriers to Entry into Public Service
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
HR	Human Resources
IDRT	Internship Data Reporting Tool
NYDA	National Youth Development Agency
PALAMA	Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy
SAGDA	South African Graduates Development Association

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Why this subject matters?

> "I felt at times there was no guideline as to why is the department having an internship program – like what is it that you want to see at the end?" (Intern 6).

This was the reflection of a graduate intern who was interviewed as part of this research and who had completed an internship at a South African national government department – which is the subject of this research. In the context of graduate unemployment and South Africa's history of unequal opportunity, the introduction of this internship programme across all government departments is aimed at providing opportunities for young people to gain workplace experience and skills (Department of Public Service and Administration [DPSA], 2006). In doing so, the South African government is trying to use the machinery of the state to help address past injustices and level the playing field for graduates. More specifically, they have introduced the internship programme as a labour market intervention to help correct and fix the bias towards young black[1] graduates. Apart from redress imperatives, not being able to adequately "support young people to make the school-to-work transition is probably the biggest challenge in the labour market" (South African Graduates Development Association [SAGDA], 2013: p. 28) and as such would be a concern for any national government.

With a particular focus on one national government department, through this thesis I sought to understand intern learning. While a graduate internship programme is not a common subject matter in relation to understanding learning, the intent and scale of the programme warranted deeper understanding and research. Considering available figures and that the South African government is the largest employer in the country, it is conceivable that they are also the largest recruiter of graduate interns in the country. While the annual intake of graduate interns is not public information, a total of 139 032 young people were recruited into public service departments as interns, learners and apprentices for a period of 12 months between the 2009-2016 period (DPSA, 2018a).

[1] The Apartheid government in South Africa passed the Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1950, which divided the population into four main racial groups: Whites; natives (blacks); indians; and coloured people (people of mixed race). Racial discrimination was then carried out based on these racial classifications.

Despite the intent and magnitude of the programme, little is known about the track which interns 'run' during their time on these national government programmes[2]. D'Abate et al. (2009) highlighted the scarcity of information available on this subject matter both in terms of academic research and online government resources, with few studies of internships in general in the literature despite their increased popularity – somethings which largely remains true. When doing a Google Scholar search for *public service internships South Africa*, approximately 47 100 results were returned, many of which were related to medical internships (Reid, 1999, 2002; Digby, 2005; Price & Weiner, 2005; Van Wyk & Naidoo, 2006; Iputo, 2008; Erasmus, 2012; Bola et al., 2015;). Substituting the words *public service* for the word *government*, returned results which were both medically orientated as well as employment and employability focused (Maharasoa & Hay, 2001; Kruss, 2004; Daniels, 2007; Marock, 2008; Chelechele, 2009; Erasmus, 2012;). While I struggled to find academic journals related to government's internship programme, I did find Masters theses available on the subject (Koma, 2010; Kouh, 2013; Mchiza, 2015; Joseph, 2017). However, these theses were more focused on interns in local government departments compared to those based in national departments. While national and local government internship programmes may have common elements, staff within these two spheres of government have different ranges of responsibility; pressure points; influences; and so forth, which may have implications for the work tasks performed and the learning environment itself - and consequently the learning that transpires.

The subject of graduate internship programmes falls within the realm of workplace curriculum, with the importance of studying this area unscored by Billett (2006):

> There is an urgent need for workplace curriculum practices and principles to be identified, elaborated and evaluated. This need arises partially from the acknowledgement of the crucial role that workplaces play in individuals' initial learning and further development of vocational knowledge throughout their working lives… Much, if not most, of the learning throughout working lives will probably be acquired, refined and developed further in workplace settings as individuals deploy and extend their knowledge through their everyday work activities (p. 1)

The workplace learning of interns in the context of this research was not viewed in singular terms but rather the different levels of the curriculum were of interest. Adopting this

[2] Curriculum is derived from the Latin word 'currere' - the track to be run (Billett, 2006).

perspective lent itself to the intended curriculum; enacted curriculum; and experienced curriculum. The intended curriculum is the curriculum that is intended to transpire, that is, the formal plan (Billett, 2006; Harris, 2011; Moercke & Eika, 2002). The enacted curriculum is what transpires when the curriculum is enacted, which may differ from the formal plan (Billett, 2006; Harris, 2011). The experienced curriculum is what "learners experience, construe and learn as a result of its enactment" (Billett, 2006, p. 2). Thus, while this typology is usually associated with educational institutions, Billet (2006) applied it to workplaces which was what also transpired in this research. In the context of government's graduate internship programme, there is the curriculum that government plan in policy; there is the curriculum that officials within government implement; and there is the curriculum that graduates experience.

Ideally, achieving fusion between the different curricular would have facilitated greater learning on the part of interns. However, various factors created a rupture between the intended and experienced curriculum – which were two layers of relevance to this study. This research found that these factors do not operate in isolation but rather have a symbiotic relationship that together shapes the overall learning that transpired. Acknowledging the role of factors in shaping learning means acknowledging learning as a set of complex processes, which is not divorced from the context in which it is learnt (Lee et al., 2004; Hager & Hodkinson, 2009;). While literature such as that of Eraut (2004b) influenced this study and my thinking, using a grounded theory approach pushed me to transcend the literature using the emerging data, in ways that other approaches may not have – with this process extensively detailed in the *Methodology* and *Discussion* chapters.

It is important to note that arising from using a grounded theory approach, the curriculum lens as well as the typologies used were embraced over time as opposed to from the outset – as dictated by the approach.

1.1.2 Why a Grounded Theory Approach?

Grounded theory is most suited to research situations where there are no clear hypotheses to test; when little is known about the area of study; and where researchers want to learn more about a phenomenon with the hope of developing theories from the data (Suddaby, 2006; Birks & Mills, 2015). This served to make it ideal for this research study as these were the prevailing characteristics. I did consider adopting a deductive approach and then using government's intended programme objectives to inform the hypotheses which could then be tested. The

hypotheses however would have been weak and speculative given the low levels of information available and in turn, simplistic findings may have been generated. Moreover, using the grounded theory approach also enabled me to limit and control the influence that my pre-conceived ideas had on the literature engagement process, research design choices and ultimately the findings. In this vein, before coming across the grounded theory approach, my methodology section was revised multiple times. The impact of operating in the context of an information shortage gave rise to the literature review becoming a kind of pre-emptive findings discussion. Moreover, and even more problematic, was that my research questions were being influenced by my assumptions, such that the voice of the participants would have been marginalised when I eventually sought them out.

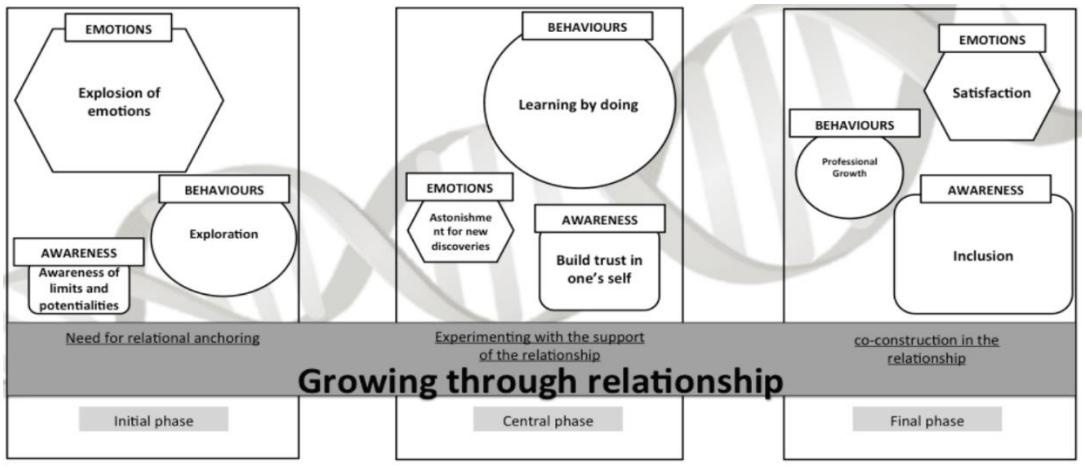
Aside from the pragmatic reasons for using this approach, there were several other reasons for its appeal. Firstly, the systematic nature of the approach offered structure, which as a student researcher I appreciated. Secondly, the honest and transparent nature of the approach was appealing as researchers using the approach must be explicit about the methods used, such as the iterative movement between data generation and data analysis. Researchers not using the grounded theory approach may still use techniques like the iterative approach - albeit to varying degrees - but may be less explicit about its usage. As an anecdote, a friend who was nearing the completion of her PhD in the United Kingdom told me repeatedly that I should ensure that I do an initial round of data generation and analysis before carrying out further collection. This is in fact what the grounded theory approach calls for. Thirdly, its emphasis on the centrality of people's voices is something that mirrors my professional modus operandi. Grounded theory is rooted in the experiences of people and does not elevate theory and academic literature above these experiences and in my professional life, this kind of grass roots approach is one that I aspire to live by, and which guides my endeavours. Lastly, grounded theory was appealing also because of its theory-building component as it pushes researchers to offer theoretical insights. Unlike other research approaches, grounded theory is geared towards explaining phenomena through theory building as opposed to simply describing or exploring phenomena.

From a methodological standpoint, various contributions have been made while pursuing this research agenda. Firstly, no other research could be found that used a grounded theory approach to study graduate internships in South Africa – whether it be in the public sector or otherwise. Moreover, nothing existed at the level of research on national government. For instance, Mkhize (2019) uses a mixed-methods approach to understand the implementation of the

internship programme in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. His research mainly speaks to the context in which the internship is transpiring such as graduate unemployment, with a smaller component related to the specific internship. Mkhize (2019) makes use of demographic data as well as data around tasks, their induction and training as well as levels of support.

Internationally, grounded theory has been used to look at interns in relation to those completing teacher or nursing internships as opposed to graduate interns in a workplace setting who have already completed tertiary education. For instance, Merlini et al. (2021) conducted 12 interviews with students completing the *Master's Degree Courses in Nursing, Physiotherapy and Prevention Techniques* and who had either completed or were in the process of completing an internship in Northern Italy. Their core category is 'growing through relationships', which develops in three phases, namely: Initial; central; and final (Merlini et al., 2021). Emotions, behaviours as well as awareness are components of each of these three phases. Their model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Merlini et al.'s (2021) core category - Growing Through Relationship

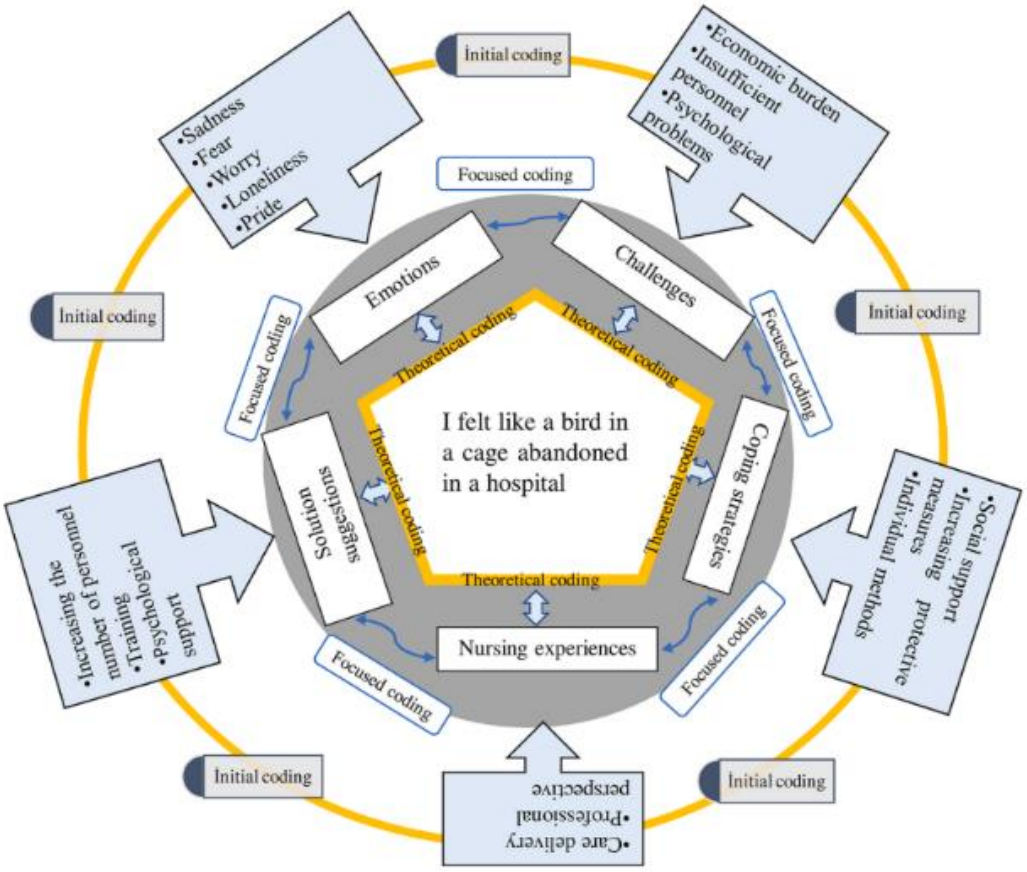


Source: Merlini et al. (2021)

Gül et al. (2022) explores experiences of interns who had clinical practice during the COVID-19 pandemic, using a constructive grounded theory approach. The research participants were fourth-year nursing students at a University Hospital. Gül et al. (2022) finds that owing to the

pandemic and being isolated from their families, interns "felt like a bird in a cage abandoned in a hospital" which is the core category (p. 4). Related categories are emotions; challenges; coping methods; nursing experiences; and solution suggestions. Some of these categories encompass sub-categories such as emotions which is encompasses sadness; pride; fear, anxiety; and loneliness. Their conceptual model is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Gül et al.'s (2022) Core Category - I Felt Like A Bird In A Cage Abandoned in a Hospital



Source: Gül et al. (2022, p. 5)

Grounded theory has also been used to look at university student experiences who completed internships, not confined to a specific discipline. For instance, using a grounded theory approach, Nosrati et al. (2021) looks at internship programmes and unpacks the factors that

affect its productivity. They interviewed university faculty members, industrialists, and students with internships. Unfortunately, the full paper is not available in English.

The work of Gholampour et al. (2022) most resembles the research in this thesis. They use a grounded theory approach to understand the internship curriculum of student teachers completing internships in schools using the lens of the intended, implemented and obtained curriculum. They find differences across all three curriculum levels. Their research participants included 16 teacher interns, 12 internship lecturers and 15 supervisors from Farhangian University in Iran. Concerning the intended curriculum, they find that amongst other things complexity of the curriculum and idealism inhibited its proper design and relevance. Regarding the implemented curriculum, issues such as "recalcitrant executive approaches toward teachers, behavioural issues, and a lack of support" gave rise to a lack of proper implementation of the implemented curriculum (Gholampour et al., 2022, p. 190). In terms of what they refer to as the obtained curriculum, they find that a deficit in student preparation and enthusiasm affected this. Their core category, which is their central phenomenon, is 'educational discontinuation' which they characterise as "unbalanced design and compilation of the intended curriculum, defective implementation of the curriculum and incomplete acquisition of the internship curriculum" (p. 191). However, in contrast to this study, their research does not involve graduate interns outside the teaching faculty; interns who have completed their tertiary education and who are ‘in the working world’; their research was not conducted in South Africa; nor conducted within the realm of a government department. This reinforces the methodological contribution made by this research as it used grounded theory to explore a subject matter which has previously not been done using this approach.

Apart from the methodological and theoretical contributions made by the research in this thesis - which are detailed in the final chapter - there are various knowledge gaps addressed through this study. For instance, through this research an understanding of the induction process into the world of government work as well as the nature of the state as an employer is facilitated.

Having covered how and why this subject area was chosen as the focus area of this study, the remaining two sections of this chapter will outline the following: The research question and its evolution thereof; how this grounded theory research study has been structured; and what to expect in forthcoming chapters;

1.2 Research Question

Birks and Mills (2015) advise researchers to specify one's unit of analysis and to be upfront about it, which will assist in keeping focused during the research process. Birks and Mills (2015) give the example of Barry Gibson, whose unit of analysis was dental practices, which treated HIV-positive patients. In total, he looked at three practices, which had differing characteristics as the emerging grounded theory was such that he needed to be able to compare practices. For my study, the unit of analysis was graduates who were on government internship programmes in national government departments, with a specific focus on graduates who completed their internship in the 2018-2021 period and who were based in one specific national department.

After selecting a subject area and methodology, a researcher still has various options at their disposal regarding their research question. For instance, I could have done a tracer study, wherein I tracked the employment prospects of graduates who completed internship programmes in government to see how the programme disrupted employment patterns – if at all. Alternatively, I could have done a kind of skills and capabilities audit in which I carried out baseline and end-line assessments with graduates to understand the changes that arose from participating in the programme. While either of these approaches may have filled existing knowledge gaps, I wanted a topic that was qualitative and exploratory in nature, owing to the extent of the knowledge gaps. When there is so much unknown about a subject area, it is challenging to have a limited research focus and as such, I felt that the ability to add knowledge was greater with a more exploratory topic.

In a grounded theory study, researchers must be cautious not to be constrained by narrow research questions as the approach progresses in response to the data collected and the process of analysis (Birks & Mills, 2015). Studies using the approach generally commence with a broad question which are specifically geared towards knowing more about "individual processes, interpersonal relations and the reciprocal effects between individuals and larger social processes" (Charmaz, 1996, pp. 28-29). These questions must also reflect the "problem-centred perspective of those experiencing or living the phenomenon to be studied" (Birks & Mills, 2015, pp. 21-22).

Urquhart (2001) commenced with the question "How do analysts and clients approach early requirements gathering" (p. 4). Urquhart's (2001) research questions only developed later and

were a product of the grounded theory process and analysis. This was not without practical difficulty, as his research advisors would probe him about his research questions, which proved challenging. Like me, he too struggled with the lack of existing literature on the process he was trying to understand and sought out an inductive approach, and with "relief" turned to grounded theory (Urquhart, 2001, p. 4). Birks and Mills (2015) also give examples of broad research questions used at the outset of grounded theory studies: "How do asylum seekers adapt to emancipation in their adopted country following internment? What influences managers in private institutions to seek professional advancement? How do women in developing countries establish financial independence?" (p. 22). Birks, who also used grounded theory in her PhD study, commenced with the question "How (in what way and by what means) has tertiary education changed the lives of nurses in Malaysian Borneo?" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 169). However, by the time she submitted her final thesis, her research question and aims evolved, as can be expected from the grounded theory process.

The broad guiding question I commenced with was *How do graduates on South African government internship programmes, in national government departments, learn on these internship programmes and what do they learn?* Exploring what people learn in a work environment is associated with individual-level questions about employee conceptions of learning, what it is that people learn at work and how is it that they learn these things (Tynjälä, 2008). For instance, Eraut (2004b), who looked at informal learning in the workplace, asked questions such as "What is being learned? How is it being learned? What factors affect the level and directions of learning effort?" (p. 248), while Billett (2006) looked at the kind of experiences and learning that transpired through engagements in the workplace. These questions played a fundamental role in helping to shape my initial starting point.

With little known about government's graduate internship programme and what transpires on the programme, I was initially unsure whether to commence with looking at *how* graduates on these programmes learn or *what* they learn. Merely looking at the *what* dimension does not in itself constitute a social process, which the grounded theory approach is geared towards explaining. However, it seemed to me that one could not merely look at how graduates learn without probing what they are learning. Thus, understanding how they learn also encompasses the question of what they learn. Mentioning them explicitly in the initial research question thus served to acknowledge that while they are two interconnected dimensions, they were nonetheless distinct. Moreover, the explicit mentioning also recognised that unpacking the *how*

dimension may not necessarily mirror the unpacking of the *what* as there may be different levels of awareness regarding these dimensions among research participants.

Over time, my research question evolved into: *What are Factors affecting the learning of interns on South African government internship programmes?* It was further refined into: *What are the factors that affect the alignment and misalignment of the intended and experienced curriculum on South African government internship programmes*? Thus, over time it became more specific, especially after engaging with literature throughout the data generation process. In terms of adopting a theoretical framework for the study, no frameworks in the initial stages are generally utilised in a grounded theory study to guide the research but can be adopted later during theoretical coding (Birks & Mills, 2015). This reflects the iterative literature approach associated with grounded theory. As such, theoretical framing of the intended and experienced curriculum as well as other models, was only included overtime in this research study. To explain how the iterative nature of the grounded theory approach was factored into the structuring of this study, the following section will outline this in more detail.

1.3 Structuring a Grounded Theory Study

The traditional sequential way in which research papers are structured does not reflect the constant comparative method that is critical to the grounded theory approach. Constant comparison entails simultaneously collecting and analysing data and as such, the iterative nature of the approach and how data was analysed and collected simultaneously may be neglected by the reader when a traditional structure is used (Suddaby, 2006). This does not mean that a researcher must structure their written study in a way that reflects the non-linear process that grounded theory entails. This would mean a "jumble of literature consultation, data collection, and analysis conducted in ongoing iterations that produce many relatively fuzzy categories that, over time, reduce to fewer, clearer conceptual structures", with the theory presented last (Suddaby, 2006, p. 637). Instead, what a researcher can do is embrace in broad terms a traditional research structure and then make the data analysis, coding techniques and development of categories explicit to the reader (Suddaby, 2006). One can do this by providing "illustrative examples of coding techniques and the evolution of conceptual categories in a table or appendix" (Suddaby, 2006, p. 637). This makes the research comprehensible to the reader while also conveying the importance of the constant comparative method in the research process.

An example of using the constant comparative method while still adopting a traditional research design is that of Browning et al. (1995) who wanted to understand the factors which lead to or inhibit cooperation amongst organisations, groups and individuals. Three sets of social conditions emerged as enablers for the development of cooperation within the semiconductor industry and their particular case study - which was the focus of Browning et al.'s (1995) research - which were early disorder and ambiguity; the emergence of a moral community; and the structuring of activities. To take into account the inductive nature of the research, Browning et al. (1995) provided a background to their case study and how the methods were tailored to suit the research context before delving into the theory which helped shape the data analysis. The results were presented according to the main categories that emerged, followed by the discussion section.

While what grounded theory entails and how it was engaged with will be discussed in more detail in the *Methodology* chapter, it is important to have an initial discussion about the role of literature as this influenced the structure of the research. The founders of grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss, are explicit in warning against "conducting a literature review in the substantive area of research at an early stage of the research process" (Dunne, 2011, p. 113). This view resonates with the consensus that a systematic review of the literature that is directly related to the area of research must be avoided at the outset of the research in grounded theory studies. For instance, Charmaz (1996) also considers a suspension of the literature review as one of the six characteristics of grounded theory.

The principle of suspending the literature review has however led to a common misconception about grounded theory, which is that researchers can ignore the literature and can conduct research in a field without having any prior research knowledge of that field or can postpone familiarising themselves with existing theories until after the data has been collected and analysed (Suddaby, 2006). This manifests itself such that some researchers do not speak about existing research until the discussion and concluding sections of their research. For Suddaby (2006) and Urquhart (2001), this misconception stems from a misreading of Glaser and Strauss (1967) such that some people think ignoring existing empirical knowledge is what they advocated. Instead, what is advocated is that the researcher should not be biased by existing research such that they become concerned with "testing hypotheses, either overtly or unconsciously, rather than directly observing" (Suddaby, 2006, p. 635). Owing to the misconception regarding the use of literature, according to Birks and Mills (2015), the “use of

the literature in grounded theory is perhaps one of the most contentious and misunderstood aspects of this approach" (p. 22).

The real crux of the debate is around when the literature should be engaged with (Dunne, 2011). No one would advocate ignoring theory, as this would produce research that is a random "mass of descriptive material waiting for a theory or a fire" (Coase, 1988, as cited in Suddaby, 2006, p. 634). There are however different levels of tolerance regarding this, with differences even amongst the founders of grounded theory. Glaser is more conservative while Strauss and Corbin are more open to using literature more actively during the research process, as it can stimulate questions, enable comparisons, enhance sensitivity and guide theoretical sampling (Dunne, 2011; Thornberg, 2012). Glaser was only open to conducting a literature review near the end of a study, as he feared researchers would be contaminated by the literature such that it influences data generation and analysis as well as the emerging theory (Dunne, 2011). As such Glaser and Holton (2004) advocated for literature to be "integrated into the constant comparative analysis process" only after "the core category, its properties and related categories have emerged and the basic conceptual development is well underway" (p. 12). Moreover, Glaser advocated for researchers to engage with literature in other substantive areas apart from the areas relevant to one's study. This however is challenging, as Dunne (2011) points out, as nobody would be able to know what constitutes a substantive area and the boundaries thereof in the absence of having prior knowledge.

For research students, the discussion about engaging with literature can be impractical and not reflect the realities of students for two main reasons (Birks & Mills, 2015; Dunne, 2011). Firstly, postgraduate programmes often require the submission of a research proposal as part of their university requirements (Birks & Mills, 2015; Dunne, 2011). In this regard, Birks and Mills (2015) advise researchers to limit their literature exploration to only that which they need to do in order to submit their proposal and meet research requirements. Secondly, and more significantly, grounded theory is generally employed when little research has been carried out on a subject matter. However, to be able to establish whether there is a dearth of information available on the subject, one would need to be able to conduct an initial literature review (McGhee et al., 2007). Moreover, as Dunne (2011) pointed out, a researcher especially at PhD level, is not a tabula rasa or theoretical virgin as they would have engaged with literature related to their subject area in some way or other before embarking on their research.

According to Dunne (2011), doing a literature review in the early stages is beneficial. This is because it enables one to develop a rationale for and justification of the study; helps to identify gaps and what has already transpired; as well as context for the study; and a means of orientating the researcher (Dunne, 2011). Given these advantages, Dunne (2011) argued that the approach of shunning engagement with literature in the initial research stage "represents a disproportionate response to an uncertain and unsubstantiated risk" (Dunne, 2011, p. 117). To counter the associated risk, McGhee et al. (2007) and Dunne (2011) advised researchers to merely adopt a reflexive approach and be conscious of how it can impact the research process. With this said, while advocating for greater engagement with the literature, Dunne (2011) avoided imposing a theoretical framework during the initial stages in keeping with the grounded theory approach. Dunne (2011) also maintained his reflexivity by "constantly reflecting on how such ideas might be impacting the research" as well as by forcing himself to justify decisions made and conclusions drawn.

When reflecting on Dunne's (2011) position concerning literature engagement, his positionality should be borne in mind. Dunne (2011) conducted his doctoral studies in an area of study in which he had previous academic engagement with, which meant there was a familiarity with existing theoretical knowledge. His advice thus reflected his reality and circumstances. In contrast, I do not have an academic background in education and at the outset of my research did not have the kind of familiarity with theoretical knowledge and concepts that he had. Dunne (2011) thus had to come to terms with his pre-existing knowledge in ways that I did not have to. With that said, I am not claiming to be a *tabula rasa*.

Dunne (2011) gave useful insight regarding how to locate one's literature review by elaborating on his approach: At the early stage of his research he included an in-depth literature review, which he referred to as a contextualisation section as opposed to a traditional review section, which covered the relevant empirical studies in his field; and he then only discussed the theoretical concepts after the data analysis chapters – while signalling to the reader that the relevant theories related to his findings will be done at a later point.

Initially, I too structured my study in this way by opting for a contextualisation section in place of a detailed literature review at the early stage of my research with a literature engagement section after the *Methodology* chapter. The intent was that the contextualisation section would be akin to a scene-setting section, which helps to build the foundation for the research, while

the literature engagement would serve the purpose of a traditional literature review section. This literature engagement section would be focused on discussing the extant theoretical concepts and relevant literature, and it would follow the *Methodology* chapter, which provided an understanding of the overall process and how literature was engaged with. This seemingly disjointed approach to presenting the theory seemed appropriate at the time as it mirrored to some extent the grounded theory approach itself.

However, with time the order of sections changed. The literature engagement section was moved to different places but ultimately, the decision was made to converge it with the contextualising section – both of which are now located in *Chapter* Two. The decision for this was twofold. Firstly, over time the division between the two sections became spurious. The literature contained in both sections influenced the research in some way, even though the engagement with the different components of the literature transpired at different times and to different degrees. Secondly, the literature could not be placed after the Methodology chapter in line with the approach by Dunne (2001). This was because, in terms of sequencing information and the overall flow of the research, it worked better from a reader perspective as I go into extensive discussions regarding coding processes in the *Methodology* chapter. To understand the coding processes in the *Methodology* chapter requires some level of literature discussions to have transpired before this. Thus, the traditional sequential way in which research is usually structured was appropriate for this grounded theory approach – even though the approach itself is not characterised as being sequential but rather iterative. It is therefore important to bear in mind that the constant comparative method was critical to this research, even though the literature is presented in its current unified form, and presented before the methodology outlining. To serve as a reminder of this, the title *Contextualising the study* was kept to signal to the reader that the literature engagement in this study was 'unique'.

In terms of structure, the contextualising the study section contains six subject areas. The first is around government's graduate internship programme and their rationale for the programme. This is followed by a discussion on graduate unemployment in South Africa, to understand the socio-economic context in which this internship programme is transpiring. There is then a section discussing formal, informal and non-formal learning because if one wants to understand how graduates on these programmes went about their learning, one needs to understand how learning in general transpires. This is followed by sections on workplace learning; workplace curriculum; and lastly factors affecting workplace learning.

Chapter Three is the *Methodology* chapter, which has several parts ranging from giving an overview of what the approach entailed, including examples that demonstrate the different ways in which the grounded theory methods were adopted, to a discussion around ethics. Lastly, it goes into detail regarding the data generation process as well as the various stages of the coding process.

Chapter Four is the *Results* chapter, which is divided into five parts. Each part covers a component of the data that emerged with some sections organised around questions such as *What was the intended and experienced curriculum*? Chapter Five is the *Discussion* chapter, which speaks to the theory that has been generated in this study and discusses the different components thereof. Lastly, Chapter Six is the *Conclusion* chapter which includes a discussion of the contributions made by this research, its limitations and possible areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

2.1 Government's Graduate Internship Programme

Four government documents are outlined in this section which highlights the rationale for the graduate internship programme as well as how the programme is to be operationalised. These documents acknowledge that the programme operates within the context of as well as responds to South Africa's socio-economic and historical challenges. However, apart from the systematic marginalisation of black people during Apartheid and the impact this continues to have on young people in terms of their skills development and employment prospects, what surfaces is also government indicating that the need for the intervention arises from the shortcomings of tertiary institutions who are not adequately preparing students for the workplace – which by implication means that government believes that this forms part of the role of these institutions. On an operational level, these documents outline the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), departments hosting interns as well as the Human Resources (HR) unit in the department under study. This includes how interns should be remunerated and the kind of mentoring and coaching they should receive. This section also contains a sub-section which demonstrates the importance of the programme by giving a sense of its scale.

2.1.1 Overview of programme intake

In 2002, the South African Cabinet agreed that over a 5-year period - from 2004/5 to 2008/09 - at least 5% of the staff of each department should be comprised of learners and interns (DPSA, 2006a). *The Public Service Internship Programme Step by Step Guide* developed by the DPSA - which is the department responsible for overall implementation and oversight - spoke to the rationale for this target and for the programme itself (2006b):

> South Africa is faced with a major problem of unemployment especially among women and the youth. While jobs are not being created as quickly as desired, the problem of unemployment is exacerbated by lack of skills and formal work experience. In addition, higher education institutions do not appear to prepare students adequately for the world of work. Thus we need to alleviate high levels of unemployment among young graduates and provide them with opportunities to gain practical work experience. These challenges are being addressed through a range of government programmes… one of them is the government's Public Service Graduate Work Experience Programme (p. 6)

Based on available documentation, the 5% commitment continued after the initial 5 years, as reflected in the *Determination On Interns In The Public Service* which took effect on 01 April 2010 (DPSA, 2009a).

Government's intention and rationale for implementing the graduate internship programme in particular, informs how they define a graduate intern, which is, "A person who has completed a qualification but has been unemployed and needs workplace exposure to enhance chances of future employment… should be between the ages of 18 and 35 years" (DPSA, 2006b, p. 5). There are also two other kinds of internships offered by the South African government apart from the graduate internship, which are is the student internship and the internship linked to professional development (DPSA, 2015b).

Student internships are for students at tertiary educational institutions who as part of their programme of study require practical experience, with government being the entity which provides an opportunity for them to gain this experience. The third type of internship forms part of a compulsory prerequisite for professional registration with councils and professional associations – with government through the internship then providing this opportunity that enables registration with their respective associations.

The number of interns, apprentices and people on learnerships recruited into the Public Service, and for which data is publicly available, is outlined in Table 1. From the 50 988 people that were recruited in the 2009-2016 period, it is not known how many of these were graduate interns. Statistics were not available for the period after 2016.

Table 1: Public Service Recruitment Numbers

Year	No. of people recruited into public service departments as interns, learners and apprentices (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2018)	Additional detail
2014/2015	24 141	
2015/16	22 502	
2009-2016	139 032	50 988 absorbed into either permanent or contract employment

Source: Author generated

2.1.2 Overview of government policy on interns

There are a few key policies which inform the management of interns in government, namely: *Departmental internship and learnership policy* (2010)[3]; *Strategic Framework Vision 2015* (DPSA, 2015b)*; Guidelines on Implementing a Determination on interns in the Public Service* (DPSA, 2015a); *Directive on the employment of persons to developmental programmes in the public service: and Internships, learnership, apprenticeship, graduates recruitment schemes and related programmes* (DPSA, 2018). The first and last document were obtained through the data generation process, which HR officials made available to me, and it is what the department in which data generation was conducted considers as the key guiding documents for the internship - according to one of the Human Resources (HR) officials interviewed. Both 2015 documents were accessed online.

i. Departmental Internship and Learnership Policy (2010)

This policy framework aims to provide guidelines for the department itself, which is meant to facilitate the development of its own internship and learnership programmes, structures, mechanisms and control measures. As such, this policy is specific to the department that is the subject of this research.

[3] The specific department's name has been removed owing to confidentiality

The policy speaks to wanting to better the chances of employment of those on internships and learnerships, and enhancing the department's capacity to render its required services. The objectives of the internship and learnership policy outlined in the document include: Addressing capacity building challenges in the public service; interns having meaningful real-life work experiences that complement their classroom experience and enable them to gain confidence; creating opportunities for learners and interns to access employment at a later stage or to become employers; integrating structured learning and structured workplace experience; improving the employment prospects of unemployed graduates who find it difficult to secure employment; increasing capacity in the Department albeit for short periods; facilitating the transformation of workplaces into places that promote continuous learning; and bridging the gap between current education and labour needs (p. 5).

The programme's key principles state that the department must make "reasonable attempts to accommodate and integrate the intern and the learner into its corporate culture. Once interns and learners have been placed, the Department should orientate them" (p. 7). It goes on to say that in terms of effective management: "Performance management systems that include clearly defined performance indicators and assessment measures to evaluate protégés must be established" (p. 7).

In terms of responsibilities for the programme, the department's relevant HR unit is responsible for amongst other things, creating awareness amongst senior managers about the programme; advertising the programme; helping managers with the selection and placement of interns; as well as providing quarterly report templates to relevant stakeholders.

The policy spells out the responsibilities of the department's management, which include (p. 9): Providing interns and learners with adequately supervised, varied and professional experience that supplements classroom learning; identifying appropriate learning assignments; creating a working environment in which interns and learners assist the department to meet its operational needs while simultaneously developing and enhancing their employability skills; offering interns and learners exposure to as many areas as possible; completing and submitting a written evaluation report of the interns and the learner's performance at the end of the internship or the learnership; assigning, training and managing interns and learners in their tasks and responsibilities; providing daily supervision and coaching; and appointing mentors and assessors.

According to the policy, the intern or learner shall in collaboration with their mentor outline what their learning and development should look like while at the department. Interns should also exhibit a willingness to grow and learn through the work experience they are gaining; make the most of the training and development opportunities made available to them; as well as participate in mandatory programmes that are organised by the Department. The new draft policy that was being developed and finalised when data generation was being conducted, makes mention of additional elements in terms of what the intern and learner ought to do. This includes the following: Complying with all the departmental policies and prescripts; faithfully and diligently devoting their time to the service of the department; treating all information as confidential and not divulging this information to any other party.

As outlined in the four documents discussed, part of government's rationale for the graduate internship programme is influenced by the country's challenge of youth unemployment. As such, the programme is also a labour market intervention to create a more enabling labour market environment for black graduates. In particular, government hopes that providing this structured pathway into employment will in turn facilitate more opportunities in the future for them in the labour market. The following section outlines the challenge of graduate unemployment that government is trying to respond to through the introduction of this internship programme.

ii. Strategic Framework Vision 2015

As South Africa's largest employer, employing 1.1 million people, government developed the *Framework for the Development of Human Resources in the Public Service: Vision 2015*, which dictates human resource development across all government spheres. Its main aims are the promotion of the development of specialist skills for the public service; addressing national skills challenges within the public service; and ensuring that there are effective government officials at all levels of government. According to the then Minister for Public Service and Administration, Hon. Fraser-Moleketi, the imperative for such a framework is influenced by South Africa's "legacy of historical socio-economic challenges including a disparate education and training system" (DPSA, 2015b, p. 5).

The Framework has four pillars, namely: Capacity development initiatives; organisational support initiatives; governance and institutional development initiatives; and initiatives to

support government's economic growth and development initiatives. Capacity development initiatives are aimed at developing people such that they can be high performers and deliver service. Within this pillar, there are eight strategic interventions with the promotion of learnerships, internships and traineeships being one of them.

According to The Framework, there has been an increase in workplace mentoring and coaching for both people on internships and learnerships. It does however say that to date, workplace learning has not been effectively managed, and it advocates for the strengthening of systems for workplace learning as an area of focus for capacity building.

It also speaks to the explicit objective of wanting to promote learnerships, internships and traineeships and provide people on these programmes with opportunities aimed at helping them gain practical workplace experience and enhance their productivity. The rationale for this is outlined as follows:

> Learners will become more productive in their jobs at an accelerated pace if they are able to learn through application of their knowledge in the context of the workplace. The workplace represents a very valuable environment for practical learning, and full advantage should be taken of the educational potential of the work environment. Learners, upon graduation, can make an immediate contribution in their places of employment if they have had the opportunity to apply their knowledge in a realistic work environment (p. 72).

iii. Guidelines on Implementing a Determination on Interns in the Public Service (2015)

The guideline document states that the "Public Service Graduate Skills Development Initiatives[4] should be directed towards making interns employable within and outside Public Service" (DPSA, 2015a, p. 9). According to government, higher education is not fulfilling its role in adequately preparing students for the workplace and consequently, government has structured their internship programme in a way that seeks to address this.

[4] This phrase 'Public Service Graduate Skills Development Initiatives' is used once in this document. The phrase 'Graduate Skills Development Programme' is used three times in this document. This does not seem to be the official name of the programme, and as such is not used elsewhere in this research.

This document provides guidelines for the operationalisation of government internship programmes across all departments. Interns, according to government policy, have the same conditions of employment as government contract employees. They are to form part of the employee performance management and development system and they need to sign a performance contract in line with the Performance Management and Development System, which includes having performance reviews. It is recommended that interns be inducted within 60 days, according to the induction programme for public service which was developed by the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA). This induction programme aims to help facilitate an understanding of the organisation of the state, legislation, policies as well as the regulatory environment.

Interns must be paid a monthly allowance that must be in line with the 2009 remuneration schedule for interns. There are three bands in this schedule: Band A incorporates all qualifications between levels 1-4 of the National Qualification Framework (NQF); Band B incorporates levels 5-8; and Band C levels 9-10. In terms of monitoring and evaluation of the programme itself, the Internship Data Reporting Tool (IDRT) is the mechanism propagated as the tool that ought to be utilised to monitor and report on the implementation of the internship regularly. Information captured by this tool is not publicly available online.

Interns are also required to have mentors/coaches during their internships, and these mentors should receive training such that they can aid in the professional development of interns. The document speaks to the importance of mentors (DPSA, 2015a):

> Mentoring and coaching underpin the transfer of relevant work knowledge and skills… Mentors should play a resource person role by ensuring that the interns learns and acquires [*sic*] the necessary work skills and knowledge to improve their opportunities for employment (p. 10).

In terms of professional development, the curriculum aims to develop the applied competencies of interns, which refers to the "applied knowledge, skills, values and attributes required to improve workplace knowledge, experience and service" (p. 10). More specifically, the curriculum must include job preparedness for the public service; life skills for public service; public service delivery (core job performance skills); communication in public service; technical skills for public service; and public finance.

The retention of interns upon the conclusion of the internship programme is treated like any other appointment. With respect to how the process of exiting the internship is managed, it is suggested that it is built around the following: Human resource plan; human resources recruitment strategy; future and current competency requirements and gaps; identified critical and scarce skills plan; and the human resource development plan strategy.

Concerning programme challenges, in March 2008 an internship workshop was held, during which a review of the internship implementation process transpired (DPSA, 2015a). The following were challenges identified in the implementation of government's internship programme: Misalignment of the programme and the HR needs of government; failure to take into consideration scarce and critical occupations in the recruitment process; lack of a mechanism for measuring progress according to the mandate given by Cabinet; and unemployed graduates not being given structured skills development. Subsequently, there was a workshop in 2009 that was also held, with the theme of *Fast tracking implementation of quality internship programme across the Public Service* (DPSA, 2009b). Information regarding what transpired at this workshop is not publicly available.

iv. Directive on the employment of persons to developmental programmes in the public service: Internships, learnership, apprenticeship, graduates recruitment schemes and related programmes (2018)

This directive applies to all persons recruited into any of the public service developmental programmes, whether it be in a national or provincial department. These development programmes include amongst other things learnerships, apprenticeships, graduate internship programmes and cadet programmes. One of the strategic goals of this directive is to:

> Ensure that the public service programmes respond to the broader economic growth and developmental agenda of government. To do this, each department must provide opportunities for the youth to gain practical experience in the workplace and enhance their productivity potential through the implementation of developmental programmes within the department (para. 2).

Mentors are to be appointed to "support the development of persons on developmental programmes" (para. 1) and can be line managers or any other suitable person that has been identified who can "render appropriate development and support in line with the career

development of the protégé and department's strategic objectives of implementing the programme" (p. 10). Individuals on these development programmes are "entitled to induction and skills development as is applicable to other employees" which can be done with the National School of Government to other appropriate providers (para. 1).

The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) is responsible for the annual monitoring of implementation and compliance in relation to the development programmes including the graduate internship programme. After every five years of implementation, DPSA must evaluate the programme's impact, effectiveness and efficiency and make appropriate recommendations thereafter.

Failure to comply with the provisions of this circular can result in disciplinary steps being taken against the relevant head of department, and the head of department can also take steps against any employee who does not comply with the circular's provisions.

2.2 Graduate Unemployment in South Africa

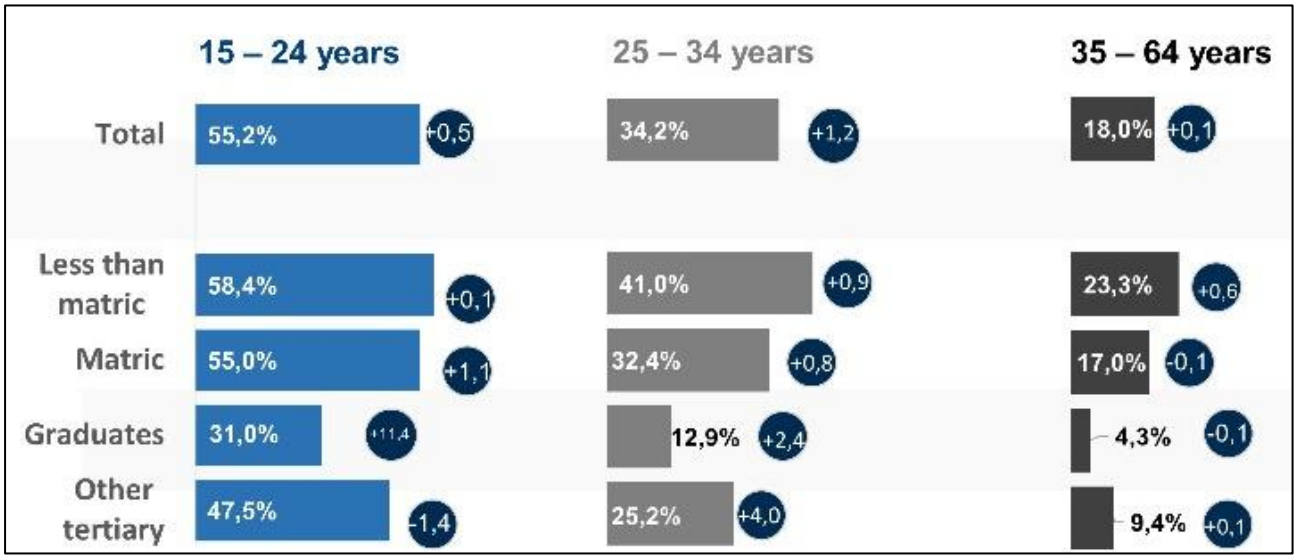
Some contend that there is a pressing issue of graduate unemployment in South Africa, while others assert the issue has been exaggerated. While this may be debatable, there is consensus that graduates are not a heterogeneous group with black graduates finding it more difficult to transition into the labour market compared to their white counterparts (Kraak, 2010; Letseka et al., 2010; Macginty, 2024). This has relevance to this study as there were only black graduates on the internship programme within the department that is the subject of this research – with more detail about their demographic profile outlined in Chapter 4. As such, there is alignment between government's rationale for the graduate internship programme and the demographic of young people that is affected by the challenge of graduate youth unemployment.

With respect to the magnitude of the graduate unemployment challenge, Bhorat and Mayet (2011) asserted that there was an increasing rate of graduate unemployment. For them, this demonstrated the mismatch between the labour demanded by firms and the skills supplied to the labour market. In contrast, Van Der Berg and Van Broekhuizen (2012) contended that this view was largely exaggerated. The Development Policy Research Unit (DPRU) and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) reports had a large divergence in terms of the statistics they gave on graduate unemployment - 9.7% versus 32% - which illustrated how the statistics can vary

on this subject matter, which can in turn lead to different conclusions. This difference can be accounted for by the data collection process: The DPRU study uses labour force survey data from Statistics South Africa, which did not differentiate between graduates in terms of when they completed their degrees, and it therefore did not take into consideration the period involved in job searching (Kraak, 2010). Moreover, it did not consider the phenomenon of under-employment which entails people eventually taking a job even if it is below their skill level (Kraak, 2010). On the other hand, the HSRC study that reported a higher rate of graduate unemployment, surveyed graduates approximately two years after graduating. As such, a shorter time frame produced a higher graduate unemployment statistic.

In the absence of a South African wide higher education tracer study, owing to the expense and time involved as well as due to data access issues, there is a lack of accurate data on the scale and nature of graduate unemployment and underemployment (HSRC, n.d.). However, even the DPRU report - which used Statistics South Africa data and which reported a lower graduate unemployment rate - contended that the unemployment rate for graduates experienced the largest relative change compared to other education groups, with an increase of approximately 50% between 1995 and 2005 (Pauw et al., 2008). More recent Statistics South Africa's (2019) 2019 quarter 1 data also highlights this issue, with youth graduate unemployment among 15-24 years olds at 31%, which is higher than the graduate unemployment rate of the 25-34 year old and 35-64 year old groupings – as shown in Figure 3. With that said, while the youth graduate unemployment rate among 15-24 years olds increased from 19.5% in the 4th quarter of 2018, it is still lower than the unemployment rate of other education groupings within the 15-24 year old group. The Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the first quarter of 2022, indicates that irrespective of the level of education, young people in South Africa continue to face the burden of unemployment with the graduate unemployment rate for those aged 25-34 years in the first quarter of 2022 increasing to 22,4% (Statistics South Africa, 2022).

Figure 3: Unemployment Rate by Education Level and Age Group (Q1, 2019)



Source: Statistics South Africa, 2019b

In terms of how black graduates experience the transition to work process, they experience a much lower labour market absorption rate compared to their white counterparts (Kraak, 2010; Letseka et al., 2010; Graham et al., 2019; Macginty, 2024). In this instance, black graduates are narrowly defined and as such their indian and coloured counterparts are not included.

There are various studies that reflect the lack of equal employment opportunity for black graduates. Moleke (2005) surveyed 2672 graduates and found that 50% of white graduates were able to find employment immediately, irrespective of their field of study. However, the engineering and the medical sciences fields were the only fields in which more than 50% of Africans found employment immediately. Baldry (2016) surveyed 1175 graduates who attended South African higher education institutions and while not representative of the graduate population in the country, her results are still insightful as it shows race to be the strongest predictor of unemployment. More specifically, Baldry (2016) finds that black graduates are five times less likely to be employed compared to white, coloured and indian/asian graduates. Looked at slightly differently, the research of Anand et al. (2016) shows that white people have an almost 60% lower job-exit rate compared to black people, with this being defined as the probability of individuals transitioning from employment to unemployment.

Kraak (2010) asserted that black people formed the disproportionate bulk of the unemployed owing to a lack of structured pathways into employment. This included social networks that led to employment. In the past, white learners had family connections with white firm owners who employed new labour market entrants and the apartheid government had racially exclusive employment policies that favoured particularly white and Afrikaner South Africans - this included bursaries and work-placements for this grouping. For graduates who studied general degrees, and who were largely white, they used their family and friend networks to enter the labour market. The few black graduates that did exist were absorbed into homeland bureaucracies. Kraak (2010) further elaborated on this:

> It is a rich irony that as the doors of learning have been opened for black South Africans after the advent of democracy in 1994, so the structured links to employment that used to exist for the benefit of white graduates have now collapsed, leaving black graduates stranded with no clear pathways into work. In attempting to overcome these complex problems, the South African government will need to look at several active labour market policy interventions as a means of rebuilding the structured pathways into work, particularly for recently graduated African youth (p. 100).

The lack of connections that black graduates have with the labour market speaks to a significant downside of social capital which is that of the exclusion of non-members. Non-members, also known as 'outsiders', are those who are not able to benefit in the way that group members can (Portes, 1998). While social capital is a contested term and difficult to quantify, it has relevance when discussing graduate unemployment in South Africa.

Van Broekhuizen (2016) also probes reasons for this phenomenon, while acknowledging that black graduates have worse labour market outcomes compared to white graduates. According to Van Broekhuizen (2016), white graduates tend to attend historically advantaged universities while a much greater proportion of black, indian and coloured graduates attend historically disadvantaged universities. Thus while the number of black graduates have increased over time, they are graduating from institutions that are seen as less desirable and which are associated with a sub-standard education compared to historically advantaged universities (Van Broekhuizen, 2016). This has relevance to this study as graduates on this programme tended to not be from historically advantaged universities. Examining the predicted probability of unemployment within each race group, Van Broekhuizen (2016) finds that even when white

graduates attend historically disadvantaged universities, their expected unemployment rate is at least as high compared to black graduates who attend historically advantaged universities. Apart from race, other variables also affect employment. Letseka and Cosser (2010) found that the lower the socio-economic status of a student, the lower the degree of control they have over their careers. Resonating with this, Baldry (2016) finds socio-economic status to be the second most significant predictor of unemployment with those in the lowest of the four socio-economic status groups being four times less likely to be employed compared to the three higher groups. Degree type also plays a role, with a Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC) (2013) survey having found that graduates who attended universities in the Western Cape and who came from township and rural schools were more likely to be unemployed. Moreover, graduates with a humanities qualification also experienced a higher rate of unemployment compared to other degree holders, with the employment rate being higher among degree and post-graduates compared to those who held diplomas and certificates (CHEC, 2013). As summarised by Baldry (2016), the CHEC report indicated the following:

> There appears to be consensus that legacies of apartheid continue to influence individuals even after their attainment of a higher education qualification… It appears that those advantaged under apartheid have a greater ability to exercise choice when it comes to deciding where and what to study. Upon graduation, the previously advantaged continue to enjoy stronger connections to the labour market through their family's social networks. Poorer people may be drawn to accept any job, even below their skill level, in order to provide a source of income and in such instances poverty suppresses the concept of choice… (p. 8)

While government has not explicitly stated in their policy documents that black graduates are their target for recruitment onto the internship programme, given the low labour market absorption rate of black people and their poor connection to the labour market, the expectation that they were the primary demographic occupying intern positions were anticipated from the outset and indeed later confirmed by the data.

As mentioned, the contextualising the study section is comprised of six areas, each providing different contextual understandings. Having outlined the programme in more detail and the context of graduate unemployment in which the programme operates, the following section speaks to how learning is understood and the different ways in which learning transpires which

helped lay the foundation for understanding how graduates on these programmes went about their learning.

2.3 Formal, informal and non-formal learning

Learning can sometimes be understood as a form of acquisition as opposed to a social process which can be advanced or hindered by workplace factors. The findings of this study support the view that learning is an outcome of participating and engaging with social communities, with the various factors which emerged outlined and discussed in the Discussion chapter. Moreover, while informal learning is often associated with adult learning and workplace learning, this research also looked at formal and non-formal learning of graduate interns on the programme as their learning also encompassed these dimensions.

While learning is part and parcel of our everyday life and may thus seem commonplace, societies have become increasingly concerned about it as reflected in our preoccupation with national curricula, workplace training courses and sophisticated schooling systems (Wenger, 1998, as cited in Illeris, 2009). In particular, we want to "cause learning, to take charge of it, direct it, accelerate it, demand it, or even simply stop getting in the way of it" (Wenger, 1998, as cited in Illeris, 2009, p. 214).

Lave summed up learning as "changes in knowledge and action" (1993, as cited in Illeris, 2009, p. 201), while Eraut (2000) defined it as "the process whereby knowledge is acquired" which also included "when existing knowledge is used in a new context or in new combinations" (p. 114). It can happen in the absence of intention as "people drink in knowledge informally and, at times, unconsciously" (Swap et al., 2001, p. 98). Kooken et al. (2007) used what they considered an operational definition of learning: "The use of information or knowledge is considered as learning if the information or knowledge is stored consciously or subconsciously for future use" (Kooken et al., 2007, p. 4). Hager and Hodkinson (2009) noted that what constitutes learning and how to define it is contested - even though it is widely used in academic and everyday life - and is left up to how people in their own capacities and perspectives label processes, activities and products as learning.

Tynjälä (2008) discussed different approaches to learning as understood in the literature, which includes seeing learning as a process through which knowledge is acquired and learning as an outcome of participating and engaging with social communities. The notion of knowledge acquisition and the associated metaphor of learning transfer as a metaphor for understanding

the learning process is however, according to Hager and Hodkinson (2009), in conflict with research and theorising and is a simplistic way of conceptualising learning which is blind to the complex set of processes that learning entails. The notion of generic skills such as employability or key skills, which has manifested itself in competence lists, is influenced by this idea of learning being independent of the context in which it is learnt (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009). Additionally, the learning transfer metaphor has metastasised such that it has given birth to other metaphors such as central, key, basic and fundamental. Learning should instead be seen as an "ongoing process rather than as a series of acquisition events" which is not divorced from the learner and context (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009, p. 2). Moreover, learning should instead be seen as a relational web and a process of ongoing change and becoming that does not entail a "fixed state of having become" (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009, p. 13). Acknowledging the relational nature of learning brings into focus the reality that individuals bring experience into a workplace as opposed to just skill and knowledge. This perspective of learning, in contrast to the approach that sees learning as acquisition, views learning as participation and a process. This view of learning as a social process resonates and supports the notion that there are factors at play which shape, influence, hinder or advance learning in a workplace which is something that emerged strongly in this study.

When speaking about learning, regardless of how one views the learning process as discussed above, the distinction between formal, informal and non-formal learning arises. According to Marsick and Watkins (2001), formal learning is generally "institutionally sponsored, classroom-based, and highly structured" while informal learning "may occur in institutions, but it is not typically classroom-based or highly structured, and control of learning rests primarily in the hands of the learner" (p. 25). For Ellström (2011), informal learning occurs on a regular basis as a product of carrying out activities which do not have learning as their primary goal. As such, informal learning can transpire with or without intention and awareness (Ellström, 2011).

In contrast to formal learning, what constitutes non-formal learning is more ambiguous. According to Coombs & Ahmed (1974), non-formal learning is organised and systematic while the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) (2005) described it as learning that may not be evaluated and does not lead to certification – unlike formal learning which results in some kind of certification and accreditation (Majewska & Johnson, 2022;

Cameron & Harrison, 2012). As Johnson & Majewska (2022) explains, non-formal learning is a hybrid between formal and informal learning, which is outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Formal, informal and non-formal learning

Formal learning	Non-formal learning	Informal learning
Learning is structured (e.g., linear objectives)	Learning **may be** structured	Learning is not structured
Learning is promoted through direct teaching behaviours	Learning is promoted through indirect teaching behaviours	
Learning is intended (by educator and learner)	Learning is intended by the **learner**	Learning may not be intended by the learner
Learning is recognised by the learner and educator	Learning is recognised by the **learner**	Learning may not be recognised by the learner
Motivation for learning may be extrinsic to the learner		Motivation for learning is intrinsic to the learner
Learning takes place in educational institutions	Learning **can** take place in educational institutions	Learning can take place anywhere
Learning has a mandated dimension	Learning has a voluntary dimension	
Learning may be recognised or measured through qualifications		Learning is not recognised or measured through qualifications
Learning may primarily focus on propositional knowledge	Learning may focus on both propositional and procedural knowledge[1]	
Learning tends to have a cognitive emphasis	Learning involves cognitive, emotional, social and behavioural elements	
Curriculum is written down	Curriculum **may be** written down	Curriculum is not written down
Learning process is 'top down', focusing on developing specific knowledge and skills	Learning process is 'bottom up', focusing on the learner and their needs	
Learning follows formal curriculum	Learning may complement formal curricula	
Learning may not be linked to socialisation[2]		Learning is often linked to socialisation

Source: Majewska & Johnson (2022: 4-5)

It is worth noting that the terms non-formal and informal are often used interchangeably as found by Hodkinson et al. (2003) who mapped the conceptual terrain on non-formal learning. However, some like Rogers (2014) - while having acknowledged how these terms have been used interchangeably - did differentiate between them. Rogers (2014) regarded non-formal learning as that which does not lead to any kind of certification; is structured in relation to learning objectives, learning time or learner support; and is intentional. While informal learning

is unstructured; can be intentional or unintentional; and does not lead to certification (Rogers, 2014). In this research, both the terms informal and non-formal are relevant and as such these are used along with formal learning.

With that said, the particular type of learning that is closely associated with adult learning and workplace learning is that of informal learning (Marsick & Watkins, 2001; Eraut, 2004a). Manuti et al. (2015) speaks to the different ways in which informal learning transpires. It could arise as a by-product of trying to solve a problem, doing something in a group setting such as problem solving or mentoring and job shadowing (Manuti et al., 2015). According to Egetenmeyer, estimations regarding the degree to which learning is informally acquired are as high as 70% to 90% (Rogers, 2014). While hard to verify, the wide acceptance of these statistics demonstrates the importance and prevalence of informal learning.

There are different kinds of categorisations of informal learning such as Schugurensky's (2000) taxonomy of informal learning which encompassed self-directed learning, incidental learning and socialisation – each differing in intentionality and consciousness, as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: Three Forms of Informal Learning

Form	Intentionality	Awareness (at the time of learning experience)
Self-directed	yes	yes
Incidental	no	yes
Socialization	no	no

Source: Schugurensky (2000)

Self-directed learning is when an individual or group of individuals embark on an intentional learning project that has the intention of learning something even before the commencement of the project itself (Schugurensky, 2000). Schugurensky (2000) gave the example of a group of high school students who, owing to attending a conservative school as well as living in a military dictatorship, organise a secret study group that meets regularly intending to discuss political economy readings. Here there is an intention of learning, as the very purpose of the study group is to learn and there is a consciousness about one's learning – although the depth

of consciousness seems somewhat assumed in this example. Incidental learning is when there is an awareness about learning even though that was not the initial intent (Schugurensky, 2000). In contrast, socialisation is when there is neither an intention to learn something nor was there an awareness about the learning itself, and it specifically relates to "values, attitudes, behaviours, skills, etc. that occur during everyday life" (Schugurensky, 2000: 4). Schugurensky (2000) however did add that even though the consciousness about the learning is absent one can "become aware of that learning later on through a process of retrospective recognition" (p. 5).

While Schugurensky (2000) outlined a difference in awareness between incidental and socialisation, as illustrated in Table 3, he seems to contradict himself by having said that learning with socialisation can be immediate or transpire later on. Thus, the time lapse between incidental and socialisation may be the same. It is thus easier for me to understand the differentiation between incidental learning and socialisation in terms of what is being learnt, with socialisation referring more to behaviour and attitudes.

Eraut (2000) developed a typology for informal learning comprised of deliberative learning, reactive learning and implicit learning. Implicit learning is unconsciously done and without recognising that new knowledge and skills have been learnt, and can involve the formation of not only skills and habits but also attitudes (Marsick et al., 2006). Implicit learning is difficult to detect and respondents do not always find it easy to speak about the process of learning if they are generally unaccustomed to doing so. Even when they do speak about it, they tend to speak to formal rather than informal learning. A useful way to elicit information from research participants, especially if their learning has been implicit, is to adopt the following approach used by Eraut (2000):

> Suggest types of knowledge which might be in use in a particular situation and to get the respondent to confirm, modify or deny their suggestions. This requires that researchers have a repertoire of types of knowledge and knowledge use, can get sufficient understanding of their respondent's situation, and can develop ideas from that repertoire in a manner that is both appropriate to the situation and meaningful to their respondent (pp. 120-121).

Reactive learning is "a more conscious and intentional effort to learn but… involves near-spontaneous reflection on past experience, noting facts, maybe asking questions and observing

the effects of actions" (Tynjälä, 2008, p. 139). Deliberative informal learning "refers to situations in which there is a clear work-based goal with learning as a probable by-product. This type of learning involves a discussion and review of past actions and experiences, engagement in decision making and problem solving" (Tynjälä, 2008, p. 139). Each of these three components of the typology differs concerning the learning intention. On one end is deliberative learning with the learning intention being evident and at the other is implicit learning which involves no intention or awareness of learning. Reactive learning lies between these two extremes.

Being aware of the different ways in which informal learning transpires was useful given that I commenced with the question of wanting to find out what and how graduates on South African government internship programmes learn. The different informal learning categories shaped the initial interview guide. However, as the research progressed the importance of formal and non-formal learning emerged. As such, the central focus of this research was on intern learning regardless of whether it transpired on a formal, informal or non-formal basis and thus while conceptions of workplace learning often exclude formal and non-formal training programmes within work settings (Jacobs & Park, 2009), these were not excluded in this study.

Having unpacked the theory around the kind of formal, informal and non-formal learning that can transpire on such a programme, the next section discusses what constitutes workplace learning, how people go about learning in workplaces and the different kinds of knowledge they can learn in a workplace which is of relevance to this research.

2.4 Workplace learning

Building on the previous section, the notion of legitimate peripheral participation and the use of associated terms such as communities of practice aligns with a more socially informed perspective of learning. What constitutes communities of practice can vary in different environments, and in this research a new context was provided to understand this concept. In this research, the focus is on individual workplace learning which is associated with questions regarding what and how people learn - which are questions that shaped the initial research questions but which evolved over time in line with a grounded theory approach. To fully understand what interns learned in this research, I needed to develop an understanding and foreground a discussion regarding the different ways in which knowledge is classified. However, no one classification type was exclusively used but rather a mixture of components

from different classifications as this is what resonated with the data. This section speaks to this as well as highlights the importance of feedback and having a mentor or expert to guide new workplace entrants, which surfaced in the data and emerged as a factor that affected learning.

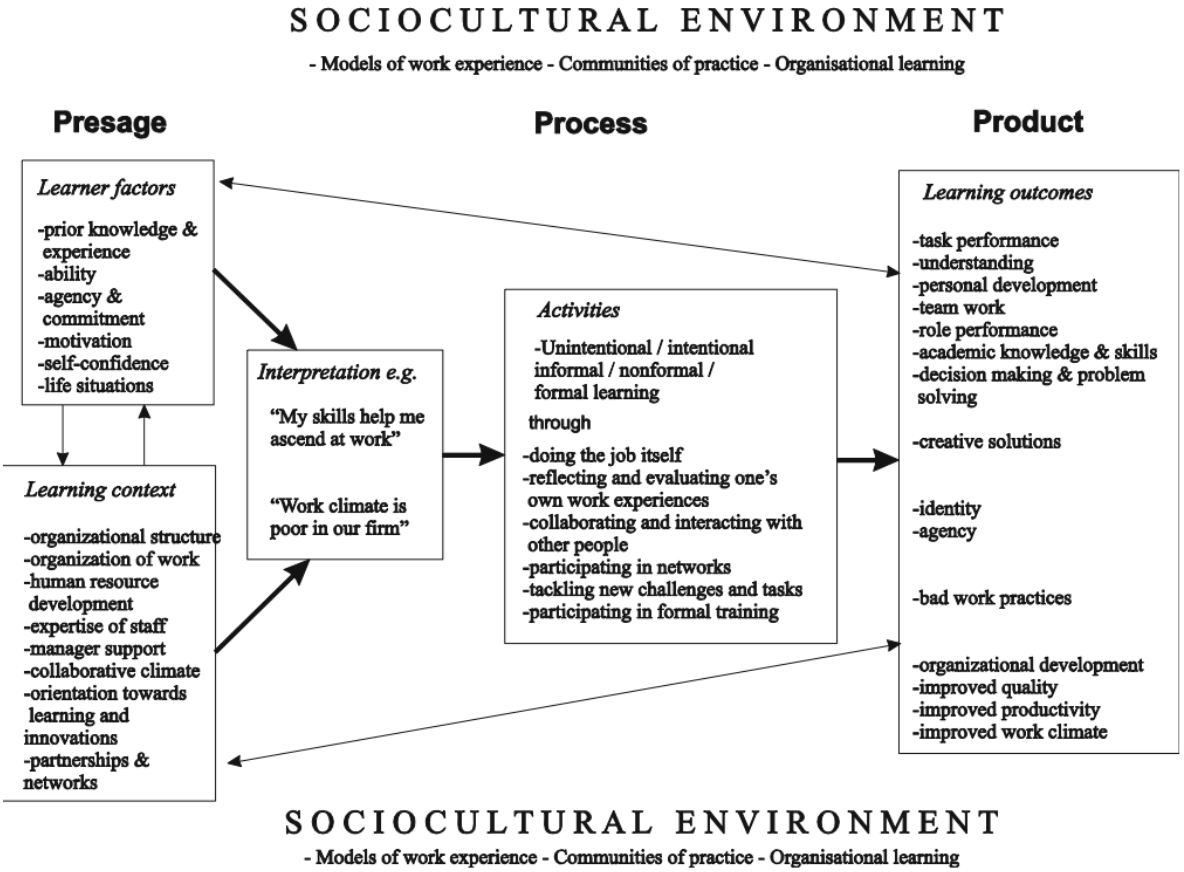
With the research into workplace learning being varied and broad, Tynjälä (2013) wanted to create some structure in terms of how the field is engaged with. They developed a 3-P model of workplace learning as a "tentative holistic model" which could be used to explore different lines of enquiry and which is based on Biggs (1999) 3-P model (Hilkenmeier et al, 2021; Hilkenmeier et al., 2021) - although there are differences between Tynjälä's (2013) model and Biggs's original model, with Biggs' model not suitable for workplace learning but rather geared towards learning within a school context. Each P is related to what Tynjälä (2013) referred to as a basic component of learning and is reflected in Figure 4: 3-P model.

The first 'P' is *presage* with it comprising of learner factors and learning context. The presage factors do not directly affect learning. Instead, how these factors are interpreted by the learner affects learning. For instance, if someone thinks that they have skills which enable them to progress at work then they will pursue learning opportunities compared to those people who lack belief in their skills. As such, according to Tynjälä (2013), the level of skills and experience of someone does not directly affect learning but rather their perception of their skills and experience - which is in line with a constructivist view of learning. In terms of *process*, this covers all kinds of learning regardless of how they transpire in the workplace. Concerning *product*, which is the third 'P', this concerns the product of workplace learning which could be a range of things such as decision-making and problem-solving and understanding how to do certain tasks, which reflects the range of things that can be learnt at work - which can even include learning bad work practices.

Tynjälä (2013) outlined six lines of enquiry when it comes to workplace learning which include: The nature of workplace learning studies; work identities and agency in workplace learning research; development of professional expertise related studies; analyses of competence development in education–work contexts in vocational education and training (VET) and higher education; research on communities of practice related research; and organisational learning research. For instance, the work by Billet as well as Fuller and Unwin which are cited in this study belong to the process component, that is, it is related to how people go about learning in the workplace.

Tynjälä's (2013) model provided a container for understanding the workplace learning literature with some researchers focusing on one dimension (i.e. One 'P') while others focus across the different 'P' domains.

Figure 4: 3-P model



Source: Tynjälä's (2013)

What constitutes a workplace is generally understood to be a physical location and shared meanings, ideas, behaviours and attitudes which all serve to shape the working environment and relationships within them (Vaughan, 2008). However, the workplace is no longer only a physical environment given the emergence of mobile offices and remote workplaces (Manuti et al., 2015), especially in the context of COVID-19 which forced people to work remotely.

Boud and Walker (1991) defined a learning milieu as "the social-psychological and material environment in which learners and those contributing to their learning work together", and

consists of a network of variables including cultural, social, institutional and psychological (p. 15). The interaction between these variables transpires in complicated ways and manifests itself in different learning permutations. The milieu is thus not just the physical environment but also includes aspects such as the culture, formal requirements, personal characteristics of those in it and expectations of different individuals (Boud & Walker, 1991). Individual learning is thus a function of the interplay between the learner and the milieu, which means learning can be inhibited by factors beyond the individual. In short "the overall milieu of organisations, and departments and units within them, influences the particular learning experience of individuals" (Boud & Walker, 1991, p. 16). In line with this more socially informed perspective of learning, Lee et al. (2004) asserted that "workplace learning is an ongoing social process where individuals and their learning contexts of work cannot simply be seen as separate considerations" (p. 34). Thus, any models or typologies which examine learning need to embrace learning as a social act which involves relationships between people as well as the talk which transpires between them (Boud et al., 2009). Learning at work can thus be viewed as being mediated by the actions of individuals and their interactions in managing different tasks and situations in the workplace as opposed to viewing work as a social process inseparable from work practices or seeing it as solely a cognitive process (Ellström, 2011).

Building on this, legitimate peripheral participation can provide us with a lens to further understand the social dimension of learning as well as provide us with a language to speak about newcomers and old-timers in the department, in addition to related notions such as communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Communities of practice has its origins in learning theory and was coined by Lave and Wegner while studying apprenticeships. A community of practice can be seen as a living curriculum and is most useful when it is used to speak to the processes and experiences of new entrants in the workplace or experienced workers who move into new jobs or positions (Fuller et al., 2005; Wenger & Trayner, 2015).

The three elements of a community of practice are domain; community; and practice. There must be a common domain of interest and some kind of shared competence, which differentiates its members from other people. In terms of community, "in pursuing their interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information" and develop relationships which facilitate learning from each other (Wenger & Trayner, 2015, para. 7). Lastly concerning practice, there is a common collection of resources or a shared practice which could involve experiences, stories or particular ways of solving

problems (Wenger, 1998, 2011). However, not everyone in a community shares the same sense of identity. As put by Wenger (2000), "We define ourselves by what we are not as well as by what we are, by the communities we do not belong to as well as by the ones we do" (p. 239).

In terms of how learning transpires in communities of practice, Lave (1996) explained:

> The argument developed by Etienne Wenger and myself (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is that learning is an aspect of changing participation in changing "communities of practice" everywhere. Wherever people engage for substantial periods of time, day by day, in doing things in which their ongoing activities are interdependent, learning is part of their changing participation in changing practices (p. 150).

Fuller et al. (2005) suggested that owing to patterns and forms of participation in communities of practice being diverse, there is a need to study it in different contexts. In this vein, this research provided a new context and opportunity to do this. Moreover, while learning can transpire on different levels - on an individual, group, organisation, inter-organisation or regional level (Tynjälä, 2008) - this research was individual-centric.

In the literature, learning on an individual level in a work environment is associated with questions about the conceptions which employees have of learning, what it is that people learn at work and how is it that they learn these things (Tynjälä, 2008). For instance, the research into workplace learning of Eraut (2004b) probed: "What is being learned? How is it being learned? What factors affect the level and directions of learning effort?" (p. 248) while Billet (2006) looked at the kind of experiences and learnings that transpired through engagements in the workplace. The focus on how and what is being learnt in the workplace may appear simplistic but due to the informal nature of the workplace setting - compared to the formal nature of learning in an educational environment - people may not recognise that they are learning (Tynjälä, 2008). As mentioned, these questions played a key role in shaping this research – which will be more evident in the *Methodology* chapter.

i. What can people learn in the workplace?

In terms of what people can learn within a workplace setting, there are different knowledge classifications which can be utilised. Gott (1989) spoke of three knowledge types, namely: Procedural knowledge; declarative knowledge; and strategic knowledge. Declarative (domain) knowledge relates to knowledge of the object; system; or device, while strategic knowledge

relates to how to determine what to do and when to do it. Another classification related to workplace knowledge also includes Mansfield (1991), who spoke of task or technical skills; task management skills; contingency management skills; and role and environment skills (Smith, 2003). Moreover, Mezirow (1991) discussed three types of workplace learning that can transpire: Instrumental learning which is geared towards skills development and productivity improvement; dialogic learning which is centred on the place of the individual within them as well as the organisation itself; and self-reflective learning which "promotes learners understanding of themselves in the workplace and provokes questions about their identities and the need for self-change, involving a transformation of their ways of looking at themselves and at their relationships" (Smith, 2003, p. 57).

De Jong and Ferguson-Hessler (1996) distinguished between four knowledge types: Situational knowledge; conceptual knowledge; procedural knowledge; and strategic knowledge. Situational knowledge is "knowledge about situations as they typically appear in a particular domain" (p. 106). Conceptual knowledge is "static knowledge about facts, concepts, and principles that apply within a certain domain" (p. 107). Procedural knowledge "contains actions or manipulations that are valid within a domain" while strategic knowledge "helps students organise their problem-solving process by directing which stages they should go through to reach a solution" (p. 107). Their categorisation is influenced by their research background in the field of physics with a focus on problem-solving, with physics characterised as being highly abstractive and hierarchical in nature as well as having strong links between elements (De Jong & Ferguson-Hessler, 1996). As such, this categorisation is not workplace specific but could be applied to this setting.

Billet (1996) also used procedural knowledge as a classification, with the other two being propositional and dispositional knowledge. Procedural knowledge comprises techniques, skills and ability regarding how to do things (Billet, 1996). Propositional knowledge comprises facts and concepts, which could vary from simple to more sophisticated levels of knowledge (Billet, 1996). In contrast, dispositional knowledge concerns attitudes and values which underpin how one puts their capabilities in action (Billet, 1996).

Eraut (2004b) developed a typology which is heuristic in nature and aimed at bringing to light the learning that may be transpiring in people's own context. It is aimed at being a useful "starting point" for people developing their own workplace typology with each component not

exclusively encompassing only one knowledge type (Eraut, 2004b, p. 265). As such, it cuts across different knowledge types, with each component also having tacit knowledge components. This typology is captured in Table 4. Eraut (2004b) said it would be better to see this not just as a typology per se but rather a "progression typology, and to see a person's current position on each aspect as a point on a lifelong learning trajectory" (p. 266).

Table 4: What Is Being Learned in the Workplace

Task Performance

Speed and fluency
Complexity of tasks and problems
Range of skills required
Communication with a wide range of people
Collaborative work

Awareness and Understanding

Other people: colleagues, customers, managers, etc.
Contexts and situations
One's own organization
Problems and risks
Priorities and strategic issues
Value issues

Personal Development

Self evaluation
Self management
Handling emotions
Building and sustaining relationships
Disposition to attend to other perspectives
Disposition to consult and work with others
Disposition to learn and improve one's practice
Accessing relevant knowledge and expertise
Ability to learn from experience

Teamwork

Collaborative work
Facilitating social relations
Joint planning and problem solving
Ability to engage in and promote mutual learning

Role Performance

Prioritisation
Range of responsibility
Supporting other people's learning
Leadership
Accountability
Supervisory role
Delegation
Handling ethical issues
Coping with unexpected problems
Crisis management
Keeping up-to-date

Academic Knowledge and Skills

Use of evidence and argument
Accessing formal knowledge
Research-based practice
Theoretical thinking
Knowing what you might need to know
Using knowledge resources (human, paper-based, electronic)
Learning how to use relevant theory (in a range of practical situations)

Decision Making and Problem Solving

When to seek expert help
Dealing with complexity
Group decision making
Problem analysis
Generating, formulating and evaluating options
Managing the process within an appropriate timescale
Decision making under pressurised conditions

Judgement

Quality of performance, output and outcomes
Priorities
Value issues
Levels of risk

Source: Eraut (2004b, p. 265)

In terms of what constitutes personal development, which is also included in Eraut's (2004a) aforementioned typology, it encompasses components of emotional intelligence. This was

something of relevance to this research and a better understanding during the coding process of this dimension was required.

Austin et al.'s (2001) defined emotional intelligence as "the ability to recognise and manage one's emotions, to solve conflicts, to motivate oneself, and to persevere in the face of difficulty" (p. 12). A more narrative definition was provided by Mayer (2004), who considered emotional intelligence as the intersection of emotions and thoughts, and as such takes each element of the phrase "seriously" (p. 3). Outlined below is a more formal definition (Mayer, 2004):

> We define EI as the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth (p. 3)

Mayer (2004) went on to breakdown emotional intelligence as encompassing four abilities: Accurately perceiving emotions in oneself as well as in others; drawing on emotions to facilitate thinking; making sense of emotional meanings; in addition to managing emotions (Mayer, 2004). The content of these dimensions or branches has been revised over time by the author. The usefulness of these different knowledge classifications to this study is elaborated on in later chapters.

ii. How can people learn in the workplace?

While the above discussion outlines the kinds of learning that can transpire in a workplace, it speaks more to range than depth. For instance, an intern and their supervisor may learn something that is classified as personal development, but their depth of learning may differ. In this regard, Dreyfus (1982) spoke about five stages of skills development which are novice; advanced beginner; competent; proficient; and expert (Benner, 1982). Novice is synonymous with limited, inflexible and rule-governed behaviour, while expert is when an individual does not require rules or guidelines but can tap into their wealth of experience and has an initiation about what to do (Benner, 1982). As opposed to speaking about stages like Dreyfus (1982), Swap et al. (2001) spoke to a continuum of expertise from low to high expertise - with novice (beginner); apprentice (intermediate); journeyman (advanced); and master (virtuoso). Jacobs and Washington (2003) also discussed a taxonomy of employee competence that has the following dimensions: Master; expert; experienced specialist, specialist; and novice (Jacobs & Park, 2009).

Regardless of how it is classified, to progress from novice to a more advanced level requires, amongst other things, someone like a mentor or trainer to provide feedback, and to set expectations and monitoring indicators (Smith, 2003). While observing and listening are important, they may not enable learners to learn knowledge that is more hidden or opaque and may not enable progression through the various stages. This is why having close guidance from an expert, referred to as proximal guidance by Vygotsky (1978), can enable individuals to more expediently access and construct more remote knowledge (Smith, 2003). This notion is linked to models of instruction because it is through these mechanisms that people can go about learning from more experienced workplace actors. In this regard, Billett (1994) outlined four types: Modelling; coaching; scaffolding; and fading. Modelling is when an expert carries out a task that the learner can observe, to learn how the expert went about doing it. Coaching is when the learner carries out the activity and the expert gives feedback or gives hints, clues or tricks of the trade aimed at helping the learner be able to achieve the intended learning outcome. Scaffolding is support at a distance that may entail providing learning opportunities for learners, which are in line with the learner's ability or general reminders given to learners. Lastly, fading is when support is progressively withdrawn from the learner until they can do it themselves. Billet (1994), who surveyed 300 skills worker, found that respondents stressed the importance of having access to experts and having the opportunity to have hands-on learning. The role of the expert, who could be a mentor or otherwise, is important as they need to make the tacit and hidden parts of their role accessible to novices (Billet, 1994). This would include making explicit why they do things in a certain way and what happens if they do not.

As mentioned above, feedback is a means by which workplace learning can be facilitated. However, this does not mean that the presence of feedback necessary enables more learning. This is because there is variability regarding how people - interns in this instance - may respond to feedback, which may also be a function of how the feedback is delivered and the nature of the feedback (Kraiger et al., 2015). As such, people may get identical feedback but may respond to this in different ways and the content of what they learn as well as the depth of learning may differ.

In the research of Eraut (2004b), which did not look at how someone can progress through the different levels but rather at how people learn, he found that four processes accounted for a high proportion of the reported learning which were namely: Participation in group activities; working alongside; tackling challenging tasks; and working with clients. *Participation in group*

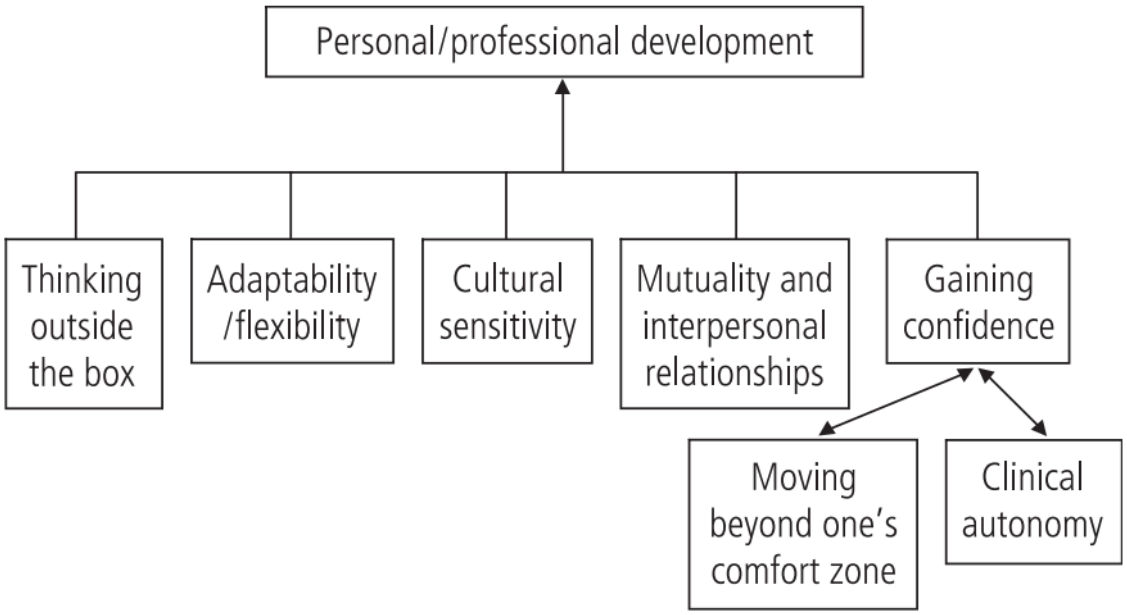
activities included working in a team towards a common goal or alternatively, a group established for a special purpose such as an audit or policy review (Eraut, 2004b). *Working alongside* enabled people to observe and listen to others, to learn new ways or better ways of doing things as well as to become aware of different skills and knowledge (Eraut, 2004b). For instance, research into nursing, engineering and accountancy showed that working alongside a colleague is beneficial as they could ask questions and receive feedback, and that the allocation and structuring of work was critical (Vaughan, 2008). With respect to the latter, this is because there was "more progress when their work was difficult or challenging, when it was collaborative, and when there were opportunities for meeting and observing and working alongside those with more expertise" (Vaughan, 2008, p. 17). *Tackling challenging tasks* entailed people being supported when taking on difficult tasks and who go on to be successful in their execution of these tasks, which serves to increase their task motivation and confidence (Eraut, 2004b). Lastly, *working with clients* facilitated learning about the client, their problems and needs as well as idea generation arising from engaging with them (Eraut, 2004b).

What also may matter in terms of how people learn is the content that they are learning, as found by Eraut et al. (2004) who found this to be true in relation to newly qualified nurses. Asking questions or seeking advice from experienced colleagues was a common and quick way of finding out things they needed to know. However, when the ward was busy, it was difficult for them to do this. Nurses also found that practising was the best way to learn as it enabled them to learn in the process. Unlike the interns in this research, these nurses had more responsibility and authority in their workplace and were able to delegate tasks to healthcare assistants. Kooken et al. (2007) found, through their workplace questionnaires, four approaches that people used when they needed to learn something or required information. The most reported mechanism was interpersonal help-seeking, followed by seeking help from digital material. The two other mechanisms which were less used were seeking help from paper-based written material as well as trying things out through practical application.

Barker et al. (2010) used a constructivist grounded theory approach to examine the learning process for occupational therapy students who completed international placements. In their study, the core category or central phenomenon that emerged was that of personal and professional development - which captured the learning that transpired. Within this, some subcategories included: Thinking outside the box; adaptability/flexibility; cultural sensitivity; recognition of the value of interpersonal relationships; and gaining confidence through moving

beyond one's comfort zone and increasing autonomy. Barker et al., (2010) did not separate the personal and professional development subcomponents because in their study they emerged as being intertwined and interrelated. Figure 5 is a graphical representation of their findings:

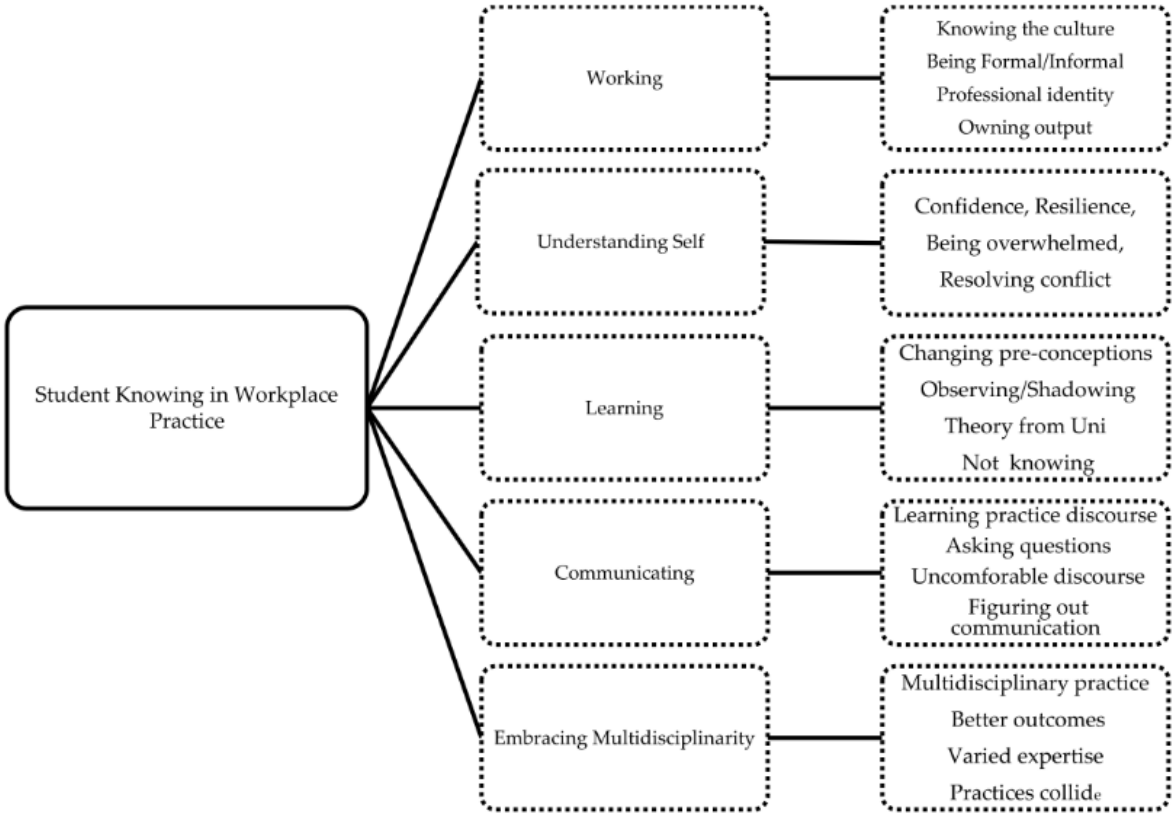
Figure 5: A Schematic Representation of Learning in International Practice Placement Education



Source: Barker et al. (2010, p. 33)

Using a grounded theory approach, Burford et al. (2020) wanted to understand "impromptu student learning and knowing in workplace practice" (p. 165), with data collected from tertiary students who returned from work experience placements as part of their studies. The core category that emerged was 'student knowing in workplace practice', with the five themes connected with this being: Working; understanding self; learning; communicating; and embracing multi-disciplinarily. Burford et al. (2020) presented this construct and framework diagrammatically as shown in Figure 6. Something they highlighted is that while their research had a core category with sub-themes that emerged, that does not mean that learning was necessarily the same for everyone and may have been unique to that individual.

Figure 6: The Conceptual Framework of Student Knowing in Workplace Practice



Source: Burford et al. (2020, p. 174)

Bearing in mind that learning may be unique to everyone as outlined by Burford et al. (2020) and that some interns may have a better learning experience compared to others. In this research I did not assume that learning necessarily transpired. In other words, I did not assume – as cautioned by Vaughan (2008) – that learning in the workplace is necessarily transpiring just because its called workplace learning. Similarly, just because it is a community of practice does not mean that learning is necessarily taking place or that learning is equally distributed.

As mentioned, learning on an individual level in a work environment is associated with questions about conceptions of learning, as well as what and how people learn at work (Tynjälä, 2008). These questions are connected to the idea of the curriculum and can be a lens through which to explore these elements. This is because the idea of a curriculum is closely associated with the idea of learning, as the objective of developing a curriculum is for people to learn something. In this regard, the lens of the intended curriculum and the experienced curriculum

was of particular relevance to this research. Over time, it became part of the framing of this grounded theory research, which will be discussed in more detail in later chapters.

2.5 Workplace curriculum

While research into workplace curriculum and learning has gained momentum in recent years, it remains an under-researched area (Eraut, 2004a; Tynjälä, 2008; Dornan, 2012; Derrick, 2019). The root meaning of curriculum comes from the Latin word ‘currere’, which means the track to be run (Billett, 2006). While it may not be explicitly mentioned or written down, the sequencing of tasks from low accountability to tasks with greater value constitutes a syllabus (Billett, 2006). The curriculum is not unidimensional but rather encompasses distinct layers, with there being some variability regarding the terminology that is used in the literature in relation to the different curriculum layers. The different layers of the curriculum were of relevance to this study as they enabled an analysis of the intentions and outcomes of different actors within the workplace curriculum value chain.

Van den Akker (2007) and van den Akker et al. (2010) differentiated between six curriculum layers as reflected in Table 5, while Kurz et al. (2010) used Porter's distinction of intended, enacted and assessed curricula. Concerning the assessed curricula, this is what students are assessed on. Misalignment in this context refers to the lack of overlap between what is in the content standards; the curricula of what teachers deliver in the classroom; and what student assessments entail. Phaeton & Stears (2017) notes that Van den Akker (2003) referred to the enacted curriculum as the implemented curriculum and the experienced curriculum as the attained curriculum, while Mills & Treagust (2003) referred to the experienced curriculum as the achieved curriculum.

Table 5: Typology of Curriculum Presentations

INTENDED	*Ideal*	Vision (rationale or basic philosophy underlying a curriculum)
	Formal/Written	Intentions as specified in curriculum documents and/or materials
IMPLEMENTED	*Perceived*	Curriculum as interpreted by its users (especially teachers)
	Operational	Actual process of teaching and learning (also: curriculum-in-action)
ATTAINED	*Experiential*	Learning experiences as perceived by learners
	Learned	Resulting learning outcomes of learners

Source: Phaeton & Stears (2017, p. 6)

Billett (2006) applied a typology that is associated with educational institutions to workplaces, which is that of the intended curriculum, enacted curriculum and experienced curriculum. The use of this typology in relation to workplace curriculum is appropriate given the broad and general nature of the typology, which is not context dependent. However, in general, one cannot simply transfer concepts around curriculum and learning from the higher education context to workplaces because the work domain is often an environment that is "antithetical to many educational values and processes" as it champions the client and is centred on bureaucratic and market logic (Hordern, 2018, p. 2). For instance, reasoning, personal development and truth can be peripheral to work environments. However, as demonstrated here, this does not mean concepts can never be applied across both domains but rather that caution should be exercised when doing so.

The intended curriculum is the curriculum which is intended to transpire, that is, the formal plan and that which is desirable (Moercke & Eika, 2002; Billett, 2006; Harris, 2011). The enacted curriculum is what actually transpires when the curriculum is enacted, which may differ from the formal plan (Billett, 2006; Harris, 2011). The experienced curriculum is what "learners experience, construe and learn as a result of its enactment" (Billett, 2006, p. 2). The enacted curriculum can be referred to as the 'curriculum in action', while the experienced curriculum is the 'learned curriculum' (Moercke & Eika, 2002).

Drawing on the work of Lave (1990), Billett (2006) described viewing the intended curriculum as participating in social practice in the following way:

> This comprises the sequencing of a pathway of activities that leads the worker-learner from novice status to being able to participate effectively in, and potentially transform, the particular social practice (eg. workplace). Movement along this pathway needs to account for the kinds of knowledge to be learnt, to engage fully - particularly that which cannot be learnt alone or requires practice to secure proficiency. Considerations of the knowledge to be learnt to become an effective and productive practitioner, and how this learning can be best supported, constitute key elements of the ideal 'intended' workplace curriculum (p. 3)

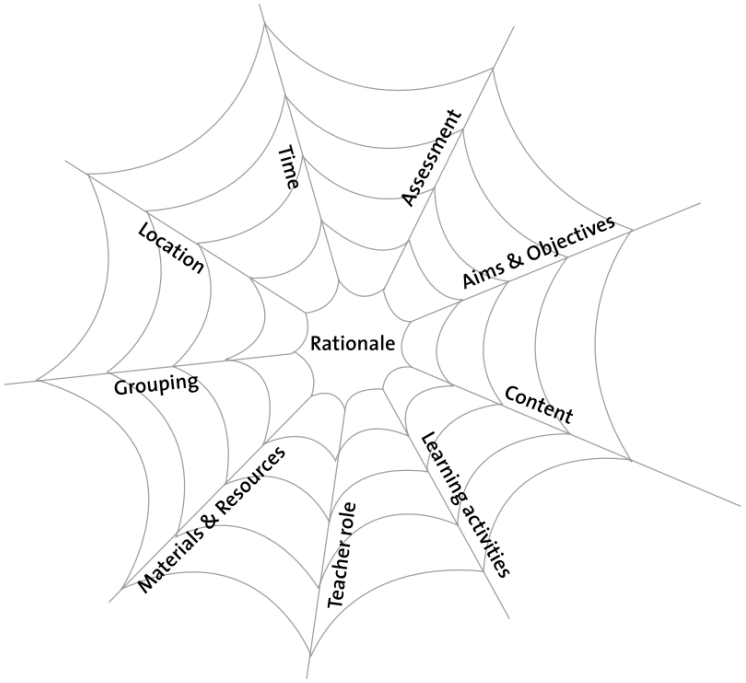
In terms of the enacted curriculum, that is what transpires when the curriculum is enacted and what people learn as a function of the interaction between the individual and the workplace (Tynjälä, 2008; Billett, 2006). With respect to the experienced curriculum, this is what learners in practice experience and learn (Billett, 2006). While influenced by the enacted curriculum, individual learners choose how they want to participate and learn in a learning environment. This is because learners have individual agency and are not "passive recipients of knowledge" (Billet, 2006, p. 11).

The different layers of the curriculum are not always in alignment, which means that although there is an intention for people to learn a set of things or develop knowledge around certain areas, their learning experience could be different to this intention. The work of Phaeton and Stears (2017) who uses a qualitative approach to understand the alignment of the intended and implemented curriculum demonstrates this. They interviewed teachers, gave them a questionnaire and analysed their workbooks. Curriculum documents, the national syllabus, curriculum policy and national examination papers were also examined. Included in their findings are that the curriculum assumed teacher competency; the curriculum was difficult to interpret; and there was a misalignment between the examiners and the curriculum designers that also served to confuse teachers. By doing so, they demonstrate how the curriculum needed to be "viewed as a web of interrelated and aligned activities which are focused at achieving the end" (Phaeton & Stears, 2017, p. 737). While this speaks to a school environment that has learning as its central activity, ideally learning in workplace internships should also be guided by the rationale for its existence because there is an understanding that the people on these internships are new workplace entrants who need some kind of development – even if other

internships do not have the kind of transformation and redress agenda as the graduate internship in this research.

According to Van den Akker (2007), when planning student learning – and by implication the curriculum - there are ten components which need to be considered when planning student learning. Van den Akker (2007) preferred to represent these components as a spider web owing to the interconnected nature of the different components, and that the desire to improve the curriculum requires interventions and coordination on various fronts. This is reflected in Figure 7. Again, this reinforces the view that learning is influenced, shaped, hindered and advanced by various factors.

Figure 7: Curricular Spider Web Perspectives



Source: van den Akker (2007, p. 41)

This section outlined the different layers of the curriculum which forms an important backdrop to this study. In this research, the typology of the intended curriculum, enacted curriculum and experienced curriculum was deployed as a lens and framework through which to analyse the

graduate internship programme. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this was not done in the initial stages, in keeping with the grounded theory approach. The divergence between the intended and experienced curriculum is of central importance to this research, which was found to be influenced by a variety of factors. The theoretical background and foundation concerning this divergence are explored in the next section.

2.6 Factors Affecting Workplace Learning

There are different factors which affect learning in the workplace, and ultimately the alignment and misalignment between the intended and experienced curriculum. In the literature, authors have classified these factors differently with this research drawing on the work of Eraut (2004b; 2012) most strongly, owing to how it helped guide the data and analysis as well as how it resonated with the data. With that said, and as will be outlined in the Discussion chapter, out of this study emerged its own unique set of factors which were found to have influenced the workplace learning of graduate interns. This section will outline some of the prominent factors which are spoken about in the literature, and which also emerged in this research.

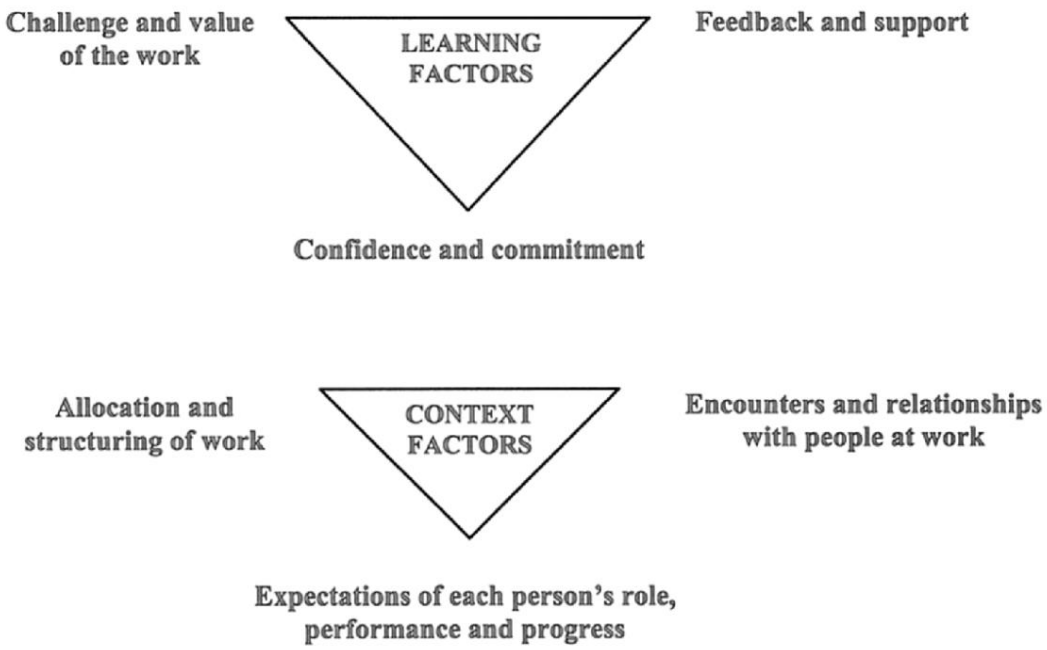
Factor classifications

If one is to understand learning as a social process, with the context in which the learning is transpiring as well as the individual both playing a role in shaping the learning (Fuller & Unwin, 2011; Hager & Hodkinson, 2009; Lee et al., 2004), then this means that the factors that affect the learning that arises will at the very least be a function of the individual and context or institution. When thinking about the factors that affect workplace learning, there are different ways to organise the factors. Eraut (2004a) spoke about learning and context factors in terms of how he classified factors that affect learning. The *learning factors* are challenge and value of the work; confidence and commitment, personal agency and motivation; and feedback, support and trust. The *context factors* are allocation and structuring of work; encounters and relationships with people at work; and individual participation and expectations of their performance and progress. This typology is graphically represented with the top triangle reflecting learning factors, while the bottom triangle represents context factors. The top left corners of both triangles are concerned with the work being done; the top right corners of both triangles are concerned with the people encountered at work; while the bottom corners of both triangles are concerned with individual workers (Eraut, 2012). As explained by Kyndt et al.

(2009), context factors are conditions that are present in the learner's context while learning factors relate directly to the learning process.

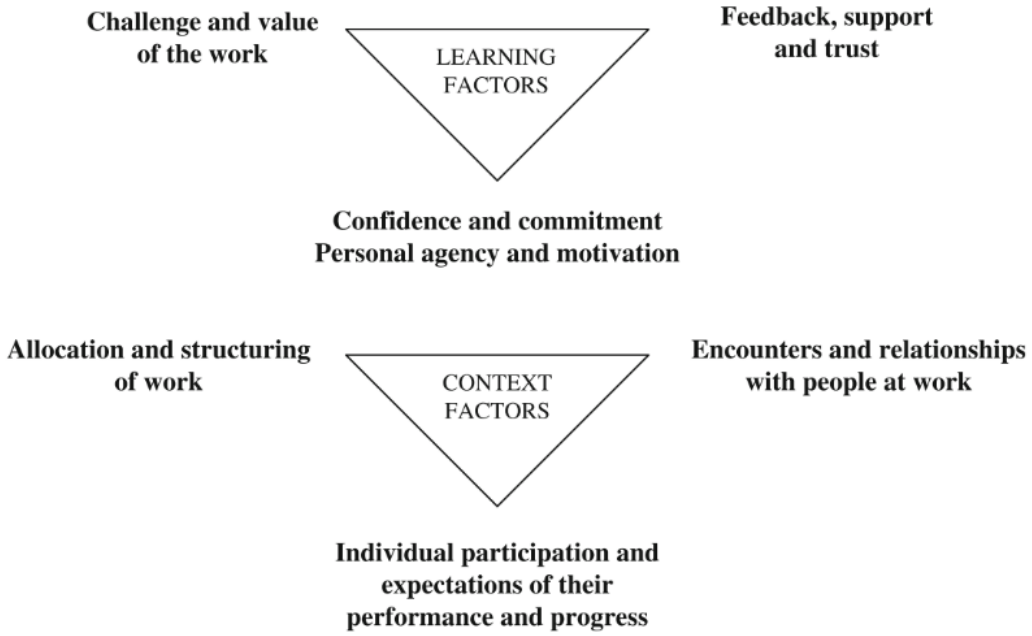
There was an earlier version of this typology that is depicted in Figure 9 (Eraut, 2004b, p. 269), while Figure 10 (Eraut, 2012, p. 25) is the revised version. The differences between these two versions relate to three components. Concerning learning factors: F*eedback and support* was renamed *Feedback, support and trust;* and *Confidence and commitment* was renamed to *Confidence and commitment, personal agency and motivation.* With respect to context factors: *Expectations of each person's role, performance and progress* were renamed to *Individual participation and expectations of their performance and progress.*

Figure 8: Factors Affecting Learning in the Workplace (Earlier Version)



Source: Eraut (2004b, p. 269)

Figure 9: Factors Affecting Learning at Work: The Two-Triangle Model



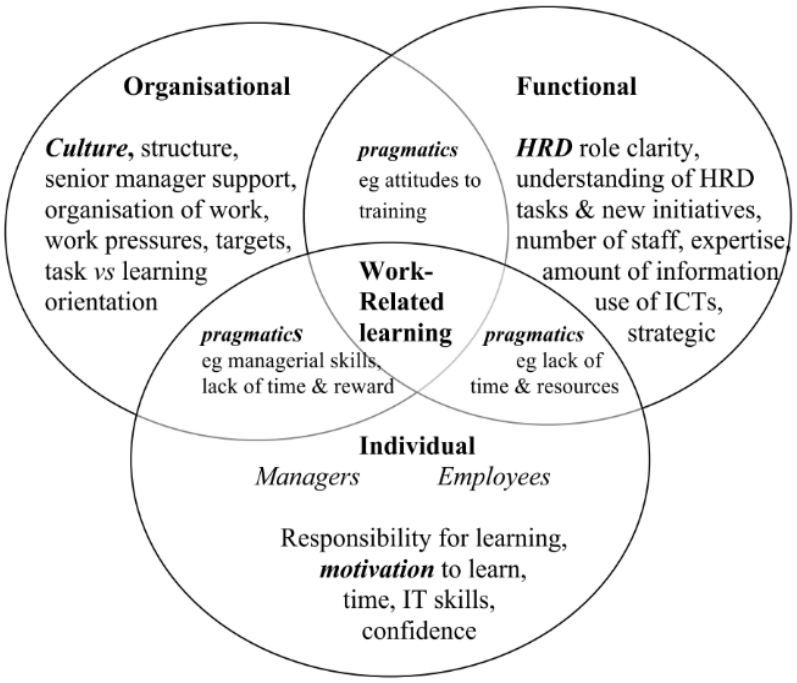
Source: Eraut (2012, p. 25)

The typology's learning and context factors have a symbiotic relationship that together affect the overall learning that transpires, which can work to create a mismatch between the intended, enacted and experienced curriculum. The inclusion of the individual agency component in the revised model is a reminder that human beings shape learning - both the individuals whose learning is the focus of analysis as well as the other individuals within that context - as opposed to just the context itself (Fuller & Unwin, 2011). As such, underpinning this typology is the view of learning as a social process, which is relevant in contexts where the extent and quality of learning is influenced by the nature and structure of the social relations within that context (Fuller & Unwin, 2011).

While there are various learning and context factors in Eraut's (2004b; 2012) typology, macro factors are not meaningfully accounted for. Workplace learning is affected by broader political economy factors, which should be understood, as learning does not transpire in a vacuum (Fuller & Unwin, 2011).

Unlike Eraut (2004a), Sambrook (2006) classified learning factors according to organisational factors; functional factors; and individual factors, as shown in Figure 8. Organisational factors relate to aspects such as work culture, the organisational structure, work pressures and the support received by senior management. Functional factors are related to "how the role of human resources development is defined and to the general characteristics of the organisation, such as number of staff, expertise, amount of information, and the use of ICTs" (Tynjälä, 2008, p. 143). Individual factors include "managers and employees responsibility for learning, motivation to learn, time, IT skills and confidence" (Tynjälä, 2008, p. 143). Moreover, within each of these categories, there are elements which can inhibit and enhance learning. In other words, factors can be expressed in both negative and positive terms. For instance, Sambrook (2006) found that learning was inhibited by insufficient resources in terms of HRD; a traditional culture and entrenched attitudes towards training; business pressures; as well as poor managerial skills.

Figure 10: Summary of Factors Influencing Work-Related Learning



Source: Sambrook (2006, p. 9)

According to Ellström (2011), the extent to which an individual can learn in a workplace is an interplay between the following factors: Task characteristics which include task complexity, variety and control; opportunities that people have for feedback, evaluation and reflection; the type and degree of formalisation in terms of work processes; organisational arrangements for employee participation in handling problems as well as developmental activities; learning resources in terms of including time for analysis, interaction as well as reflection. Moreover, structural factors according to Ellström (2011) may be "experienced, understood and valued by an individual" differently (p. 108). This means that even if people are subject to the same structural factors, there may be subjective factors that interact with these structural factors, which then have different effects on learning. These subjective factors could include "identities, previous experience, self-confidence, motivation, formal education, interpersonal relationships, family structure and so forth (Evans et al., 2004; Ellström et al., 2008; Fuller and Unwin, 2004; Gorard et al., 2001)" (p. 109). Hence, the "learning potential of a task (a job or a workplace) as well as the actual learning that occurs is viewed as a function of structural as well as subjective factors" (p. 115).

Circling back to the typology of factors affecting workplace learning in Figure 9: Factors Affecting Learning at Work: The Two-Triangle Model, it is important to remember that it may not "extend across all learners and all contexts" but it does underscore key learning factors "whose relative significance will vary across contexts" (Eraut et al., 2004, p. 2). Thus, in different contexts the dynamics of the learning and context factors will play out in different ways to affect the overall learning experience – and these factors themselves may vary depending on the workplace being studied. This is demonstrated in the research of Eraut et al. (2004) who looked at newly qualified nurses and graduate engineers. Newly qualified nurses operate in an extremely busy environment and their list of responsibilities mirrors those of experienced nurses. Their ability to learn the most important responsibilities is a function of good relations with colleagues and learning from experience. They rarely receive coaching and have very little induction. In contrast, the work environment for graduate engineers is looser, which requires them to be proactive. The work allocated to them is critical to their learning, which means that managers need to put thought into this.

Some of the factors touched on in the different components of the factor classifications outlined in this section are discussed elsewhere and will be touched on in the following section within

the various sub-sections. In doing so, it will become more evident how learning is affected by different factors and the different levels at which these factors operate.

Unpacking some of the factors that affect learning

i. How individuals influence their own learning

According to Boud & Walker (1991), experience of learners in the workplace is shaped by what they bring to it in terms of their personal experience and their way of being in the world Consequently, people do not approach workplaces in a homogenous way as everyone is different. People also have different and unique intents and motivations when approaching situations and different reasons why they are in those learning situations. A lack of intent may have the effect of giving rise to a superficial experience that can result in missed learning opportunities and a loss of interest and focus (Boud & Walker, 1991). As such, it is not surprising that Eraut added personal agency to his typology, which is referred to as *Confidence and commitment, personal agency and motivation*.

Austin et al. (2001) spoke to how feelings of anxiety or fear can distract from the processing of information, while confidence and the desire to exert oneself may have the opposite effect and aid in the performance of tasks. Moreover, emotions play a role in learning, and the extent and quality to which an individual engages in learning opportunities are shaped by their value, beliefs and other life experiences (Billett, 2011). There is thus an interdependence between the kinds of learning opportunities one has access to and the degree to which they choose to engage in these learning opportunities (Billett, 2011). Speaking to the importance of taking initiative and making the most of learning opportunities, which forms part of personal agency, Burford et al. (2020) say that their research demonstrated the following:

> Much of the knowing and learning of practice must be stolen. It must be spontaneously acquired when students rub shoulders with experienced practitioners. Building confidence as a practitioner must take place in the vagaries of workplace practice. Professionalism and its realities, taking care of the self at work, and practice discourses cannot be learned in a classroom. The learning that students acquire in practice cannot be provisioned by the academy (p. 173).

Thus, both the quality of the learning opportunities that people have access to as well as the manner and extent to which people access these opportunities matter. These are referred to as affordances, which are opportunities for participation and the utilisation of these opportunities by individuals (Vaughan, 2008). This comes back to the notion of personal agency, and particularly the role of initiative in learning.

ii. The role of other individuals in workplace learning

Apart from individuals influencing their own learning, other actors in the workplace also shape the learning and ultimately the curriculum that transpires (Phaeton & Stears, 2017; van den Akker et al., 2010). In this regard, Van den Akker (2007) identified five levels at which the curriculum is engaged with by different actors: Supra level (international/comparative); macro level (system/society/nation/state); meso level (school/institution); micro-level (classroom); and nano level (individual/personal). For instance, in a primary and high school setting, government influences the curriculum at a macro level by setting goals and expectations, while management in a school would be meso level influencers. At the micro level, learners influence the curriculum (Phaeton & Stears, 2017). Each level consists of different actors, with different decisions made at each level that can affect both the curriculum and the output. A lack of coordination between these levels can give rise to a misalignment between the different layers of the curriculum (Phaeton & Stears, 2017). However, not all actors are equal as the implementers of the curriculum are the key agents and need to understand their role in the delivery of the curriculum (Phaeton & Stears, 2017).

In a workplace setting, managers and supervisors have a pivotal role to play as they can enhance the learning that transpires (Boud et al., 2009) – the same can be said of mentors. Mentoring is a means of informal teaching that has gained popularity in the past couple of decades. On reviewing the mentorship literature, Swap et al. (2001) found that mentored individuals performed better and got promoted quicker. Newcomers to the workplace are more likely to seek technical information, regarding how to perform specific aspects of the job by asking supervisors in particular (Swap et al., 2001). The kind of knowledge that mentors impart to their mentees around norms and values is often overlooked, with norms implying guidance for behaviour.

However just because mentors know a lot does not mean that they know how to "bridge the gap between their own knowledge and the fragmentary or incomplete experience base of the novice - even assuming that they are willing to try" (Swap et al., 2001, p. 108). Swap et al. (2001) found that some experts are patient at imparting their knowledge and understand how they need to feed this knowledge in "calculated dosages and couched in accessible language", while others get frustrated at the knowledge level of their mentee or protégé (p. 108). Setting up mentor programmes are not enough, as the mentors may sometimes be uninterested or lack the technique on how to be effective at 'teaching'. Swap et al. (2001) also suggested that there should be incentive systems in place to reward mentoring and that assistance should be given to mentors so that they learn how to be more effective. D'Abate et al., (2009) also concurs and recommends that "whenever possible, interns should be assigned to supervisors with strong mentoring capabilities and that it would be beneficial to combine some type of formalised mentoring program with an internship program" (p. 534).

When it comes to supervisors, while it is commonplace in the literature to suggest that workplace supervisors are integral to the learning of staff, this may be impractical or absent in some cases, according to Hughes (2004). Hughes (2004) found that the role of the supervisor in participant learning was constrained, and that they were not involved in the learning process of participants. Expanding on this Hughes (2004) elaborated:

> The lack of direct involvement in learning processes was surprising. I had expected the supervisors at least to make an attempt to help their staff learn, as this is what much of the literature was saying that they should be doing. But in all the interviews there was no sign of such an involvement, and no sign that the participants were seeking it (p. 285)

With that said, while not directly involved, supervisors nonetheless had an extensive influence on learning such as through the tasks they delegated and the expectations they set (Hughes, 2004). This corroborated the research of Raliphada et al. (2014), who underscores how supervisors can shape learning but whose central focus was on understanding why public servants do not deliver the kind of services that match the expectations of South African citizens. Raliphada et al. (2014) uses a mixed-methods approach that relied on self-reporting, with semi-structured interviews conducted with five managers and a survey with 150 randomly selected employees (with a 60% response rate). They focused on one South African government department that had a staff population of 3 000 people. While their research question and primary subject matter differ substantially from this research, some of their

findings are of relevance. Research participants highlighted the role of supervisors in advancing or hindering learning. A supervisor is defined as someone who is in first-line management that "monitors and regulates employees in their performance of assigned or delegated tasks" (Raliphada et al., 2014, p. 747). Respondents reported that supervisors lacked interest in the growth and development of subordinates and when conveying this, researchers reported frustration on the part of participants. This lack of interest manifested in supervisors not exerting effort into understanding the development needs of subordinates; a situation wherein subordinates could attend any course without it forming part of a planned learning intervention; and a failure to genuinely engage in performance review sessions (Raliphada et al., 2014).

Raliphada et al. (2014) also finds that supervisors are untrusting of subordinates to execute tasks independently, and there was rigidity amongst managers and supervisors who were comfortable with the status quo in the department. Regarding the latter, the resistance to change was attributed to fear that one's subordinate may outshine or replace them, with departmental staff using the excuse of protocol to not do things differently. Also, "the resistance to change may be attributed to insecurity associated with high levels of job losses and unemployment both in the country and globally" (Raliphada et al., 2014, p. 749).

Clarke (2017) also finds how important the line manager or supervisor was in providing support and direction to graduates. Some of the things which managers, who were found to have a positive impact on the development of graduates, did included: Being welcoming and making time to give advice; taking time to orient them; making time for regular meetings with them; and looking for developmental opportunities for them which were challenging (Clarke, 2017). Moreover, they were able to balance guiding them with letting them learn by trial and error. These findings emanated from conducting 23 in-depth interviews with participants on a one-year graduate development programme in a large government department in Australia to find out about their experiences and factors that shaped it (Clarke, 2017). Some of the recommendations they make are that managers need to clearly understand the aims of the programme and provide the relevant support to realise this and that high-quality mentors be appointed who have the time and capacity to provide support (Clarke, 2017). They go on to say that while this research was conducted in the public sector, it may also have relevance to the private sector.

Also pertaining to research around mentors, Mchunu and Mutereko (2020) finds concerns regarding programme duration and the lack of competent mentors in relation to the Government Communication and Information System's (GCIS) internship programme in KwaZulu-Natal. The one-year programme was considered too short a period to get adequate experience. They found that there was no selection criteria regarding mentors and they were not trained to guide, support and counsel graduate interns (Mchunu & Mutereko, 2020). A consequence of not having properly trained mentors was that graduates ended up doing insignificant administration tasks which were not aligned with their respective qualifications, "for the mere sake of getting work experience" (Mchunu & Mutereko, 2020, p. 71). One of the recommendations they make is that mentors be paid an allowance to enable effective monitoring and mentorship (Mchunu & Mutereko, 2020).

There also needs to be an appropriate match between mentors and mentees. For instance, while there is intent on the part of the learner or intern, there is also the intent of the supervisor and mentor, and a mismatch between the intent of these groupings can lead to "disorganised and unproductive experiences and to considerable frustration on the part of both parties" (Boud & Walker, 1991, p. 15). There are pressures which can affect the learning potential of the relationship. For instance, one force which could inhibit the transfer of expertise from mentor to mentee is time pressures within organisations (Swap et al., 2001).

In a more systematic way, Eraut et al. (2004) classified the five aspects that were important for relationship building between newly qualified nurses and their mentors, which facilitated learning and enabled nurses to settle in more quickly. These included the amount of time they spent together; the mentor's interest in the learning and career development of nurses; getting both challenge and support from their mentor through their mentor's encouragement by 'having a go' in a safe environment; mentors getting their mentees to reflect on their work practices by asking questions; and regular formal and informal feedback from mentors. As further advised by Cupps and Olmosk (2008), supervisors should also resolve uncertainties early on including discussing responsibilities and expectations with interns - with the first few days setting the tone for the internship - and that less supervision should be given on some tasks.

Apart from the role of mentors and supervisors in workplace learning, other colleagues also play a role in learning. In recognition of this, Eraut et al. (2004) used the phrase 'helpful others' and explored some of the following research questions to get a better understanding of their

role: In what ways, and from whom, do participant learners acquire knowledge from in their workplace? What help and advice do they seek, find or receive, and with what degree of success? What help and advice do they not get, but express a need to get? What formal and informal roles are taken up by helpful others? The potential presence of ‘helpful others’ means that supervisors do not have to directly provide the learning themselves but can "set the climate, encourage their staff to take on this role as an integral part of their working responsibility” (Eraut, 2012, p. 28).

iii. Workplace tasks affect learning

Eraut et al. (2004) found that the allocation and structuring of work was an important factor for their research participants as it affected the difficulty or challenge of the work; the extent to which the work was individual or collaborative in nature; as well as opportunities for meeting, observing, working and receiving feedback with people with more or different expertise. With respect to engaging and working with more experienced colleagues, working alongside other people offers an opportunity to observe and listen, to learn new ways of doing things and to become aware of various knowledge and expertise. This learning can transpire while engaging in the same or related tasks with people who may or may not form part of the same community of practice (Boud & Rooney, 2014).

Also concerning task allocation, when assigning tasks, mentors and supervisors should also ensure that they allocate tasks that extend the experience of novices as opposed to just assigning them tasks in which they are already experienced (Eraut et al., 2004). Moreover, it can be harmful to the learning of interns if they are primarily responsible for administrative tasks and "menial jobs" such as making copies, filing paper and running errands, and it may impact their quality of work and levels of motivations (Cupps & Olmosk, 2008, p. 309). Cupps and Olmosk (2008) advise that there should be a phased approach in terms of giving responsibilities to interns, with challenging tasks added to test their abilities. This experience stemmed from their management of a four-month public service internship programme in South Carolina that handpicked ten undergraduate students who were considered the cream of the crop. Neither being over-challenged or under-challenged promotes learning and is not good for morale, and as such needs to be factored in when allocating and structuring work activities (Eraut, 2012).

D'Abate et al. (2009) wanted to better understand the experience of interns and to do this, used job satisfaction as a proxy. One of the hypotheses they tested was that job characteristics are positively related to internship satisfaction. Job characteristics included skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback; work environment characteristics included learning opportunities, supervisory support, career development opportunities, co-worker support and organisation satisfaction. Using a mixed method approach which included surveying 261 participants, they found that within the job characteristic grouping, task significance was the strongest predictor of satisfaction (D'Abate et al., 2009).

iv. Trust, confidence, support and feedback

Hughes (2004) conducted interviews to understand the tasks assigned to people; how individuals approached the learning that accompanied these tasks; their interactions with supervisors and other colleagues; as well as other important learning moments. Only learner viewpoints were captured, with no colleagues or supervisors being interviewed. There were six research participants, who were public-sector employees, who had taken up new positions in the department or section, and who had a new supervisor. One of the findings was that trust was integral to participant learning. Employees have to prove their trustworthiness through their willingness and competence, with the latter referring to "learning quickly, asking sensible questions, seeking sensible advice, acting with suitable independence and self-determination" (Hughes, 2004, p. 281). In contrast, demonstrating learning incompetence "by asking what appear to be silly questions, by taking a long time to grasp a topic or concept, by seeking advice on flawed premises, by appearing to be too dependent" negatively impacted trustworthiness (Hughes, 2004, p. 283).

Concerning confidence, Eraut (2004a) was struck in interviews with both novices and experienced workers, regarding the role of confidence in learning. On the one hand, learning transpired from them being proactive in terms of seeking out learning opportunities - which required confidence, while on the other hand confidence was also a by-product of successfully meeting work challenges. Thus, a lack of confidence would affect the ability of individuals to make the most of learning opportunities (Eraut et al., 2004). In terms of defining what is meant by confidence, Eraut et al. (2004) found that the usage of the term came close to Bandura's (1982) concept of self-efficacy, which is a "context-specific concept" related to the "ability to

execute a particular task or successfully perform a role" and is "not a general attribute like self-esteem" (p. 3).

Confidence has a close relationship with other factors. When individuals receive support, this boosts their confidence which enables them to take on challenging tasks and in turn, taking on such tasks develops their confidence (Eraut et al., 2004). Thus, taking on challenging tasks can lead to increased levels of motivation as well as confidence (Eraut et al., 2004), and thus in the absence of this, one may not be reaching their optimal levels of confidence. This triangular relationship can create a cycle of positive development in which challenge, support and confidence reinforce each other and are also conditional upon each other (Eraut et al., 2004). Here, challenging work refers to individuals facing challenges and problems in their work, which creates the need for them to engage in a particular course of action with respect to learning (Boud & Rooney, 2014).

Linked to support is the element of feedback in the typology, with feedback being especially important for individuals within the early years of their careers. Austin et al. (2001) underscored the importance of feedback as it is a means by which people make sense of their environment and environments that are "rich with stimuli and provide useful feedback in response to a learner's efforts" can lead to "greater perceptual development and learning (p. 11). Eraut et al. (2004) found amongst newly qualified nurses that a lack of feedback triggered feelings of self-doubt. However, Eraut et al. (2004) found that graduates' understanding of feedback might differ from that of their managers. For instance, managers may say things that are interpreted as being polite by interns instead of it being construed as feedback such as 'Thank you' and 'Well done'. D'Abate et al. (2009) found feedback to be another factor which influenced satisfaction, which was "no surprise" as interns are "accustomed to feedback on campus" and as such "it's only natural for students to seek it in the workplace as well" (p. 534). They also found that higher degrees of satisfaction corresponded to interns having opportunities to learn new information and lessons. While internships are temporary, unlike other kinds of temporary work, generally the motivation behind internship programmes is development and providing learning opportunities for interns to enhance and acquire skills - which for D'Abate et al. (2009) is why feedback and learning opportunities are key predictors of internship satisfaction.

As mentioned, trust and personal agency were later added to Eraut's (2012) typology. In terms of trust, in the context of intern responses and the typology itself, the focus is not on the level of trust between interns and the organisation (which in this case is a government department) but rather inter-personal trust.

v. How government as an institution can affect workplace learning

When examining a workplace curriculum, it is assumed that the workplace will be a welcoming environment for workers to learn and engage in (Billett, 2006). This however is not always the case as workplaces have different attitudes towards learning. For instance, prevailing workplace interests of employers, managers and co-workers could restrict the learning of workers because it is not in line with their interests or due to biases based on gender, race or other differences (Tynjälä, 2008; Billett, 2006). Moreover, other factors that serve to make the workplace a contested environment are perceptions regarding competence, culture, personal relationships, and group affiliations that play a role in influencing the kind of work an individual is given - which in turn affects learning.

Moreover, the structure of organisations also impacts learning as does one's occupational positioning and status within an organisation such as senior staff compared with junior staff (Lee et al., 2004). In this regard, Vaughan (2008) spoke to how individuals and groups may not have equal access to opportunities with workplace opportunities being contestable between different individuals and teams. He went on to say that:

> Where people are positioned in the political economy of the workplace affects not only the types of learning in which they engage, and the types of knowledge they can acquire, but also the extent to, and manner in which, their learning and knowledge is recognised. The weaker the employee's market position, the less likely they are to have access to training and career development... In other words, learning is really only as good as the opportunities to really participate in the organisation" (p. 15)

In essence, "opportunities to participate in and access support and guidance are distributed in ways that reflect workplace political and power relationships" (Billett, 2011, p. 57). Workplaces are also contested with personal relations, hierarchies and cultural practices influencing the distribution of workplace affordances. Thus, it is not just about the willingness of interns to participate or the work that is allocated to them that impacts learning but the kinds

of learning opportunities available to them beyond what is ‘allocated to them’. For this reason, researchers wanting to understand workplace learning concerning a specific group of workers, need to “locate those workers within the productive system of their organisation” which will facilitate an appreciation of the “extent to which their particular workplace has the discretion to create optimal conditions for learning” (Fuller & Unwin, 2011, p. 49).

Learning opportunities may thus not be the same across all groupings or individuals in the workplace, as factors such as job position and status may affect one's access to opportunities. In the context of this research, attitudes towards interns may not be something that has learning implications for other workers but may be something unique to interns. For instance, Boud and Rooney (2014) touch on how being perceived as a learner is not always desirable as it implies that one may not be a fully functioning member of the workgroup but a person of lesser status, akin to having a ‘L’ number plate around one’s neck. Fuller et al. (2012) used the imagery of a Russian doll as a metaphor for the multi-layered nature of organisations, with these different layers affecting learning. The positioning of people within this Russian doll affects learning including the types of knowledge that people can access. This also means that wider regulatory, sectoral and organisational characteristics affect workplace learning.

According to Fuller and Unwin (2011), workplaces can have expansive and restrictive characteristics. Expanding working environments foster learning, compared to restrictive environments, with not all individuals engaging in learning in the same way (Fuller & Unwin, 2011). Their personal backgrounds, aspirations and prior educational experiences shape how people engage with opportunities. On the other hand, Ellström (2011) differentiated between enabling and constraining learning environments. Enabling environments are those that promote adaptive and developing learning, while constraining environments constrain these kinds of learning or compromise developmental learning while promoting adaptive learning.

The workplace that is the subject of this research is a national South African government department – with the use of the word ‘national’ used to differentiate it from local government departments (within provinces). There may be specific features of this kind of workplace that are different to other workplaces, which in turn affects learning.

While Raliphada et al. (2014) only focuses on one department and as such could not "comfortably generalise the findings of the study to the whole of South African Public Service"

which at the time of publishing consisted of twenty-seven departments, they did propose that the inhibiting learning culture they found could be due to the bureaucratic nature of the public service (Raliphada et al., 2014, p. 752).

Clarke (2017) finds a lack of suitable work at the graduate level and no clearly defined role for participants in a one-year graduate development programme in a large Australian government department, which contributed towards graduates being allocated low-level tasks including photocopying, having little responsibility and a lack of challenging tasks. There was a misalignment between the qualifications of the graduates and the units they were placed in, which left graduates feeling that they were just passing time as opposed to getting the most out of the programme. According to some of the issues which gave rise to this included poor graduate placement; insufficient communication between the respective units and HR; and an inadequate understanding of what graduate level work entails (Clarke, 2017). Graduates also complained about not being able to rotate between units, which they felt limited their development.

Other institutional factors in the workplace can also have a bearing on the learning that transpires within it. For instance, in terms of Human Resource Development (HRD), Sambrook (2006) found that the lack of understanding regarding their role and the 'distance' between HRD and managers was something that influenced learning. HRD was also found to not provide "practical information regarding the need for learning, on learning processes and on learning opportunities" which was considered a hindrance (p. 7).

While some of the factors outlined in this section may appear intuitive, many of them are evidence based. As highlighted by Sambrook (2006) in relation to their research but which also has a bearing on this research, it is important to understand these factors because "it is only by raising awareness of these factors that it is then possible to deal with them, to encourage and harness all forms of learning in the context of work" (p. 18).

Summary

Government documents outlined in this chapter highlighted both the rationale for the graduate internship programme and how the programme is meant to be rolled out. The internship programme positions itself as being an intervention that responds to South Africa's socio-economic and historical challenges as well as a response to addressing the shortcomings of

tertiary institutions that do not adequately prepare students for the workplace – both of which continue to affect particularly black young people in terms of their skills development and employment prospects. The broader framing of this research is that of the curriculum, with the curriculum not taken as monolithic but rather multidimensional with different actors playing a role in interpreting what they believe the curriculum should be as well as interns ultimately experiencing it. The notion of curriculum is strongly linked to the idea of learning, as the purpose of a curriculum is to learn something. This chapter outlined the socially informed perspective of learning, which resonates with this thesis. This learning perspective sees learning as a social process and as an outcome of participating and engaging with social communities which can be advanced or hindered by workplace factors. In this regard, the different factors that influence learning were discussed as well as specific factors further elaborated on. While this played a pivotal role in shaping this research, a unique set of factors emerged in this study which influenced workplace learning. Additionally, this chapter also spoke to the different kinds of knowledge that can be developed through workplace learning, the formal, informal and non-formal learning distinction as well as the different ways people go about their learning – all of which were useful for the data generation and analyses components of this research.

Understanding the factors that affected the learning of interns while completing their public service internships - with a specific focus on one national government department in South Africa - became a key component of this study as this research evolved. While the initial guiding research questions were centred around what and how interns learnt while on the programme, the factors which contributed towards the divergence and convergence between what policy makers intended interns would learn and what they learnt became pronounced in the data. In other words, the misalignment and alignment between the intended and experienced curriculum became evident. Before getting onto the results and theory that emerged from this research, how this grounded theory study was carried out will first be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction to grounded theory

Often the phrase ‘seeing the light at the end of the tunnel’ is invoked nonchalantly. In this instance, it is not a hyperbole but rather adequately describes what finding the grounding theory approach felt like. While I was always clear about my focus area, how to approach it was less certain.

Before finding the grounded theory approach, I wrote and re-wrote research questions and literature reviews that proved both unsuccessful and frustrating. The problem stemmed from the dearth of information available on the focus area and even more generally on graduate internship programmes. Most of the research I encountered on the subject focused on various types of medical internship programmes as well as internship programmes that were a component of a university course, as alluded to in Chapter One. The consequence was that the various versions of my research question and literature review section were riddled with assumptions. In short, in the context of an information shortage, my mind was filling in the gaps and making assumptions before even carrying out the research. This meant that the foundation of the study was becoming strongly influenced by my assumptions, such that the voice of the participants would have been marginalised when I eventually sought them out.

The grounded theory approach was introduced into the academic sphere by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 and was developed in response to the prevailing positivism of the day (Suddaby, 2006; Walsh et al., 2015). At the time, qualitative research was considered anecdotal and descriptive, and theory testing was favoured over theory-building (Hall et al., 2013). Glaser and Strauss sought to develop an approach which could "systematically derive theories of human behaviour from empirical data" (Urquhart, 2001, p. 2) and as such, grounded theory is preoccupied with issues of “analytic procedures, comparative methods, and conceptual development and assumptions of an external, but discernible world, unbiased observer, and discovered theory” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 4). It was thus both a revolt against the prevailing quantitative method as well as a means of addressing the lack of systematic guidelines encountered with the qualitative approach (Dunne, 2011). Understanding this historical context enables one to better appreciate the ethos and tenets of the grounded theory approach (Dunne, 2011).

Both Glaser and Strauss subsequently published separate works that unpacked the mechanics of this approach in more detail (Walsh et al., 2015). Glaser published *Theoretical Sensitivity* in 1978 while Strauss published with his student, Corbin. Constant comparisons and theoretical sampling are two concepts which are the hallmark of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) grounded theory approach (Birks & Mills, 2015). Holton further adds the principle of emergence as being fundamental (Walsh et al., 2015). Birks and Mills (2015) make a more comprehensive list of the key elements which include: Initial coding and categorisation of data; concurrent data generation or collection and analysis; writing of memos; theoretical sampling; constant comparative analysis using inductive and abductive logic; theoretical sensitivity; intermediate coding; identifying a core category; as well as advanced coding and theoretical integration. Thus, while other scholars have added to the list, constant comparisons and theoretical sampling nonetheless remain pivotal. In this chapter, these two components as well as some of the other elements that Birks and Mills (2015) outline are discussed.

To humanise grounded theory, such that people are not bogged down by all the methods it entails, Glaser advises approaching it in the following way[5]:

> Grounded theory is simply the discovery of emerging patterns in data. Everything has patterns. Everybody engages in grounded theory every day because it's a very simple human process to figure out patterns and to act in response to those patterns. Grounded theory is the generation of theories from data (Walsh et al., 2015, p. 593)

Unlike other research approaches, grounded theory is geared towards explaining a phenomenon through theory building as opposed to simply describing or exploring a phenomenon. The kind of theory it seeks to develop is centred on patterns of action and interaction which surface in common social life (Annells, 1996). Theory can be thought of as:

> Way of thinking and a model of how things work, how principles are related, and what causes things to work together... A theory is not just an idea. It's an idea that is a coherent explanation of a set of relationships that has been tested with lots of research. If the idea survives rigorous testing, that theory is said to have empirical grounding. A theory is developed from practical experience as well as research. Any

[5] These are the words of Barney Glaser when he was speaking at a panel symposium on Grounded theory in Orlando Florida in 2013

> given theory is usually about one aspect of the learning process (Austin et al., 2001, p. 15).

However with that said, Charmaz points out that it is assumed that we all have the same understanding of what constitutes theory (Gibbs, 2015). In practice, theory operates on different levels and one may not necessarily know it when they see it (Gibbs, 2015). While what transpired in this research is outlined in Chapter Four, Chapter Five speaks to the patterns and theory which emerged.

Throughout this research, there are author generated diagrams. This is something which has always been integral to grounded theory with there being certain periods in which it was mandatory to include a diagram indicating the core category and its relationships when using the approach (Buckley & Waring, 2013). However, not all studies make use of diagrams with Coker (2020) an example of this. Coker (2020) wanted to understand what reflection is in the context of educational leadership programmes and its value to students in these programmes. With data collected from six college students completing this kind of programme, and using a grounded theory approach, they speak to how each student was a “Übermensch, either already exalted or one step away" (p. 77). These students considered themselves at the "pinnacle and had no discernible use for feedback or different perspectives” (p. 77). Coker (2020) used no diagrams to reflect the core categories and sub-categories. In this study, visual diagrams are used throughout to summarise and simplify information, processes and findings. In particular, original diagrams are used in this chapter as well as the Discussion chapter.

3.2 Philosophical foundations

For Birks and Mills (2015), researchers adopting the grounded theory approach need to first come to terms with their personal philosophical position. This includes establishing their understanding of three interrelated concepts, namely ontology; epistemology; and methodology. Ontology concerns the nature of reality and what we can know about reality, whereas epistemology concerns the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Lastly, methodology is related to how the inquirer can go about learning about that which they believe can be known. Being explicit about how one understands these dimensions helps to avoid the risk of deficient research design (Walsh et al., 2015). Taking this a step further, there should also be methodological congruence by ensuring that there is synergy between the three dimensions outlined above and the research methods

used (Birks & Mills, 2015). Research methods are closely aligned to methodology and are defined as the “practical procedures used to generate and analyse data” (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 4).

With the first-generation of grounded theorists being more preoccupied with the methods entailed in grounded theory, over time there has been much debate and disagreement regarding what kind of philosophical understanding resonates most strongly with the approach (Birks & Mills, 2015; Hall et al., 2013). Traditionally, it has been associated with a post-positivist paradigm and critical realist ontology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hall et al., 2013). A post-positivist paradigm is a worldview that holds that we can only imperfectly know reality and as such, research outcomes cannot be considered completely objective nor certain (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012; J. Mills et al., 2006b; Smith et al., 2012). Moreover, it holds the researcher as someone who “constructs knowledge, instead of just passively noting the laws of nature” (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012, p. 7). In terms of the nature of reality, a critical realist ontology asserts that "reality is assumed to exist but to be only imperfectly apprehendable" and earns its name owing to claims by its proponents that "reality must be subjected to the widest possible critical examination to facilitate apprehending reality as closely as possible (but never perfectly)" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110).

In terms of the epistemology associated with a post-positivist paradigm - that is the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known - while it has an objectivist flavour it has been labelled modified objectivism by Guba (1990) owing to its diverging tenets (Miller, 2000). Both objectivists and modified objectivists believe that "knowledge can best be gained through a search for regularities and causal relationships among components of the social world" (Miller, 2000, p. 60). However, while objectivists believe researchers can adopt scientific methods which will enable us to know the prevailing reality, modified objectivists do not assume that knowing reality is entirely possible for researchers (Vrasidas, 2000). Unlike objectivists, modified objectivists do not think that there can be a complete separation of the researcher and the subject matter (Clark, 1998; Miller, 2000). Objectivists hold that adopting scientific methods creates this separation between the researcher and the subject matter while modified objectivists recognise the fallibility of scientific methods and merely strive to be "as unbiased as possible and will attempt to be aware of any values that might compromise neutrality" (Miller, 2000, p. 61). They therefore do not claim that their work reflects "absolute

truth and value-free inquiry" (Miller, 2000, p. 61). As Phillips (1990) puts it, they are merely trying "the best they can" (Miller, 2000, p. 61).

While grounded theory has traditionally been associated with a post-positivist paradigm, there has been an emerging constructivist perspective. Charmaz (2000) who is part of this constructivist school of thought criticises Glaser and Strauss for assuming that reality is divorced of the observer and for being unrealistic about the researcher's ability to be unbiased. For Charmaz (2000), grounded theory researchers are narrators who are telling a "story about people, social processes, and situations" as things do not merely "unfold before the eyes of an objective viewer" (p. 15). Additionally, Charmaz (2005) asserts that the rigorous methods of the grounded theory approach cannot prevent researchers from influencing the categories developed which are products of the researcher's interpretations of the data as opposed to that which purely emanates from the data (Charmaz, 2005). Research findings are thus seen as being co-created by the inquirer and the study focus area and consequently, researchers do not merely discover knowledge but instead play a role in constructing it (Annells, 1996; Hall et al., 2013). As such, a constructivist approach to grounded theory speaks to the co-construction of meaning such that the resulting theory is a product of both the participants' and researcher's experiences (Mills et al., 2006b). From an epistemological standpoint, constructivists believe that it is not possible to divorce the "inquirer from the inquired into" as it is this relationship that "creates the data that will emerge from the inquiry" (Mills et al., 2006a, p.9).

Glaser (2002) believes grounded theory is not constructivist in nature but if constructivist data had to form part of grounded theory it would only constitute a very small dimension. As such, Glaser (2002) considers the phrase constructivist grounded theory a misnomer. Glaser (2002) accuses Charmaz (2000) of "descriptive capture" (p. 3) and points out that, "describing what is going on, does not conceptually explain what is going on" (p. 11). Glaser (2002) accuses her of being lost in her "zeal" to be a "story teller" (p. 10) and cautions against this as it alters the role of the researcher from one who conceptualises to one who narrates. Glaser (2002) says Charmaz ignores the abstraction dimension of the approach and that only researchers who can conceptualize should utilise grounded theory, as it is a "conceptual method, not a descriptive method" (Glaser, 2002, p.6). Moreover, Glaser does not believe that data are reconstructions of experience. It is not that Glaser holds researchers to be perfect in the data generation process but rather that researcher bias is minimized owning to the methods that grounded theory demands. In this regard, Glaser (2002) said – which affirmed the view of Corbin and Strauss

(1990) – that "personal input by a researcher soon drops out as eccentric and the data becomes *[sic]* objectivist not constructionist" (Glaser, 2002, p. 6).

Glaser's caution about researchers becoming narrators resonates with the caution that was given by Suddaby (2006) about not conflating phenomenology with the grounded theory approach. This conflation results in researchers having a well-structured method but merely producing raw data and findings that are obvious (Suddaby, 2006). While phenomenologists aspire to capture the lived experience of actors in rich descriptive terms, the grounded theory approach expects researchers to be more focused on how individual experiences can be used to generate theoretical assertions about causal relations between actors, as opposed to on the subjective experiences of individuals in and of themselves. As put by Suddaby (2006), although a researcher may commence an interview with a "phenomenological interest in subjective understandings… the primary interest is not in the stories themselves. Rather, they are a means of eliciting information on the social situation under examination" (p. 635).

The choice between post-positivism and constructivism, was not a decision made at the outset of this research but rather evolved over time. While on a personal level I identify with the notion of post-positivism, in that there is an objective divine reality, embracing this standpoint within the context of a grounded theory study suggests that the theory that is generated I something that emerged as opposed to something that was constructed. The notion of emergence is associated with the idea that there is an objective reality or theory that exists, which in turn can be discovered by the researcher adopting grounded theory research methods (Ramalho et al., 2015). In contrast, the constructivist grounded theory approach does not see the grounded theory methods as a means by which the data can become objectivist in nature as this is unattainable (Ramalho et al., 2015). The proactiveness of the researcher when using a grounded theory approach, which was essential especially when doing coding and categorising, demonstrates how theory is constructed as opposed to something that emerges. For instance, during the coding process I realised there is a level of subjectivity in the coding process because even if I were to use the words of interviewees when I labelled codes, I could nonetheless influence its framing. Also, the classification of codes into categories introduces a level of subjectivity as the assignment of codes into these categories can be subjective. Moreover, the development of the core category also has a dimension of subjectivity as the lens of the researcher can easily shape the core category that is developed. Identifying with a constructivist approach – albeit reluctantly as the idea of one's research being objective in nature is appealing

– still demands that researchers favour and prioritise the data which is what I endeavoured to do.

Moreover, I was always acutely aware in the research process of staying focused on the bigger picture to avoid getting lost in the stories, and to also stay clear of opening myself up to bias. This is evidenced by a memo entry I wrote: "Don't get lost in the stories that you forget the theory building component" (S. Hendricks, July 30, 2020). Moreover, I also rehashed into this memo quotes from Annells (1996), Glaser (2002) and Suddaby (2006) that reinforced this. As such, the caution about conflating phenomenology with grounded theory is indeed warranted, as one could easily fall short in terms of theory generation but I do not think that adopting a post-positivist philosophical position helps to avoid this problem. In other words, this caution applies to both post-positivists and constructivists as opposed to just the latter. As such, regardless of the philosophical approach adopted one can fail to generate theoretical assertions about causal relations between actors and instead merely capture the lived experiences of actors in descriptive terms.

Holding a constructivist paradigm while adopting a modified objectivist standpoint, that holds that there cannot be a complete separation of the researcher and the subject matter, in some way bridges the gap between post-positivists and constructivists. Reflecting on the different debates discussed above, perhaps there was accidental wisdom in the first generation of grounded theorists being more preoccupied with the methods entailed in grounded theory, as this has enabled the approach to be used by researchers with varying philosophical positions. Moving onto the question of the usage of theory, while already highlighted when discussing how this study was structured, this is not something that is straightforward in the grounded theory context compared to other qualitative studies. As such, I will discuss the usage of theory in this research followed by a discussion of the methods entailed in grounded theory. The methods follow from the philosophical approach just discussed.

3.3 Usage of Theory

This section builds on the discussion in the introductory section regarding theory engagement. Approaches tend to be deductive or inductive in nature, with Aristotle playing a significant role in deductive reasoning which is born out of a syllogism (Cohen et al., 2007). In its simplest construction, a syllogism consists of two premises and a conclusion, with the first premise consisting of an a priori statement. This approach is geared towards the testing of hypotheses, which can either be confirmed, refuted or modified (Gray, 2014). However, in the 1600s

Francis Bacon was instrumental in questioning the deductive approach (Cohen et al., 2007). He considered the conclusions reached to be that which is based on preconceived notions, thus leading to a biased conclusion. For Bacon, observation was integral to reasoning and he proposed making hypotheses and generalisations based on the study of individual cases instead (Cohen et al., 2007). This gave rise to the inductive approach. The history of grounded theory, as already discussed, was developed in response to the prevailing dominance of the deductive approach. With that said, while grounded theory is generally considered an inductive method, the comparative method of moving between data and analysis is abductive in nature (Suddaby, 2006). Abduction is a mix of the inductive and deductive approaches and involves a kind of oscillation between observation and hypothesis on one hand with hypotheses and conclusions on the other. However, Suddaby (2006) uses the phrase 'analytic induction' to refer to grounded theory as opposed to abduction. Thornberg (2012) describes this process in the following way:

> Like the fictional detective Sherlock Holmes, a researcher who uses abductive reasoning constantly moves back and forward between data and pre-existing knowledge or theories, and makes comparisons and interpretations in the searching for patterns and best possible explanations (p. 6).

In terms of when to engage with literature, Birks and Mills (2015) emphasise three points at which this can be done. The first is when the researcher is trying to enhance their theoretical sensitivity, the second is during the data analysis phase and finally, when the researcher needs to source theoretical codes. There is however no clear formula for the degree to which literature should be engaged but rather it is a function of the kind of study being undertaken (Birks & Mills, 2015). An example of engaging with the literature is that of Isabella (1990) who spoke of how she engaged with both the literature and her previous knowledge, and that data and theory were constantly compared when it came to engaging in analysis. Isabella (1990) noted that even before embarking on research, her personal experience of working suggested that members of an organisation viewed events differently. Stella Walsh also described how she consulted the literature after doing initial interviews after historical and oral history methodologies as well as gossip emerged in her study of food choices of older women (Birks & Mills, 2015). She did not have a background or understanding of these areas and therefore needed to consult the literature.

Thornberg (2012) considered Glaser's approach of only engaging with literature towards the end of the study problematic for several reasons. One problem mentioned is that if one had to be

true to this principle, it would be almost impossible for researchers to conduct grounded theory studies within their field of speciality - Dunne (2011) for instance would not have been able to utilise grounded theory as he conducted his doctoral studies in an area of study in which he had previous academic engagement with. Bearing this in mind, Thornberg (2012) advocated for a more intimate relationship with literature and coined the phrase 'informed grounded theory' which refers to using grounded theory while "being informed by existing research literature and theoretical frameworks" throughout the research process (p. 8). Thornberg (2012) did however warn researchers to remain grounded and to remember that the focus is on the data and not the literature. To make the point, he cited Hickey (1997) who conducted a literature review before conducting his study, which resulted in him misreading the data due to the inaccurate assumptions made and the direction he took owing to this prior reading of the literature.

The challenge that Thornberg (2012) cited is not something I identified with as this research study was not within my academic field of speciality. This begs the question of why researchers who are specialists in their field; and who operate in fields where there is a lot of information, would want to use the grounded theory approach. In this regard, Marland shed light on why this could transpire (McGhee et al., 2007). Marland was an educator in mental health nursing and conducted research into the use of neuroleptic medicines by people with schizophrenia. While there was research available on this subject matter, there were criticisms around the key concepts used in such studies. Grounded theory was thus employed as a means to “develop a theory free of the methodological and conceptual pitfalls of previous studies” and to enable a “fresh and open-minded approach to an old problem” (McGhee et al., 2007, p. 5).

As mentioned earlier, there is an ongoing debate regarding when it is appropriate to engage with the literature, and there are different tolerance levels regarding this - with differences even amongst the founders of grounded theory. The approach that was used from the outset is in line with Strauss and Corbin as I felt that engaging with the literature more actively during the research process would help to stimulate questions, enable comparisons, enhance sensitivity and guide theoretical sampling. However, I engaged with literature only after an initial sampling had been carried out. This will be expounded on in more detail in the next section.

3.4 Methods central to grounded theory

While there may be a proliferation of how-to manuals, there is a need for procedural flexibility to accommodate differing research contexts as indicated by Corbin and Strauss (1990), with Suddaby (2006) having described the approach as messy and having warned researchers that they need to be comfortable with ambiguity when using this approach. This warning stemmed from a recognition of the importance of the relationship between the researcher and the data, which is not something that can be mechanised. The origin of the approach must be borne in mind, which is that "it was founded as a practical approach to help researchers understand complex social processes" (Suddaby, 2006, p. 638).

Some researchers may purport to use the approach but are merely using components of it. While using components of the approach is acceptable, researchers ought to acknowledge when they are only using aspects of the approach as opposed to misleading readers into thinking they are using the approach in its entirety (Walsh et al., 2015). Hemmings and Weaven (2005) who drew on the experiences of three student teachers completing internships at local schools, explicitly say that they used "principles of grounded theory" as opposed to purporting that it was a grounded theory study (p. 2). To collect data they used interviews, a reflective journal and telephonic conversations and after doing this used grounded theory coding methods. This enabled them to arrive at 15 categories which were then grouped into three themes, namely: Positive realities; negative realities; and coping strategies (Hemmings & Weaven, 2005). In contrast, Gioia et al. (2013) while they developed a 'dynamic' data structure and showed the linkages between emerging themes and categories using arrows, they did not use the constant comparative method. Gioia et al. (2013) could have stated, like Miller et al. (2020), that they used a method that was a "synthesis between grounded theory and content analysis" in exploring the experiences – including enablers and barriers to engagement - of nursing, midwifery and allied health professions (NMAHPs) who undertook clinical academic internships (p. 1).

For Suddaby (2006), a check on whether a paper has used grounded theory involves the following:

> When I review a paper containing a claim of grounded theory, I check to ensure that, at a minimum, the authors have described their methodology transparently enough to reassure me that they followed core analytic tenets (i.e., theoretical sampling, constant comparison) in generating the data and that I can reasonably assess how the data were used to generate

> key conceptual categories. I'm also interested to see indicia of the researchers' theoretical sensitivity - their openness to new or unexpected interpretations of the data, the skill with which they combine literature, data, and experience, and their attention to subtleties of meaning. I look for indications of consistency between research questions (and their assumptions about the world and how people come to understand it) and the methods used to answer the questions. Finally, I am very attentive to the researchers' use of technical language in describing their methodology because I believe there is a clear connection between rigor in language and rigor in action (p. 640)

Taking the advice of Suddaby (2006), I am explicit about my methodology and later will detail how the core components of the approach were followed, how the data was used to generate conceptual categories as well as the data generation and analysis process. Being explicit about what I did, will mean that the reader will get to see how I have managed the messy and non-linear nature of the approach. Moreover, I was also mindful of the criteria of Corbin and Strauss (1990) that are aimed at ensuring the adequacy of the process and research findings which includes checking theoretical interpretations of the data for whether they are common sense or technical in nature; checking if categories developed were rooted in events and actions that were numerous or based on a handful of occurrences; checking how the core category developed and what some of the analytic decisions made were; as well as checking if the core category is simplistic or has explanatory power.

The methods central to the approach will now be unpacked, namely: Constant comparison; theoretical sampling; theoretical sensitivity; memoing; and coding. While I was unable to structure the methodology section in a way that reflected the non-linear process that grounded theory entails, I have given examples and practical insight in relation to the different elements to demonstrate and confirm to the reader that the grounded theory approach was indeed followed. Structuring it to reflect the grounded theory process would have been a “jumble of literature consultation, data collection, and analysis conducted in ongoing iterations” (Suddaby, 2006, p. 637). This of course would have been incoherent and confusing.

3.4.1 Constant comparison

The effectiveness of the constant comparison approach, as explained by Corbin and Strauss (1990), lies in "the carrying out of procedures of data collection and analysis systematically and sequentially” which “enables the research process to capture all potentially relevant aspects of

the topic as soon as they are perceived" (p. 6). It entails simultaneously collecting data and analysing the data, and constantly comparing incidents with other incidents; codes with other codes; categories to other categories; as well as comparing different elements e.g., codes to categories (Suddaby, 2006; Birks & Mills, 2015). The grounded theory approach thus differs from other qualitative approaches in that it does not wait for all the data to be collected before data is analysed nor is the process of data generation and analysis completely distinct processes (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Suddaby, 2006). With this approach, analysis is required from the inception as it feeds into subsequent interviews and observations. This does not mean that the interviewer enters the data generation process without questions or areas of observation. However, these questions if found to be irrelevant are altered and questions that are more relevant are added.

What is often not spoken about is how external pressures can affect this process, and in particular time pressures. While researchers ought to try to rise above externalities that may affect the research process, mentioning it and its management thereof, is important as it is the kind of honest and transparent approach that grounded theory calls for. The time pressures I faced were influenced by two factors. Firstly, after receiving the required permission to conduct research in the department, I discovered that at the time there were no interns within that department. The most recent iteration of the internship programme was for a two-year period, which had ended three months before I received permission to conduct the research. While they usually would already have had a new cohort, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic the internship programme within the department was suspended for a year. In this context, I felt that the sooner interviews with interns were conducted the better to ensure that too much time did not lapse between the interns completing their internships and me conducting the interviews. This was borne out of concern regarding the influence of time on the quality and accuracy of the interviews i.e., the longer the time lapse between completion of the internship and interviews, the greater the chance of interns not remembering or misremembering. Secondly, I was conducting this research on a part-time basis, while I worked on a full-time basis. As such, the need to conduct interviews timeously on the one hand with the reality that if I coded each interview and did literature engagement after every individual interview, it would take an immense amount of time – which would also extend the time between when interns concluded their internships and when interviews were conducted.

Thus, without compromising on the grounded theory methods, I did a first batch of interviews before coding and engaging with literature - in line with the constant comparison approach. More specifically, I conducted six interviews with interns, coded five of these interviews and then started moving between the data, codes and literature. To give a sense of timelines, it took just over three and a half months to conduct six interviews; to code five of these interviews; and to do some initial literature engagement. For noting, I was engaging not with new literature but rather re-engaging with literature that I had previously encountered before coming to the grounded theory approach. I do not think using this kind of 'batch approach' compromised the grounded theory approach, as I kept notes during the process and I allowed previous interviews to shape my future interviews as dictated by theoretical sampling.

In terms of how the constant comparative approach manifested itself in this research process, after I coded the first five interviews I engaged with literature after I had done open coding - which is explained later. Apart from the necessity to do so being borne out of the dictates of grounded theory, what motivated me was that I was reflecting on a code group labelled *What is being learnt?* I did this reflection when I was attempting to come to terms with what was then over seven hundred codes, and I remembered research that I had previously done that had relevance to this code group. This made me go back and read previous versions of my research proposal. I found a curriculum section in which Eraut (2004a) spoke to factors affecting workplace learning as well as the various typologies that he developed. This was quite useful as it elevated the groups I had created - which at this stage were groups developed to help me sort codes and check for duplicate codes.

An example of the usefulness of engaging in literature is as follows: People spoke a lot about initiative and about going out looking for work, and they gave other examples of how they would direct their own learning. Initially, I put these kinds of codes in the *Initiative and self-learning* group that I developed but since engaging Eraut (2004a), I then moved it to a group entitled *Learning factors: confidence and commitment* that better captured what was transpiring – this was a learning factor group in line with Eraut's older version of the typology as captured in *Figure 8: Factors Affecting Learning in the Workplace (Earlier Version)Figure* 8: Factors Affecting Learning in the Workplace (Earlier Version)

What this enabled me to do is link confidence to this grouping, and allowed me to think about initiative and self-learning in a different and more nuanced way - as I did not initially associate

either of these things with confidence. However, after having engaged the literature, doing so made sense as one needs a level of confidence to take initiative; while self-learning helps to develop confidence; and some level of confidence is also needed to do self-learning as you need to have confidence that you can learn by yourself.

Engaging with literature, in line with the constant comparative approach, thus had value to the open coding process which I did not anticipate. I initially thought its inclusion as part of grounded theory was for purposes of theoretical sampling - which is explained later - and for guiding researchers regarding what to ask and where to 'go' next. Moreover, engaging with the literature also had another unintended benefit as it also made me realise after reading more of Eraut (2004a) that I needed to go into greater detail about work activities in future interviews. In particular, more detail was needed regarding how people learned to do what they were doing during the internship.

As mentioned, both constant comparisons and theoretical sampling are the hallmarks of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) grounded theory approach (Birks & Mills, 2015). Having spoken to constant comparisons, theoretical sampling will be discussed in the following section.

3.4.2 Theoretical sampling

Theoretical sampling, as originally defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967), is the "process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges" (Birks & Mills, 2015, pp. 67-68). Theoretical sampling is thus a process of identifying and following clues, and then using this as a basis to determine what data to then collect – which is guided by the theory that is being constructed (Suddaby, 2006; Birks & Mills, 2015). Consequently, one cannot simply determine beforehand who all the interviewees will be nor the precise questions that will be asked.

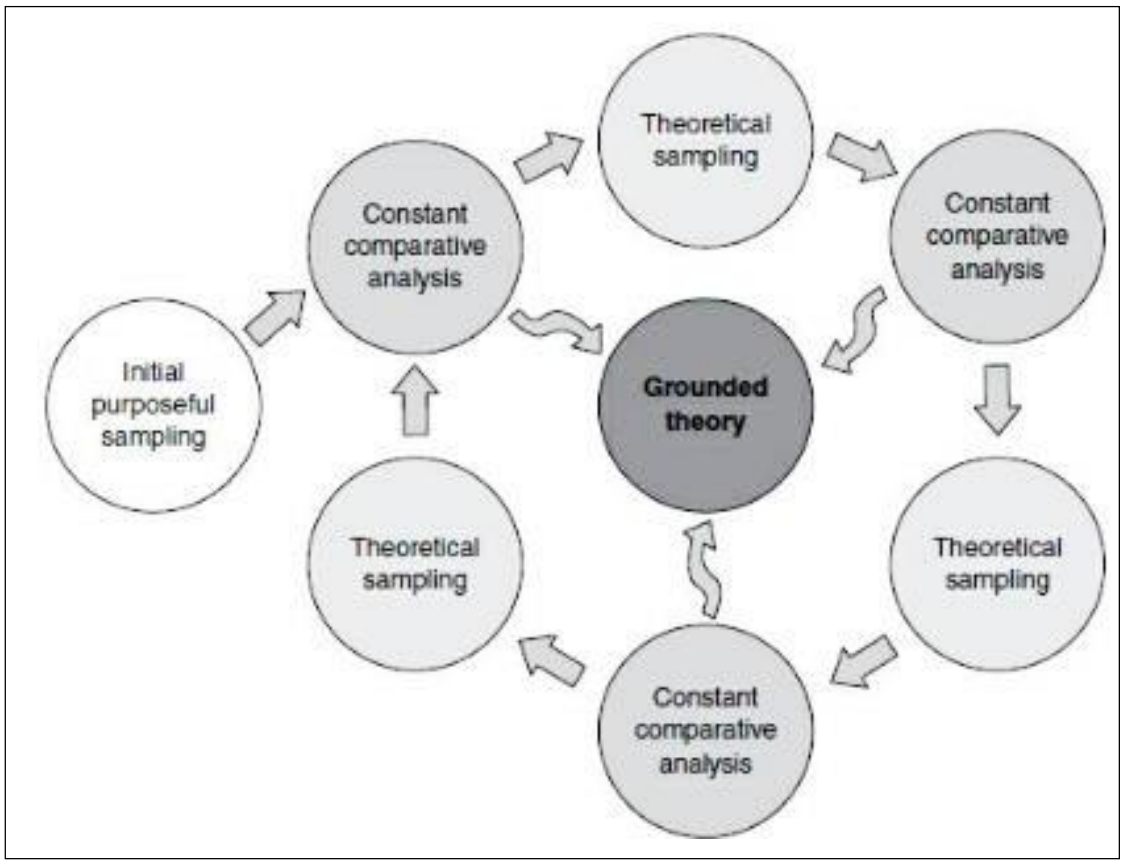
As explained by Birks and Mills (2015), the researcher during the constant comparative analysis process asks questions related to what is obvious and notably absent, and whether something more obscure is being suggested by the data. These questions are then 'answered' through theoretical sampling. Birks and Mills (2015) believe in using theoretical sampling from the first data generation exercise and this approach is one that I adopted in this study. This was borne out of a consciousness that my research may begin to take shape early on, as opposed to

only later when category clarification and expansion transpire. Theoretical sampling helps researchers do constant comparative analyses during the research process (Birks & Mills, 2015) - What this means in practical terms is illustrated in Figure 11.

As explained by Birks and Mills (2015), this means that a researcher may for instance do the following:

> Conduct an interview with a participant who is experiencing the phenomenon… data generated from that interview in the process of analysis will make you aware of issues that require expansion, clarification or confirmation. Theoretical sampling provides direction for your next stage of data generation in a process of concurrent analysis that continues cyclically until categories are fully developed… Theoretical sampling is not just about what you do next, it is also about how you do it (p. 68).

Figure 11: Interplay of Theoretical Sampling And Constant Comparison



Source: Birks & Mills (2015)

The call for researchers to embark on theoretical sampling, kept me feeling anxious and restless as I was always searching and trying to find clues of where to 'go'. After I concluded six interviews, the interviews started to feel somewhat monotonous. The interviewees were to my mind giving similar answers, albeit with different layers of depth. I was unsure if it was my line of questioning producing these similarities or if they were genuinely similar. I decided that in my forthcoming interviews, I would experiment with my line of questioning to see what that produced. In particular, a deeper approach was used when asking questions and I felt that this helped me generate better quality data from interviews. Here I mean that I asked more follow-up questions as well as for further detail when things were either unclear or when additional detail was of relevance to the research – as opposed to easily moving on to other questions as per my interview guide.

An example of theoretical sampling in action is when I conducted my fourth interview, and the interviewee was speaking about the importance of their supervisor. This had come up in previous interviews and I wanted to start testing to see whether the relationship between an intern and supervisor affected what interns felt they had learnt. In other words, I wanted to expand, clarify and confirm this, as Birks and Mills (2015) speak about. In this regard, I asked the interviewee how their learning would have been affected in the absence of a relationship with their supervisor:

> I wouldn't say yes and I wouldn't say no. The reason why I'm saying this is because as much as yes, she's my supervisor but I don't work with her alone so me learning would have not stopped with the outcome of my relationship with her, but it did play a big part (Intern 4)

Theoretical sampling can also assist researchers in seeing the kinds of questions they overlooked in previous interviews, which can then be probed in future interviews, as well as help researchers in determining what needs to be clarified going forward. For instance, I realised after conducting my initial sampling of six interviews that I did not probe what the experience of moving to Johannesburg was like – as it may have shaped learning. Many interns reported relocating to Johannesburg when I asked the introductory questions but because I saw these questions as a way of making the interviewee feel comfortable combined with the fact that I was preoccupied with the learning that transpired on the internship itself, I did not probe what this relocation experience was like. As such, I noted that for future interviews I would do this. This is part of the appeal of grounded theory as the typical qualitative approach does not

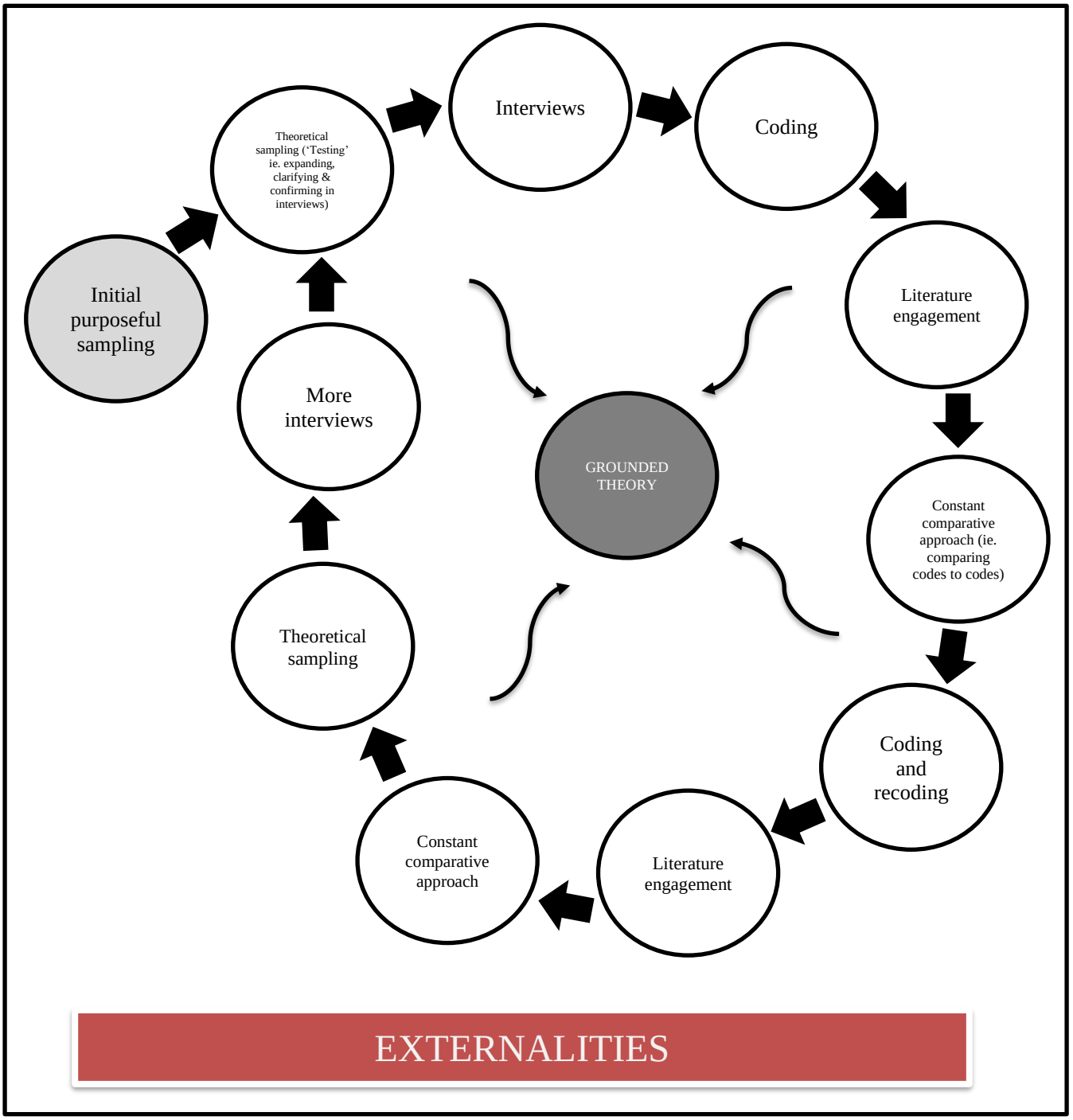
have built-in mechanisms which push researchers to think about possible missed questions or other salient questions during the data generation process. Other examples of this included: In the sixth interview, the idea of whether there were learning differences concerning the internship was tested and whether interns thought initiative was an important factor; and in the seventh interview I tested the extent to which work was challenging and if they thought the negative attitude towards interns was owing to jealousy, the fear of the potential of interns or to something else.

Concerning identifying areas for clarification, I remember doing open coding for the initial interviews and at times it got confusing because interns spoke about mostly having to do administrative work but then gave examples of work activities related to core functions – the differentiation between these two types of work activities is expounded on in a later chapter. Some also spoke about not having a voice but proceeded to give examples of having a voice. This made me realise that I needed to interrogate this more. In some way, I already started doing this in the third interview when I probed regarding the percentage of time spent doing administrative work. Intern 3 had the following response in this regard:

> Remember this admin work, it's not like it's an everyday work. It depends on the pack of work that we have or if there is anybody that needs to travel, if there's any bookings that I need to do, if there are any claims that I have to do, then that's when I'd say I will have ninety percent of Admin work on that day. With the X* they'll give me maybe a period of, "In two weeks please can you be done with this piece of work that you have done so that we can move on with another piece".

After conducting the six interviews and having worked with the data, I reflected on *Figure 11: Interplay of Theoretical Sampling And Constant Comparison* that outlines the interplay of theoretical sampling and constant comparison. While this Birks and Mills (2015) diagram is a good illustration and depiction of the interplay, which aided my understanding, there are elements that the diagram does not reflect which may be assumed. In the interest of transparency and to demonstrate the iterative and messy nature of grounded theory, Figure 12 is an original illustration of the process that I had undertaken after the initial round of six interviews. This original diagram also captures the externalities component that was touched on earlier, and which included time pressures and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 12: Interplay of Grounded Theory Methods



Source: Author generated

While one needs to be guided by interviews and emerging data, there is a need to know what to pursue and to not get lost in the data. In a memo I wrote, I reminded myself to stay focused because with "so much unknown about these internships and so many interesting things that I

could explore", I needed to ensure that I was "focused on what is being learnt and how"[6] – which was my initial starting point that evolved with time.

Apart from what has already been mentioned, after the initial batch of interviews were conducted, I made a list in my memo of things to ask in follow-up interviews. This was borne out of theoretical sampling, and an extract of this is in Table 6. These different questions were either added to my interview guide or I amended existing questions to incorporate them, and in some instances, they were left out depending on how the interview unfolded.

Table 6: Follow-Up Notes and Questions from Memo

Note/Reflection	Action/Question
Test some of the groups in relation to Eruat's (2004a) two typologies (what and how it is being learnt) – elements that are weak and strong.	Test Eruat's typology as it is related to the *how* it is being learned typology, which I felt was weak overall: • Participation in group activities: This had three codes • Working alongside others: This had four codes • Tackling challenging tasks: This had zero codes • Working with clients: This had zero codes (I took 'clients' in this context to mean communities, the public and stakeholders external to the Department) Three of the eight dimensions of Eraut's (2004a) *what* is being learned in the workplace typology were blank when I applied it to the data, in particular these were: • Decision making and problem solving (0 codes) • Judgement (0 codes) • Role performance (0 codes)

[6] At the time of writing this memo, this was still my topic

	It could be that the typology does not hold well or perhaps the internship does not help them when it comes to learning decision making and problem solving; role performance and judgement. This is something I need to test in further interviews, to check whether people felt they learnt anything in relation to the groupings for which the codes are low or empty.
Interns speak a lot about trust. But what is the basis of the trust? Why should they be trusted? Maybe it is perceived competence? And what is the basis of the perceived competence? I said this in relation to Eraut (2004a, p. 264) having spoken about competence. They seem to have a difference in access to opportunities – is perceived competence the reason why? Or is it dependent on one's supervisor?	If interns in future interviews speak about trust, probe them on this as opposed to moving on to the next set of questions - ask them why they should be trusted? Why some [interns] were trusted more than others? Ask them about their perceptions of themselves and whether their perceptions of themselves about the work they should be doing affect their own learning.
If they knew how to already do something - did they get the opportunity to become better at it or learn a different dimension of it? This stems from the fact that sometimes they say that they already knew how to do something - if so, were they able to master it or deepen their knowledge of it.	If anyone says they already knew how to do something, were they able to get better at it? Able to master it?
Some interns spoke about how someone in administration would assist them.	Find out if it was one admin person or does each unit has their own administration related official.

There are currently no direct questions to interns regarding what they think the factors are that affect learning in the workplace *[sic]*.	Ask this (maybe ask them to list three) - Factors which either promoted/aided/helped their learning or which hindered/affected their learning

Source: Author generated

3.4.3 Theoretical sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity is defined as "the ability to recognise and extract from the data elements that have relevance for your emerging theory" and it is this that helps to develop a rich grounded theory (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 58). Speaking of her own research experience, Birks says that she only really understood theoretical sensitivity much later in the research process:

> I'm sure I really didn't know what theoretical sensitivity was until relatively late in my research. I could define it, discuss it and even debate it, but it wasn't until I was deep inside the process that I discovered this subconscious ability to see parts of the data that would contribute to the whole. This is the skill of living out theoretical sensitivity. You have little idea what the final picture will look like but you know with a degree of certainty that this piece of data, this code, this category or this relationship, has relevance. I guess it's similar to how an artist sees those elements of a view that outsiders do not discern, but which ultimately bring to life their creation (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 171).

A researcher's level of theoretical sensitivity increases as the research process progresses. A researcher's level of theoretical sensitivity reflects the researcher's personal and professional history, their previous exposure to the subject area and their interaction with the data during the research process (Birks & Mills, 2015). In this regard, according to Glaser and Strauss, "the researcher does not approach reality as a tablu rasa [blank slate]. He [*sic*] must have a perspective that will help him see relevant data and abstract significant categories from his scrutiny of the data" (1967, as cited in Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 59).

After assessing one's starting position in relation to the research, one can then work on developing theoretical sensitivity, and learn how to strike a balance between keeping an open mind and identifying concepts that have significance (Birks & Mills, 2015). In line with this and on the advice of Birks and Mills (2015), I am transparent about my prevailing assumptions,

experience and knowledge in relation to the topic. This also includes acknowledging my expectations regarding research outcomes. This latter step helps prevent influencing the outcome, as it is "only through acknowledging your predictions that such preconceptions can be avoided" (Birks & Mills, 2015, pp. 20-21). These are all reflected in Table 7 and were outlined to mitigate against it affecting theoretical sampling and in order to enhance theoretical sensitivity. The different aspects mentioned in the table are things which I have had to reflect on and needed to manage during the data generation and analysis processes.

Table 7: Level of Theoretical Sensitivity

Item	Note
Assumptions and biases	• Most government graduate interns are black graduates who lack social capital and access to the labour market – which are the factors that have led them to these low paying internship positions. However, some internship programmes are exceptions to this such as the National Treasury programme for graduates. • These internship programmes are not breaking the cycle of unemployment. Graduates thus complete these programmes without gaining adequate skills and their employment prospects are only marginally increased. • These internship programmes are poorly managed and officials do not give much concern about their effectiveness. • Administrative work is trivial and not as important as developing cognitive skills and learning how to manage bigger processes and projects. Moreover, learning how to do administrative[7] work is not beneficial for interns.
Experience	• I coordinated and designed a graduate development programme for graduates who had an interest in government and civil society. They had social justice backgrounds and were aspiring change agents. It was a full-time 9-month programme that comprised of in-class content

[7] My use of the term administrative mirrors its ordinary as opposed to its academic usage and more specially, here I am referring to basic tasks such as stapling and photocopying as opposed to that which is critical to the functioning of government departments.

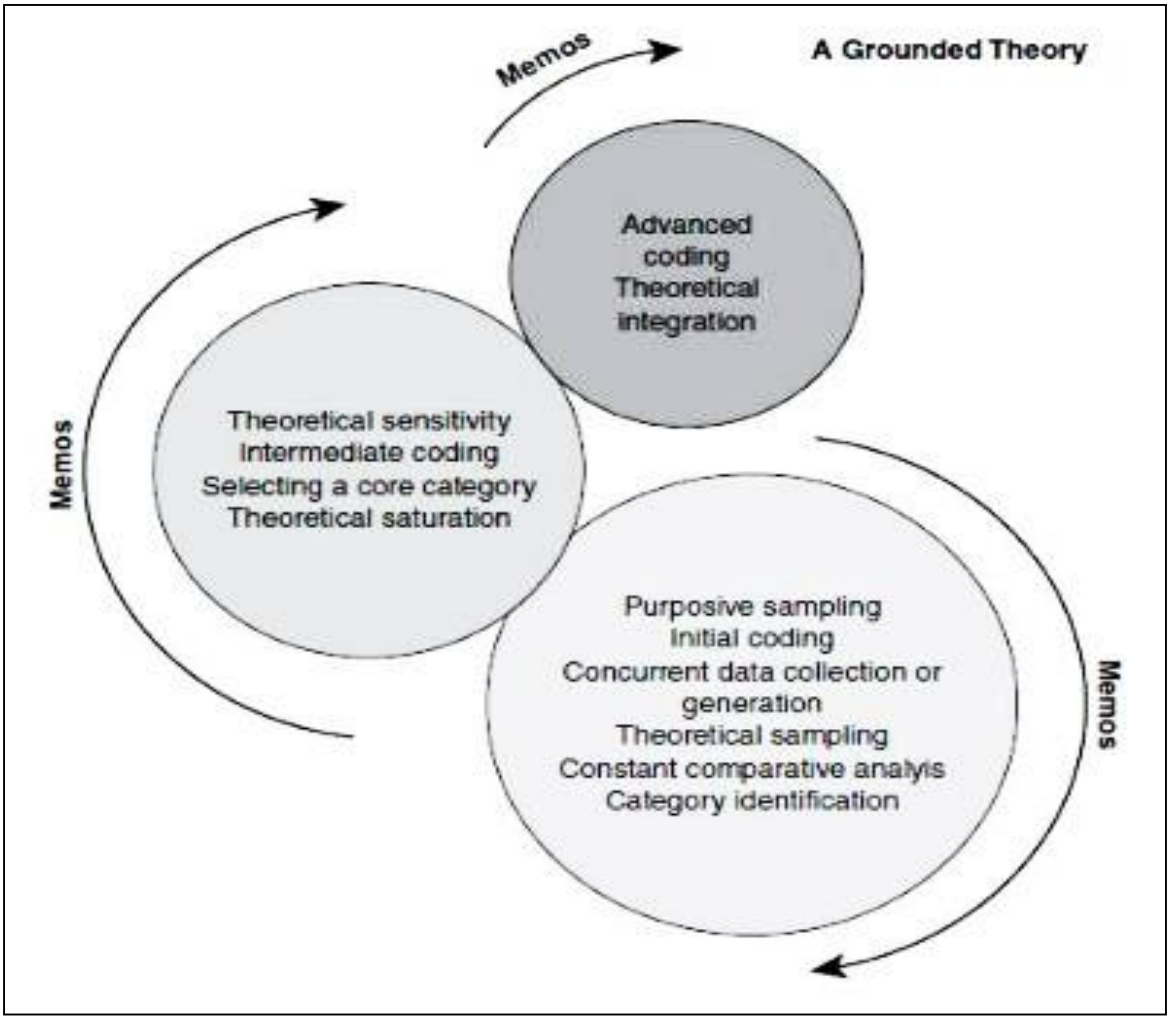
	delivery, practical projects as well as an internship at an organisation of their choice. • I have an acquaintance who was on a government internship programme. I have not spoken to them about their experience but I do know [owing to social media] that his work entailed domestic air travel and that they had a mentor.
Theoretical knowledge	• I did not come to the subject area through academic engagement but rather through professional experience. I do not have an academic background in education, so my level of theoretical knowledge is limited. Before coming to grounded theory, I read about employability and employability skills; layers of the curriculum; and vertical and horizontal knowledge.
Expectations regarding outcome	• Interns are learning mostly basic administrative skills. • In terms of how they learn, it is mostly self-taught and unstructured. • Their level of English proficiently has a bearing on both what and how they learn. • If they have a good relationship with their workplace mentor, this enhances both what and how they learn.

Source: Author generated

3.4.4 Memoing

Birks and Mills (2015) describe this as "the critical lubricant of a grounded theory 'machine'" and is a mechanism for elevating data to a conceptual level (p. 40). They provide a useful diagram to give a visual representation of this, depicted in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Memoing as a lubricant for the grounded theory 'machine'



Source: Birks and Mills (2015)

The benefit of writing reflective memos is that it also helps to keep researchers honest and accountable, as it is a means of recording research decisions made and the rationale behind them (Birks & Mills, 2015). However, over time the memos written are not only a means of keeping abreast of the researcher's thoughts and research decisions but it also becomes part of the research findings (Birks & Mills, 2015).

Regarding my usage of this, I had started using memos from an early stage, which was used for storing thoughts and reflections about grounded theory. Initially, this was kept separate from my field notes which were notes I made during interviews - with both memos and field notes being what Birks and Mills (2015) advise. While I thought separating these two mediums would

be beneficial, the division became artificial with time. Perhaps if there was an ethnographic component to this study that entailed spending time in the workplace, there would have been a greater need for field notes to keep track of research observations.

In addition to the memo examples cited elsewhere in this chapter, an additional extract of mine is included below and relates to thoughts regarding how to structure the research:

> Thinking about my structure and reflecting on what I read about grounded theory in that I can't write up my PhD in the same way that reflects the process that I undertook as it would be a mixture of back and forth of data generation, reflection and literature (and I think it may read like a novel - like a suspense or action movie!). But I need to make sure that my reader has a good understanding of the process that I undertook, so as to understand the process that I followed. I think what I should do is have the methodology section upfront so that the reader understands the process prior to understanding the literature - at the moment in my PhD proposal I have introduction - contextualising the study - methodology. I think this is the right approach - I think my findings and literature review would come after this (maybe combined somehow?) (S. Hendricks, 22 November, 2020).

Coding is central to the overall grounded theory process because it is what enables the researcher to help make sense of the data and enables the analytic process of determining a central idea to transpire. This is discussed in the next section.

3.4.5 Coding

According to Strauss (1987), the coding process in grounded theory is aimed at developing categories that are rooted in data, and to then use these categories as a basis for building theory (Birks & Mills, 2015). Before unpacking the different stages involved in the coding process, there are a few key things worth mentioning. The first is the differentiation between concepts and categories. Related concepts are grouped to form categories, with categories being "higher in level and more abstract than the concepts they represent" and they form the basis of theory development (Corbin & Strauss, 1990: 7). In short, codes that are bunched together form a category (Birks & Mills, 2015). Corbin and Strauss (1990) speak to how concepts can be generated into categories:

> If 'pacing' is a concept which emerges during the course of research along with other concepts such as 'self-medicating', 'resting', and 'watching one's diet', a researcher may

> realise that they are all activities which are directed towards a similar process which is that of ‘keeping an illness under control’. As such, the researcher can group these under a more abstract heading into a category called ‘Self Strategies for Controlling Illness’ (p. 7)

In terms of being able to identify processes at play, only after several interviews will the researcher be able to identify this, at which point, they would need to go back to previous interviews and see whether the explanatory power of the process holds (Charmaz, 1996). This requires researchers to be open to what is being discovered, unconstrained by preconceived notions, as well as allowing each concept to earn its way into the research (Walsh et al., 2015). Corbin and Strauss (1990) describe this phenomenon in the following way:

> Every concept brought into the study or discovered in the research process is at first considered provisional. Each concept earns its way into the theory by repeatedly being present in interviews, documents, and observations in one form or another - or by being significantly absent (i.e., it should be present, but isn't, so that questions must be asked). Requiring that a concept's relevance to an evolving theory (as a condition, action/ interaction, or consequence) be demonstrated is one way that grounded theory helps to guard against researcher bias (p. 7)

Having outlined the above, when it comes to coding, Charmaz (1996) advocates line-by-line coding that pushes researchers to ask questions such as: "What process is at issue here? Under which conditions does this process develop? How does the research participant(s) think, feel and act while involved in this process? When, why and how does the process change?” (p. 39). Line-by-line coding generates a significant number of codes, and researchers need to find ways of managing this to not get overwhelmed. In this research, a grouping technique was used to manage this process - which will be touched on later - with Table 8 giving a sense of the number of codes generated in my first set of interviews:

Table 8: Number of Codes From First Eight Interviews[8]

Interview	Codes per interview
Interview 1	188
Interview 2	166
Interview 3	214
Interview 4	84
Interview 5	63
Interview 6	74
Interview 7	75
Interview 8	64
TOTAL	**928**

Source: Author generated

With respect to the different stages in the coding process, Corbin and Strauss (1990) outline three types of coding namely: Open, axial and selective. Open coding entails breaking down data analytically and assigning conceptual labels (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). To do this, salient words or phrases are labelled which is the first step in the analysis process (Birks & Mills, 2015). Charmaz (1996) advised researchers to keep their codes active and very specific, as this will enable researchers to discover processes that may otherwise have remained implicit. Axial coding is the process by which categories are related to their sub-categories and tested against the data. During this coding process, hypothetical relationships should be formulated and tested using data that is subsequently gathered (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). This formulation and verification of hypotheses - which relate to the relationship between categories – should be done during this coding process. A single event cannot be the cause for discarding a provisional hypothesis (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). A researcher must be cognisant of the fact that there may be variation concerning the contexts in which hypotheses hold true. In this regard, Corbin and Strauss (1990) said that, "a major strategy in grounded theory is to seek systematically the full range of variation in the phenomena under scrutiny" (p. 13). In practical terms, a researcher can say, "under these conditions, action takes this form, whereas under these other conditions, it

[8] At this stage of the open coding process, these were all unique codes but was later consolidated.

takes another" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 14). Birks and Mills (2015) also speak about intermediate coding which is part of axial coding. This coding practice is used in two ways as they explain: “Firstly, to develop fully individual categories by connecting sub-categories, and fully developing the range of properties and their dimensions; and, secondly, to link categories together” (p. 12). Open or initial coding fractures the data while intermediate coding serves as a means of reconnecting the data in a way that is more abstract conceptually in comparison to doing thematic analysis (Birks & Mills, 2015). Theoretical saturation is reached when “new data analysis returns codes that only fit into existing categories, and these categories are sufficiently explained in terms of their properties and the dimensions” (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 10).

Lastly, at the final stage of data analysis, selective coding transpires. This entails unifying categories into a core category, which is the central phenomenon of the study. Additional theoretical sampling and selective coding help to further develop the core category, which is achieved by not only focusing on the core category but also the related categories and sub-categories. It could be that a core category is not identified even if sufficient coding has been gathered. The researcher would then need to pit "one analytic scheme against the other to see which captures the essence of what the research is all about" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 15). Corbin and Strauss (1990) explained the process of identifying a core category in the following way:

> It is identified by asking questions such as: What is the main analytic idea presented in this research? If my findings are to be conceptualized in a few sentences, what do I say? What does all the action/interaction seem to be about? How can I explain the variation that I see between and among the categories? The core category might emerge from among the categories already identified or a more abstract term may be needed to explain the main phenomenon. The other categories will always stand in relation to the core category as conditions, action/interactional strategies, or consequences. Diagramming can assist in integration of categories (p. 14)

A practical illustration of how the coding process transpires can be found in the work of Browning et al. (1995). They wanted to understand the factors that lead to or inhibit cooperation amongst organisations, groups and individuals. Grounded theory was appropriate, as they wanted to derive new theoretical insights on how to build cooperation. Interviews were central to the methods used, with observational and archival data being a means of verification and of

providing context. During the open coding process, they had 130 codes and after using axial coding that reduced the categories to 24 codes. During the selective coding process, 17 categories were formed that were arrived at by collapsing and renaming some categories. Once the categories and provisional hypotheses were developed, Browning et al. (1995) collected further data to test the bounds.

While coding can appear straightforward, Birks speaks of how she did not find the coding process as easy as she had anticipated (Birks & Mills, 2015). She found axial coding difficult and eventually used a Glaserian approach informed by Charmaz, which meant that like Charmaz she utilised an axial component to identify relationships (Birks & Mills, 2015). This could not have been anticipated before commencing the study but rather was adopted during the research.

It is vital to note that even when being loyal to the grounded theory approach, researchers may fall short owing to not adopting a level of abstraction that is higher than the data itself (Suddaby, 2006). One cannot simply move from doing an initial evaluation of the data to developing categorical codes and then to conceptual or theoretical codes, without making any effort to interpret what is before the researcher as this will not produce insight (Suddaby, 2006). What cannot be overlooked is the researcher's role in deciding what categories to focus on, what data to collect next, as well as the meaning to ascribe to the data (Suddaby, 2006). An example of this is *A Stakeholder Framework for Designing and Directing Effective Marketing Internships by* Hoyle and Goffnett (2013). According to them, using a grounded theory approach they wanted to "conduct an exploratory stakeholder analysis of key stakeholders to understand relationships in the design and delivery of a marketing internship program" (p. 1). While they visually mapped out the stakeholders involved and how this mapping differs from conventional stakeholder theory as it encompasses higher education as a stakeholder as opposed to business stakeholders, they failed to adopt a level of abstraction higher than the data. As such, even though they said they followed the grounded theory methods, their findings are descriptive as opposed to offering theoretical and analytical insight. This demonstrates that while the grounded theory approach entails employing a series of steps, the approach is not mechanical.

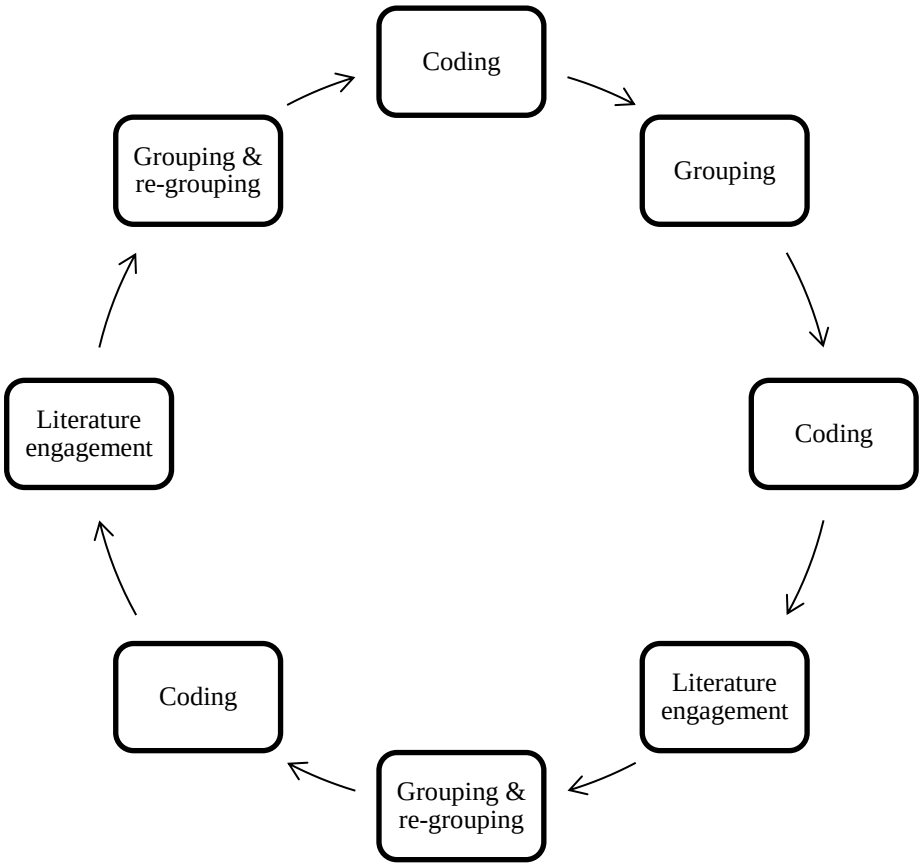
However, this creative dimension of grounded theory as opposed to an approach that is more mechanical in nature is not without dispute. This tension was in fact a departure point between the founders of grounded theory "with Glaser favouring creativity and openness to

unanticipated interpretations of data while Strauss and Corbin became advocates of adherence to formal and prescriptive routines for analysing" (Suddaby, 2006, p. 638). However, this does not mean that Strauss and Corbin advocated a purely mechanical approach, as they too warned that this kind of approach could produce well-established or trivial phenomena.

Like Birks, I did not find the coding process straightforward but for different reasons. Firstly, line-by-line coding was very time consuming and something I was unaccustomed to. Secondly, while the memos and field notes I made during interviews assisted me with some of the emerging group development, on a micro-level I was unclear on how to label codes. I even watched online lectures on this but realised that the process was not scientific. Moreover, while Birks and Mills (2015) speak about keeping codes active to detect processes, this often prolonged the coding process and I had to remind myself to not be so focused on keeping codes active that I overlook some of the important descriptive information.

While the literature on grounded theory speaks about codes and categories, I deployed an intermediary grouping step – as alluded to earlier. These groups were not established to be categories but rather to manage and make sense of all the codes – which at the time were numerous as they were all unique code generated through the open coding process. In other words, I needed the groups in order to make sense of all the codes before I could move onto developing categories as I felt like I was drowning in code. Over time with these groups evolving into categories, in my memos I sometimes continued to refer to them as groups even though they were categories. In addition, at some point, there were both groups and categories, as not all groups evolved into categories simultaneously. Figure 14: Coding and Re-Grouping Process that I developed illustrates this process, and in so doing connects this process to the one outlined in *Figure 12: Interplay of Grounded Theory Methods*. I refer to re-grouping as the process of moving codes across groupings, developing new groups with codes taken from other groups or the renaming or merging of groups. The ability to re-group enabled me to embrace in real terms the idea of Corbin and Strauss (1990) about seeing new concepts as provisional and gave me the fluidity to be able to do this. For illustrative purposes, an extract from my memo in this regard: “I developed the groups as I went. Have more than I anticipated… I will now work through the groups to see if some of the codes can be combined” (S. Hendricks, 24 October, 2020).

Figure 14: Coding and Re-Grouping Process



Source: Author generated

Figure 14 speaks to the process used, which was not something spoken about in the grounded theory literature but rather a pragmatic process that was adopted to remain true to the grounded theory approach while also managing the volume of data.

This section aimed to discuss the key methods encompassed in the grounded theory approach which is that of constant comparison; theoretical sampling; theoretical sensitivity; memoing; and coding. When doing this, examples were also given of how these methods were used in the research process. Having done this, the succeeding section will discuss the ethical issues associated with this study.

3.5 Ethics

The fluid nature of the grounded theory approach makes predicting all ethical issues that could arise challenging, as one does not know beforehand everyone who will be interviewed and what the precise research questions asked will be (Birks & Mills, 2018). What student researchers can do in practice is give a rough estimate of the number of people they anticipate interviewing and then seek further ethical clearance if changes occur (Birks & Mills, 2018).

Before embarking on interviews, I needed to be mindful that an integral part of conducting ethical research is that of informed consent. Informed consent comprises of four elements, namely: Competence; voluntarism; full information; and comprehension (Cohen et al., 2007). Researchers must ensure that their subjects have the necessary competence to make the decision to participate in the research. With respect to voluntarism, participants should have the opportunity to participate or not participate, while full information calls for participants to be given full information regarding the research project (Cohen et al., 2007). Often full information may not be possible, in which case a reasonable level of informed content must be sought (Cohen et al., 2007). In terms of comprehension, participants should be able to comprehend the nature of the research at hand (Cohen et al., 2007). With respect to competence, seeing that interviews were conducted with graduate interns and government officials, it is assumed that they met this dimension of ethical research. With respect to voluntarism, full information as well as comprehension, I ensured that these components were covered in the Participant Information Sheet[9] and the Consent Form[10].

In terms of ethics in the context of interviews, I needed to be mindful of the confidentiality of participants and an agreement was made regarding this. When engaging with the notion of confidentiality, what generally comes to mind is that of external confidentiality. Tolich (2004) differentiates between this traditional understanding of confidentiality, which is termed external confidentiality, and that of internal confidentiality using the metaphor of an iceberg. While what is visible of the proverbial iceberg may be what researchers are preoccupied with, the hidden part of the iceberg below the surface should also be considered as it is a source of potential harm. Internal confidentiality, which is akin to the hidden part of the iceberg, entails interviewees being able to identify other interviewees or research subjects through the research

[9] See Appendices 4-5 for Participant information sheet template
[10] See Appendices 6-7 for Consent form template

report – and can also be referred to as deductive disclosure (Tolich, 2004; Kaiser, 2009; Saunders et al., 2015). Broad definitions of confidentiality such as that of Wiles et al.'s (2008), which centres on the idea that information that identifies the individual must not be disclosed without the permission of the participant, may overlook internal confidentiality.

The issue of internal confidentiality is especially challenging when research has transpired in an organisational or community setting, as opposed to with groupings of people who do not know each other (Kaiser, 2009; Wiles et al., 2008). In such cases, members of a community or organisation may be able to identify themselves and others. While I initially thought that this was going to be a challenge owing to interns all having completed their internship in one department and during the same time period, this was managed by anonymising and sometimes removing parts of the data during the write-up stage.

For Tolich (2004), internal confidentiality expands the vulnerable definition as it also includes "autonomous persons with diminished autonomy" (p. 105), as opposed to only seeing groups such as children and people with mental disabilities as forming part of these categories. To manage this reality, Tolich (2004) advises researchers to take charge of the autonomy of the interviewees and to consider all interviewees who form part of this group as "persons whose autonomy has been impaired" (p. 105). This would entail taking the time to understand "what information is potentially damaging if read by another insider, and which information is innocuous" (Tolich, 2004, p. 105). However, he does warn researchers that even if every precaution is taken, absolute guarantees of confidentiality cannot be given. The approach of Tolich (2004) resonates with me as I recognise that there is asymmetric information in research contexts, with researchers having more knowledge about the details of the research compared to interviewees.

With respect to consulting research participants, Wiles et al. (2008) found that researchers have different orientations regarding this, with there being a continuum of approaches. Some embrace the responsibility of protecting identities as they can do a better assessment of risks while others consider it the responsibility of participants. The kind of approach that researchers adopt along this continuum is a function of context, research approach and the issues they are dealing with (Wiles et al., 2008). Regardless of the approach used, Kaiser (2009) cautioned about being patronising and making the assumption that participants want complete confidentiality as doing so also denies them their voice (Kaiser, 2009). However even if

participants want to be identified in the research, "they need to be made aware that the final presentation of their views may not be entirely what they envisioned and once something is in print it cannot be changed" (Kaiser, 2009, p. 10).

There is often a once off discussion between the researcher and the participant at the beginning about confidentiality, even though neither party know what information will be disclosed during the research process (Kaiser, 2009). Kaiser (2009) advised against this approach and suggested having a more open relationship with participants about confidentiality by making participants aware that later in the research process confidentiality can and may be discussed again. I made sure to ask participants at the end of all interviews if they had any questions and ensured that all participants had my contact details so that I was accessible to them after the interview in the event that they wanted to make contact.

Anonymity is the most common approach to securing confidentiality, such that it is often conflated with confidentiality (Cohen et al., 2007; Wiles et al., 2008; Saunders et al., 2015;). Anonymity lies on a spectrum, with fully identifiable on one end and completely anonymous on the other end (Saunders et al., 2015). In terms of where researchers lie on this continuum, this will be a function of the researcher balancing data integrity on the one hand with protecting the identity of participants on the other hand (Saunders et al., 2015). However, even if a researcher does choose to prioritise the protection of participant identities and goes to great lengths to anonymise data, once again this is something that cannot be fully guaranteed (Saunders et al., 2015). For this research, I felt I needed to be mindful of protecting interns from their workplace-mentors/superiors being able to identify them, especially if their remarks cast their mentors/superiors in a negative light. With the internship programme already completed, the risk of appraisal is reduced but is none the less something that I remained conscious of.

In terms of how anonymity is achieved, pseudonyms are often used for this purpose (Saunders et al., 2015; Wiles et al., 2008). Saunders et al. (2015) discuss their approach to using pseudonyms and how they used pseudonyms which avoided exposing the cultural background of participants but that in some way still resonated with the participants. Not only are names subject to anonymisation but also identifying information such as places, religious or cultural background, occupation and age as these can all lead to identification (Kaiser, 2009; Saunders et al., 2015). Changing key characteristics can easily be done if it does not change the message of what is trying to be conveyed but when the changes are essential contextual information,

this does make it more challenging (Wiles et al., 2008; Saunders et al., 2015;). Speaking to these challenges, Saunders et al. (2015) say, "Anonymising has been an ongoing working compromise" which can at times mean sacrificing data integrity for the sake of anonymity – and vice versa.

However, anonymising data alone is insufficient and researchers have to go beyond this. For instance, Saunders et al. (2015) speak to how a researcher needed to split a person into two people as a means of ensuring that no one would be able to identify them. This shows that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to anonymising data but rather a contextually contingent approach is demanded (Saunders et al., 2015). Thus, it is a balancing act that must be guided by interviewee preferences to ensure that the research produced is ethical and does not dehumanise research participants. In terms of the actions I took to anonymise the data in this research, this is outlined in Table 9.

Table 9: Actions Taken to Anonymise Data

Intervention required	Action taken
Anonymising names mentioned by interns	While I did not use pseudonyms, I sometimes substituted X* or Y* in place of names in cases where removing the reference entirely to the name being used would have altered the meaning of what was being said.
Anonymising personal information	I also used X* and Y* to anonymise personal information. An example of this: "So the other one studied X* so in fact not that she was not given a chance".
Anonymising work activities	I removed or altered references to work activities that are unique to a particular unit. An example of this: "How are they supposed to know this without you teaching me, taking me through, orientating me. This is how we develop X* - Firstly, you need to know this, that and that. Sometimes you just go to the meeting and just sit the whole day without even commenting."
Amending sentences	In a limited number of cases, sentences were altered by removing or anonymising them, as using an X* or Y* would have compromised the meaning. Example: "I did administration work in preparation to

	go and do field work – of which it's very refreshing, as much as there are challenges…". In this instance, the phrase *field work* was used to describe what they did, and which had a more general meaning as opposed to the specific task they had mentioned – which would have made the unit they were in somewhat obvious.
Naming convention of Human Resources (HR) and mentors	For mentors and HR staff that I interviewed, I did not label nor use any pseudonyms as the sample was quite small so I was worried that doing so would have compromised confidentiality. The conventions of HR 1 and 2 as well as mentor 1 and 2 were used.
Naming convention of interns	In place of the names of interns, and as an alternative to using pseudonyms, I labelled the interns from intern 1 to intern 12.

Source: Author generated

While full internal confidentiality may be hard to attain, it is something that I endeavoured to achieve. I am however hoping that the above measures taken helped to reduce the possibility of this transpiring. I also had to be particularly cautious when it came to reporting intern learning as a reader may be able to pick up what unit the intern was based in as well as the department under study, and in turn be able to identify interns, HR officials and so forth. Seeing that the department under study has units and does work that is unique to that department, being explicit about work activities would have severely compromised confidentially. Thus, while every effort was taken to ensure confidentiality, the hope is also that the substance of the findings was not compromised owing to the anonymisation that transpired.

In terms of consent forms, only the consent forms of the officials were physically signed and returned. The remainder of the forms were sent before the interviews and then verbally discussed with interns – except for two interns who returned them electronically. This formed part of the recorded component of the interview for record purposes. This is because most interns appeared to have an issue with data and computer access, and I did not want the emailing of forms to be a barrier to interviews.

Having discussed the ethics entailed in the data generation process, the following section will discuss the data generation process itself.

3.6 Data generation

A significant and unforeseen event transpired in the year I was set to commence data generation, which was the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This resulted in a national lockdown in March 2020 that accompanied uncertainty regarding what the next few months would look like in terms of restrictions on physical interactions and gatherings. In May 2020, I thought that I would be able to conduct face-to-face interviews later that year, which meant that I could do some preliminary data generation in the immediate term and then conduct interviews later – with preliminary data generation entailing online surveys that collected basic data. However, by July 2020, it was clear that I would be unable to do the ethnographic research that I had planned to do, as the situation was likely to extend beyond mid-2021. In the absence of the ethnographic approach, I wanted to ensure that data generation was not compromised and as such, I tried to carry out as many interviews as possible. The department unfortunately only had the contact details of a few interns who had completed the internship. The remainder of the contact details I got were from interns who were willing to share the contact information of other interns once they had completed interviews with me and got a sense of the research and the legitimacy thereof - this was before the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) came into effect.

While the grounded theory approach embraces a variety of data sources, participant interviews are the most commonly used, which is unsurprising as researchers using the approach are generally trying to understand the world from the perspective of the individual (Birks & Mills, 2015). Birks and Mills (2015) do, however, caution against only relying on interviews, as they may not be the best source of data. It could for instance be that in some settings, participant observation is the most significant data source. Ultimately, researchers should ask themselves where they are most likely to find the kind of data that may be significant for their research (Birks & Mills, 2015). Types of data sources could include surveys, diaries or logbooks, government policy documents, procedure manuals or articles (Birks & Mills, 2015). For instance, in the grounded study of Browning et al. (1995), they used interviews, newspapers, documents and observations. Additionally, they used time triangulation that entailed comparing information gathered from people who were at the case study organisation early in its history, with information from participants who worked there more recently. At the outset, while I knew that interviews would be the dominant data source, this was going to be complemented with amongst other things focus groups, learning diaries and observations. However, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of interns in the department at the

time of data generation, I was unable to use learning diaries and observations. I was however able to access relevant government documents online and I was also sent documentation from officials involved in the rollout of the programme.

Being unable to conduct ethnographic research owing to the pandemic meant that I was unable to triangulate and observe interns, their interaction with mentors/supervisors as well as the dynamics in the department such as the interaction between officials, time pressures and how different units operated within the department. Research had to nonetheless continue and while it was not ideal, valuable data generation was able to be conducted. However, conducting ethnographic research in this subject area remains an area for future research which other researchers can pursue as it will enable a comparison between the findings of this study and one using an ethnographic approach.

Phone interviews were used in this research study, owing to government regulations around social distancing being in place and prohibited at the time. To my mind, conducting phone interviews allowed for a greater level of honesty that in-person interviews would not have facilitated. Moreover, the combination of conducting phone interviews with interns who had already completed their internship, enabled an even greater level of honesty from interns as they were less concerned about the ramifications of anything they said compared to if they were still on the internship. Also, the use of phone interviews meant that interviews were less formal and perhaps less daunting for interns compared to if they were conducted in person. On a personal level, I also preferred conducting phone interviews because it gave me the chance to take notes and refer to my notes in a way that I would have been unable to do if someone was sitting in front of me.

In terms of interview types, a common distinction is drawn between structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. A structured interview involves asking a pre-determined set of questions with the answers falling within limited response categories (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The questions asked, and their sequencing, are scripted with little deviation from what was planned. On the other end of the spectrum are unstructured interviews that involve the interviewer not knowing in advance all the questions that they will ask (Qu & Dumay, 2011). In terms of a semi-structured interview, this is where questions and the topics covered are pre-determined but the wording and sequence of it differs according to participants (Cohen et al., 2007). In semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions influence the direction of the

interview as these questions give participants greater freedom in answering questions. These questions are intertwined with probes that are aimed at getting more detailed responses (Qu & Dumay, 2011). With the grounded theory approach, interviews are between unstructured and structured depending on when they transpire. As anticipated, in this research the early interviews were more unstructured and became more structured as the research process progressed. More specifically, the first eight interviews helped to cement the focus on factors that affect workplace learning, while the next few interviews were used more for sense-checking factors; seeing what was missing from the analysis; as well as understanding how the different elements interacted with each other. This meant asking questions that were more direct in nature.

Isabella's (1990) interview approach provides a good example of how grounded theory can be exploratory while also being structured. Isabella (1990) wanted to "identify the interpretations that managers construct to understand key organisational events" (p. 11). The first phase involved doing pilot interviews with four managers at each organisational level, and they were asked to name critical organisational events that transpired in the past five years. Based on these interviews, the five events that were commonly mentioned became the key events that were focused on in the study and were the events used as discussion points in all subsequent interviews. In total, she interviewed 40 managers from different managerial levels. This approach was suitable seeing that she aimed to understand the different interpretations that managers have of the same key events as opposed to understanding who considered what organisational event critical. At the end of every interview Isabella (1990) also asked participants whether there were other details or information which they considered relevant.

The emergent nature of the grounded theory process did not inhibit me from having an interview guide, but I could not expect it to remain constant throughout the study as Birks and Mills (2015) caution. I commenced the interview with demographic information to both get a better understanding of the graduates as well as to allow them to become comfortable. I had to be cognisant going into the intern interviews that learning is not something that is always easy to recognise, as trying to determine how people learn is as challenging as trying to determine what they learn (Eraut, 2004a). Before coming to grounded theory, I came across the work of Eraut (2004a) who found that individuals were sometimes unaware of their own learning due to its informal nature. I found that creating a reflexive interview environment is not straightforward and it took a bit of time for interns to start thinking deeply about their internship

experience. One had to let interns 'ramble' on because they may not immediately speak to what is being asked but then go on to do so or then talk about other things that you did not anticipate. Conducting the interviews over the phone was also beneficial in this regard because the conversation flowed easily.

Eraut (2004a) used interviews as the chief medium of collecting data, with the focus of interviews being on trying to understand "how people learned to do what they were currently doing in the workplace" (p. 249). The approach Eraut (2004a) used, which I bore in mind when conducting interviews, was the following:

> Started by inviting our respondents to describe their work in a very detailed manner, including all the ordinary everyday aspects, and to recall the activities of the previous and current weeks; and also whether other weeks were different and, if so, in what way. The discussion then moved on to the issue of what types of knowledge, skill, or competence are needed to do the work, and finally to how these were acquired (p. 249)

With learning being difficult to recognise and dissect, being able to conduct ethnographic research as intended may have enabled interns themselves to come to terms with their learning. This is because it may have translated into me being able to ask deeper questions based on my observations or ask them questions in their workplace as their learning was unfolding. I was unable to really know interns and their workplace in the way that I had wanted, which could have 'led' me to a different central phenomenon in this study. However, as this research evolved, having intricate knowledge of learning became subordinate to the question of what affected the learning of interns. While this focus would have also benefited from a more immersive approach, it was something that interns could more easily discuss compared to what and how they learnt.

With respect to who I interviewed, I initially planned to interview three sets of people, namely: Graduate interns; government staff in the department who are directly responsible for the graduate interns; and government staff responsible for managing the programme across all government departments. However, adopting the grounded theory approach and utilising the theoretical sampling method meant that I could not be dogmatic about this beforehand. With that said, I did interview two of these three groupings, and I also went on to interview mentors - as that is where the data 'led' me. The breakdown of research participants was as follows: One

interview each with 12 interns[11]; one interview each with two mentors/supervisors[12]; and one interview each with two HR officials[13]. The interns interviewed in this study represent the overall cohort well, with interviewees coming from a mixture of provinces and tertiary institutions, as well as having varied degree types. Some interns interviewed had prior working and volunteer experience while others did not.

In terms of gaining access to these individuals, formal permission from the department was required. In particular, written permission was required from the Director General (DG). In the absence of knowing officials within the department, it would have been challenging to get access - especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when officials were inundated with work owing to the health, social and economic crises that it brought on.

When conducting the interviews, I heeded the advice of Jacob and Furgerson (2012) who advised asking open-ended questions as opposed to closed questions, as the latter merely facilitates binary responses of yes or no. For example, starting questions with the phrase "Tell me about…" facilitates responses that are more detailed and allows the interviewee to take the question in different and unanticipated ways. In the same vein, questions should also be expansive in nature (Jacob and Furgerson, 2012).

While a central theme in my research is the notion of learning, what constitutes it and how to define it are contested. Thus, while widely used in academic and everyday life, what constitutes learning is left up to how people in their own capacities and perspectives label processes, activities and products as learning (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009). To get my head around this, I considered the following thought experiment: If Person A says that they did not learn anything from a given experience but Person B says that Person A did in fact learn something, who should we believe? It could be that Person A did learn something but they have yet to reflect on it or that they did not learn what they had hoped to learn, which results in them concluding that no learning had transpired. However, it could also be that Person B is mistaken and that even though they hoped Person A would learn from the experience, they had in fact failed to do so. As a researcher, I think there are a few things that can be done to make sense of the situation: One could study the learning experience of Person A to see whether learning

[11] See appendix 1 for the interview schedule
[12] See appendix 3 for the interview schedule
[13] See appendix 2 for the interview schedule

transpired as perhaps the learning was latent or undiscovered or maybe there was a misunderstanding regarding what constituted learning. In addition, one could get an understanding of why Person B believes Person A did learn something and the rationale for this assertion. One could also go beyond this and get an understanding not only about whether something was learnt or not but also what was learnt and what the learning process was like. To get a clearer picture, a group of people that were in a similar learning position as Person A could also be interviewed. This could be done to see whether any kind of generalisations can be made or whether complementary information could be gathered that gives a better picture of the learning experience. I would still however be left with the conundrum of whether Person A did in fact learn anything - if they continue to assert that they did not - despite the claims and experiences of Person B and others. As I reflected on this thought experiment, I concluded that the unit of analysis mattered - if Person A is the unit of analysis, then their understanding of learning is what matters and as a researcher, part of my role is to also unpack Person A's understanding of learning and the various dynamics around it. As such, my role as a researcher in this context is not to contradict and to put on trial any claims made by interns as to whether they learnt or not but rather to understand at a deeper level their learning experience and the factors that affected their learning. Moreover, as a researcher using grounded theory, my role is also to see how this learning experience could be understood at a more meta-level. With that said, this does not mean that I did not weigh up one thing that an interviewee said against another thing they said if found to be contradictory.

While I am drawn to the transparent and structured nature of the grounded theory approach, I am however not naïve about how researchers can affect the research outcomes during the interview process – as recognised by the constructivist school of thought. As such, I needed to be continuously self-reflexive during the research process and avoid any biases I may have had during the data generation, interpretation and analysis phase. Glaser (2002) said that if researchers use an interview approach that "forces and feeds interviewee responses" then it amounts to interviewer bias (p. 3).

On the issue of when enough data has been collected, it is not always clear when this point has been reached (Suddaby, 2006). However, the quality of the contact that a researcher has with the data generation site has a direct bearing on the research generated (Suddaby, 2006). Moreover, the willingness of interview participants to partake in the research process also matters because not everyone may want to participate. Apart from the non-responses I got, I

also received the following two messages: One person was upset that I had messaged them and that I had their contact details; while the other declined the interview, saying that they could not assist owing to personal reasons and that they had a lot to deal with at the time. Thus, while I had the contact details of 20 interns, I was only able to interview 12 of them.

While this section in broad terms discussed the data generation process, the following section will discuss on a granular level how the overall process including the different components of the grounded theory approach was undertaken.

3.7 Methods and procedures

Having outlined the central methods of grounded theory, this section will expound in more detail how these methods were used and the overall process undertaken – especially with respect to the coding process. Although not by design, there were three phases involved in the coding process. Phase 1 encompassed familiarising myself with the data and coding process, and was focused on the first set of interviews conducted. Phase 2 was more abductive in nature - as there was more theory at my disposal – with idea testing transpiring more in interviews. Literature engagement occurred more during this second phase, as guided by theoretical sampling, compared to the initial phase. In phase 3, the rest of the interviews were conducted with a lot of the sub-category development and write-up process transpiring in this phase – along with completing the research itself.

3.7.1 Phase 1

After coding five of the first six interviews using the software Atlas.ti, there were 715 unique codes. Naturally, I felt as though I was drowning in code. I combined codes that were duplicates and those that were very similar, which reduced it to 600 codes. I knew more code merging could transpire but with so many codes, it was hard to do. This is because codes were listed alphabetically and codes that could potentially be merged started with different alphabets - which made it challenging to pick up duplicates and similarities when going through the coding list. As a result, I decided to group the codes to make it easier to see what codes are similar and redundant and to also make sense of them. In doing this, I had to remind myself to not confuse on the one hand combining similar codes and on the other hand combining codes that are in the same grouping - as with the latter, codes may be related but may not be similar in a way that warranted combining. As mentioned earlier, groups as I define them are not the same as

categories or sub-categories but rather a tool I used and developed for duplicate checking and 'cleaning up' the codes.

Based on the interviews done at the time and on what I thought emerged from them, and using my interview notes and memos to guide me, I started with the following groups: Initiative; role of supervisor/mentor; and admin verse core work. In terms of the process, I went through the 600 codes to see which codes could be put into these three groupings - as opposed to going through the list three separate times for each group. After going through the code list and sorting it into the three groups, more groups were developed. This resulted in the creation of 18 groups, which are outlined in Table 10 along with the number of codes per group.

Table 10: First 18 Groups Created

No.	Name of group	No. of codes per group
1	What is being learnt?	83
2	Ways in which internship/learning experience can be improved	22
3	Support group	15
4	Role of supervisor/mentor	85
5	Positive experiences of internship	10
6	Negative experience/feelings	26
7	Learning process/learning methods	53
8	Learning environment and culture	29
9	Lack of clarity/guidance on roles/responsibilities/tasks	10
10	Initiative and self-learning	39
11	Factors that promote learning	14
12	Factors that impede learning	71
13	Expectations of internship not met	19
14	Expectations and intention of internship	39
15	Demographic details	30
16	Admin verse core work	12
17	Access to learning opportunities	20

18	Learning experience	4
	TOTAL	**581**[14]

Source: Author generated

Grouping the codes made me realise that I could have done better in terms of labelling them and that some codes needed to be renamed or rephrased to keep them more active and for the labels to more adequately explain what was transpiring – which is also the advice of Birks and Mills (2015). However, I did not want to lose any of the descriptive information and as such thought that it was better to keep some codes more descriptive, which in hindsight could have been done while keeping them active. For instance, from the outset 'social studies student' could have been 'studied social science', and 'postgraduate student' could have been 'furthering postgraduate studies'.

In general, I found that coding took much longer than anticipated and that it was not a straightforward process. This is because I was also sometimes unsure of what label to deploy. Moreover, I was also anxious that I was not doing it 'right' which slowed down the process as I kept second guessing myself. With my master's degree, I did not do open coding as it was deductive in nature so the coding process that I undertook for this research was a new experience.

In the process of grouping codes, I realised that my codes were not all on the same conceptual level. For some, I just used the words of the interviewee to code it but it was hard to completely separate the open coding process from analysing these codes when labelling them. However, over time I think it 'levelled out' but I did try to not attach conceptual labels too early on.

After the 19 groups were developed, I lacked the vocabulary to deal properly with the *What is being learnt* group which had over 80 codes in it. I knew I needed to engage the literature for guidance, which led me back to the literature that I had previously engaged with to see if I had written anything related to this. In so doing, I came across Eraut's (2004a) typology related to factors affecting workplace learning. I added this typology to the data which was beneficial.

[14] There were some codes that were not in any grouping, while a few were in two groups (as I was unsure which group to put it in). This is why this does not add up to 600 codes.

Owing to the benefit of doing this, I decided to add the other two typologies that Eraut developed to see whether they also resonated with the data and helped me make sense of things. This included the typology concerning what is being learned in the workplace, which had eight dimensions, as well as how things are learnt in the workplace which had four dimensions. Applying these groupings to the data resulted in 35 groups with 571 codes. This is illustrated in Table 11.

Table 11: Groups After Adding Eraut's Three Typologies to Data

No.	Code groups	No. of codes per group
1	Access to learning opportunities	20
2	Admin verse core work	13
3	CONTEXT FACTORS: Allocation & structuring of work	18
4	CONTEXT FACTORS: Encounters & relationships with people at work	30
5	CONTEXT FACTORS: Expectations of each person's role, performance and progress	11
6	Demographic details	30
7	ERAUT (2004): Academic knowledge and skill	18
8	ERAUT (2004): Awareness and understanding	13
9	ERAUT (2004): Personal development	14
10	ERAUT (2004): Task performance	7
11	ERAUT (2004): Decision making and problem solving	**0**
12	ERAUT (2004): Judgement	**0**
13	ERAUT (2004): Role performance	**0**
14	ERAUT (2004): Teamwork	1
15	Expectations and intention of internship	36
16	Expectations of internship not met	19
17	Factors that impede learning	13
18	Factors that promote learning	16
19	HOW ITS BEING LEARNT: Participation in group activities	8

20	HOW ITS BEING LEARNT: Tackling challenging tasks	**0**
21	HOW ITS BEING LEARNT: Working with clients	**0**
22	HOW ITS BEING LEARNT: Working alongside others	6
23	Learning environment and culture	23
24	Learning experience	4
25	LEARNING FACTORS: Challenge & value of the work	8
26	LEARNING FACTORS: Confidence and commitment	45
27	LEARNING FACTORS: Feedback & support	15
28	Learning process/learning methods	32
29	Negative experience/feelings	12
30	Positive experiences of internship	10
31	Role of supervisor/mentor	86
32	Support group	16
33	Trust	3
34	Ways in which internship/learning experience can be improved	19
35	What is being learnt?	25
	TOTAL	**571**

Source: Author generated

When I applied the *what is being learnt* typology to the data, which is captured in *What Is Being Learned in the Workplace*, decision making and problem solving; role performance; and judgement were empty. That is, no codes seem to have resonated with these. At the time, I knew that it was either that I did not have a proper understanding of these dimensions and needed a better understanding of them or that there were no codes in them. The initial *What is being learnt?* group still had 25 codes in it - as opposed to these codes finding a home within the eight dimensions of the typology. Bearing all this in mind, at the time I was unsure whether this typology was a good fit. It could be that the typology did not hold well or perhaps the internship did not help interns when it came to learning decision making and problem solving, role performance and judgement. This was something I needed to test in future interviews to check whether people felt they had learnt anything about the groupings for which codes were low or empty. However, the groups academic knowledge and skill; awareness and understanding; and personal development, were helpful as it was the vocabulary that I needed.

As time passed and the research concluded, it turned out that the internship was not effective, according to interns, when it came to teaching them decision making and problem solving, role performance and judgement. In the absence of applying this typology to the data, I could have easily missed this, as I may have been too busy looking for what is in the data as opposed to what is not in the data – which is just as important when conducting research, especially in relation to grounded theory.

With respect to Eraut's (2004a) typology related to the learning process, this typology did not resonate well with the data and was not a good fit. As such, I needed to find something that better explained the learning process and how interns went about learning things. As such, only one of Eraut's three typologies proved to be a good fit for the data, which was the factors affecting workplace learning i.e., *Figure 8: Factors Affecting Learning in the Workplace (Earlier Version)*[15]

3.7.2 Phase 2

After having completed phase 1 of data generation and analysis, phase 2 felt like a different stage owing to both the process it entailed as well as the time gap between the phases. This sub-section goes into unpacking the coding process for the three main areas, which relate to factors affecting workplace learning as well as how and what is learnt by interns. While it may not be necessary to separate the phases in this manner, it was done nonetheless for the sake of transparency regarding the research process.

When looking at the codes related to factors affecting workplace learning, some code groups were collapsed into others, some code groups were renamed and codes were also reallocated if they were found to be more appropriate elsewhere. For instance, the *Role of supervisor and mentor* group was collapsed into the *Encounters and relationships with people at work* group, and many of the codes from the *Expectations and intentions of internship* group were reassigned to the *Individual participation and expectations of their performance & progress* group.

[15] Later *Figure 9: Factors Affecting Learning at Work: The Two-Triangle Model* was applied which proved to be an even better fit ie. Eraut's revised typology.

Going through the groups and codes also made me realise that I may have had a bias against the internship such that I felt interns did not learn a lot which resulted in me overlooking the positive dimensions of the internship. I had this realisation when I went through the *Challenge and value of the work* group and found nothing positive said about the internship. There was a group called *Positive experiences of internship,* which I then merged into the *Challenge and value of the work* group when I had this realisation.

During phase 2, I also went through codes in some of the groupings and realised some were incorrectly allocated. Commencing the results chapter writing process and going through the codes during this phase enabled me to get a better sense regarding what belonged where.

I then moved on to looking at codes and groups related to how things are being learnt. I was unsure at this stage whether the factors dimension constituted a different PhD study or whether it was connected to the *what and how it is being learnt* dimensions. As mentioned, Eraut's typology related to how things are being learnt did not find expression in the data. As such, I needed to find something that better explained the learning process. I then went through the codes and created groups based on what was emerging from the data itself as opposed to from the literature. In this regard, groups were marked with an * to remind me that these were groups created from the data as opposed to being influenced by what I had read. Examples of this include **HOW ITS BEING LEARNT: Workshop, training and being directly 'taught'* and **HOW ITS BEING LEARNT: Asking questions, taking initiative & reading,* which were groups that were created. In general, the groups that were created that were related to the learning process were shaped more by the data itself compared to the literature I had engaged with.

I then went through all the interviews to see if anything was overlooked regarding the learning process - which was the case. I attributed this to interns speaking about the learning process subtly and in conjunction with other elements such as what they had learnt, which in turn contributed to me overlooking them. This enabled me to properly allocate codes to the relevant groups created.

In terms of what interns learnt, the process of developing groups for this transpired over a few weeks and is something I found challenging. The reason being is that I was uncertain regarding how to label them, in other words, how to classify them. I kept experimenting and turned to the

literature for guidance. The extent of the challenge is demonstrated by the fact that I paused the data generation process as I was unable to make sense of the data before me. What eventually transpired was that the groups created were a mixture of groups influenced by literature and the data, as opposed to it being any one author's learning categories – which was covered when discussing literature in Chapter Two. Going through the groups in this meticulous way made me reflect on the codes within the groups. For instance, I realised that the *WHAT IS BEING LEARNT: Procedural knowledge* group had codes that operated at different levels, with administrative tasks and core functions not being homogenous and also operating on different levels. I also realised that while interns may have learnt about core functions, this does not mean they had the opportunity to do activities related to it – knowledge of something versus experience of having done it.

3.7.3 Phase 3

During this phase, the remainder of the four intern interviews were conducted and coded. The coding process for these interviews involved less line-by-line coding, as there were more whole paragraphs as responses. The reason is that my line of questioning at this stage of the research process was such that I was asking very specific questions based on what emerged and aspects that needed to be tested. Once coded, codes were allocated accordingly.

I decided that the coding of interviews would be limited to interns, while interview transcripts with officials would remain uncoded. In other words, I would not use Atlas.ti to code the interviews with officials, as I did not want to confuse the codes and the interpretation thereof that were generated from intern interviews. I did however ensure that I went through the scripts to see if officials raised issues that corroborated, expanded or contradicted what interns said or if they raised anything that had not already emerged. As such, interviews with officials were used to triangulate the intern interview data.

While this phase 3 section is substantially shorter compared to phases 1 and 2, this phase entailed category development and the linking of groups - which by then evolved into sub-categories - along with the research write-up process. As such, the length of this section write-up does not reflect the intensity and duration of the process undertaken.

Summary

Having given a detailed account of the methods entailed in the grounded theory approach and how I applied these methods, the *Results* chapter now follows. Before engaging with Chapter Four, the reader already knows the process followed as well as some of the different groups and categories that emerged. As such, the messiness of the grounded theory approach was managed in terms of how information was sequenced while still conveying the iterative nature of the approach.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The third chapter of this study outlines the data which emerged through the process of engaging in the various grounded theory methods that were outlined in the previous section. This chapter is divided into five sections. The first element of this chapter speaks to the selection process for the graduate internship programme and then goes onto unpack the data with respect to the profile of interns, which enables a better understanding of the interns who were on this programme.

The second element of this chapter then unpacks the data about the intended curriculum, followed by the experienced curriculum. To do this, it is organised around two questions: *What was the intended curriculum? What was the experienced curriculum?*

The third part of this chapter then goes on to outline the data related to the question of how interns went about their learning. The fourth component then unpacks the data concerning the factors that affected the workplace learning of interns, with this section sub-divided into learning factors; context factors; as well as additional elements – the reason for this sub-division was covered in the previous chapter. Lastly, this chapter then covers the intern support group as the fifth and final component.

4.1 Intern demographics and programme selection

4.1.1 How were interns selected for the programme?

Before commencing the recruitment process of interns in the department, the HR unit sent a form to departmental units in which units needed to indicate the number of interns they wanted and the area of work they would be involved in. On this form, units needed to specify what was expected of interns and the work that would be allocated to them. Thereafter, based on the department's budget, they would then determine the number of intern positions they would make available. In some years, the department hosted fewer interns in contrast to the number of interns requested by units owing to budget constraints. According to the HR officials interviewed, when the department was not able to match the request of units, they would have a discussion with unit managers to determine where cuts could be made - while ensuring a fair spread of interns across the department so that every unit at least received one intern. This

stated process however contradicted in some way the statements of a mentor interviewed, who spoke to how interns were sometimes forced on units as opposed to units wanting them.

In terms of the advertisement process, social media was mostly used as newspapers were considered costly. After applications were received, the Human Resources (HR) unit went through a "sifting and the sorting" process before engaging with units about potential candidates (HR Official 1). Units in conjunction with HR would then shortlist candidates for interviews. Involving units in this stage was considered important as they had "their own criteria – what it is that they look for" according to HR official 1.

During the interview process, units fielded questions to candidates that they considered relevant and then scored candidates according to their responses. Based on this scoring, they determined a first and second choice candidate. If the unit's first choice was unavailable, HR would then move on to the second choice candidate. This outline of the process demonstrates the close interaction that HR and respective units had in the graduate intern recruitment process.

With respect to the kind of candidate HR looked for, they wanted someone hard working and who they thought would abide by departmental rules. Units however sometimes had other requirements that they considered important such as their ability to travel or the absence of a criminal record. The example given was that if someone had a criminal record, they would not be able to work in the finance unit as that unit works with payments. According to a HR official interviewed, the best performer of the day in the interview process was selected. At times, they considered this "unfair" because it meant that the "good talkers" were selected who may not be "smart" when it comes to work performance and implementation. This illustrates that while HR was responsible for the overall recruitment process, the power to select successful candidates was within the ambit of individual departmental units.

4.1.2 Who were the interns on this programme?

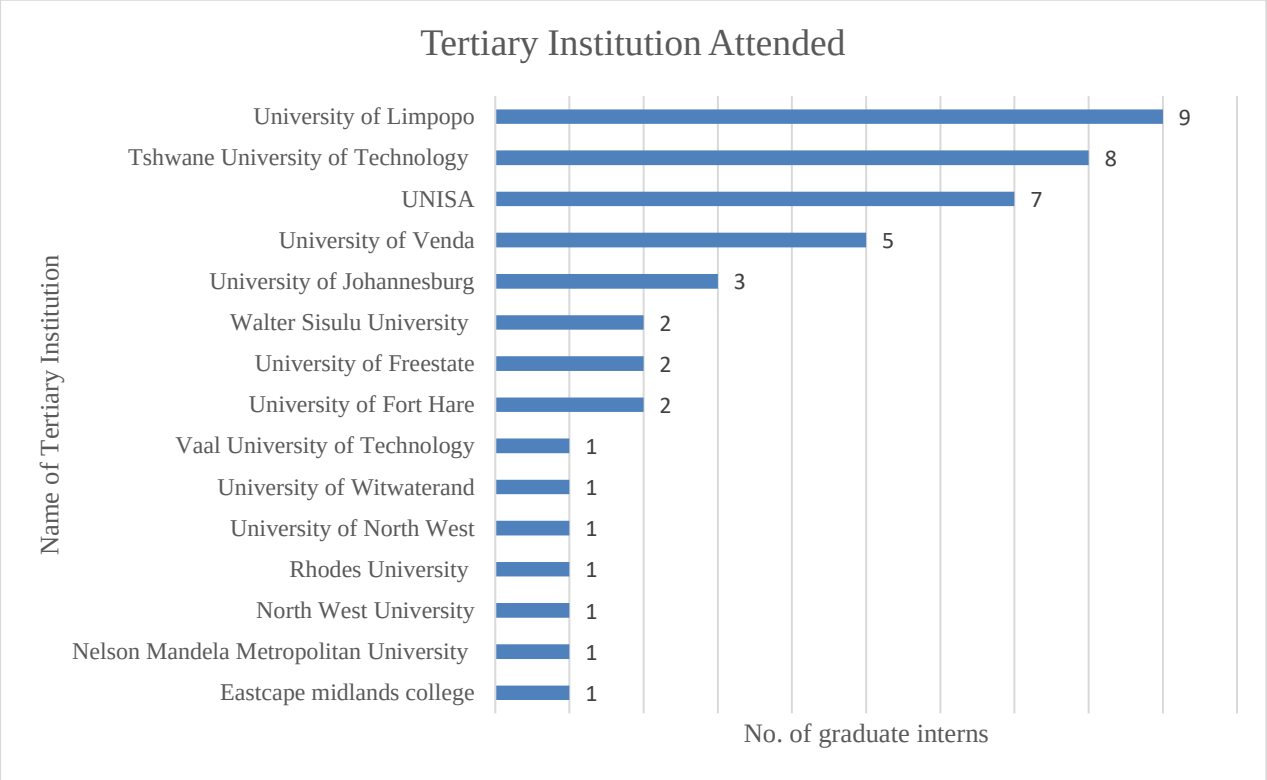
3.1.2.1 General overview of interns

The department that is the subject of this research, made data available to me regarding the demographic and educational profile of the graduate interns who were recruited into the programme for the period under study. More specifically, data was made available for 47 graduate interns who commenced the internship during April - May 2018 as well as three

interns who commenced in April 2019. Together the data on the 50 interns suggests that these are low-paying intern positions which attracted mostly black underprivileged young women from outside the Gauteng province of South Africa. This is also substantiated by the institution and degree type data which revealed that most interns did not attend universities nor held tertiary qualifications that were considered prestigious. More specifically, 65% of them attended formerly black tertiary institutions and universities of technology as well as studied through correspondence, while 34% of them had a Diploma or National Diploma. These qualifications are considered less desirable compared to Bachelor's degrees and were typically not specialist in nature but rather generic and general. Thus, while it was the view of a HR official interviewed that the best candidate of the day was selected during the interview process, there appears to be self-selection into the programmes whereby a particular kind of graduate is applying for it, and then from this cohort the ‘best’ is selected.

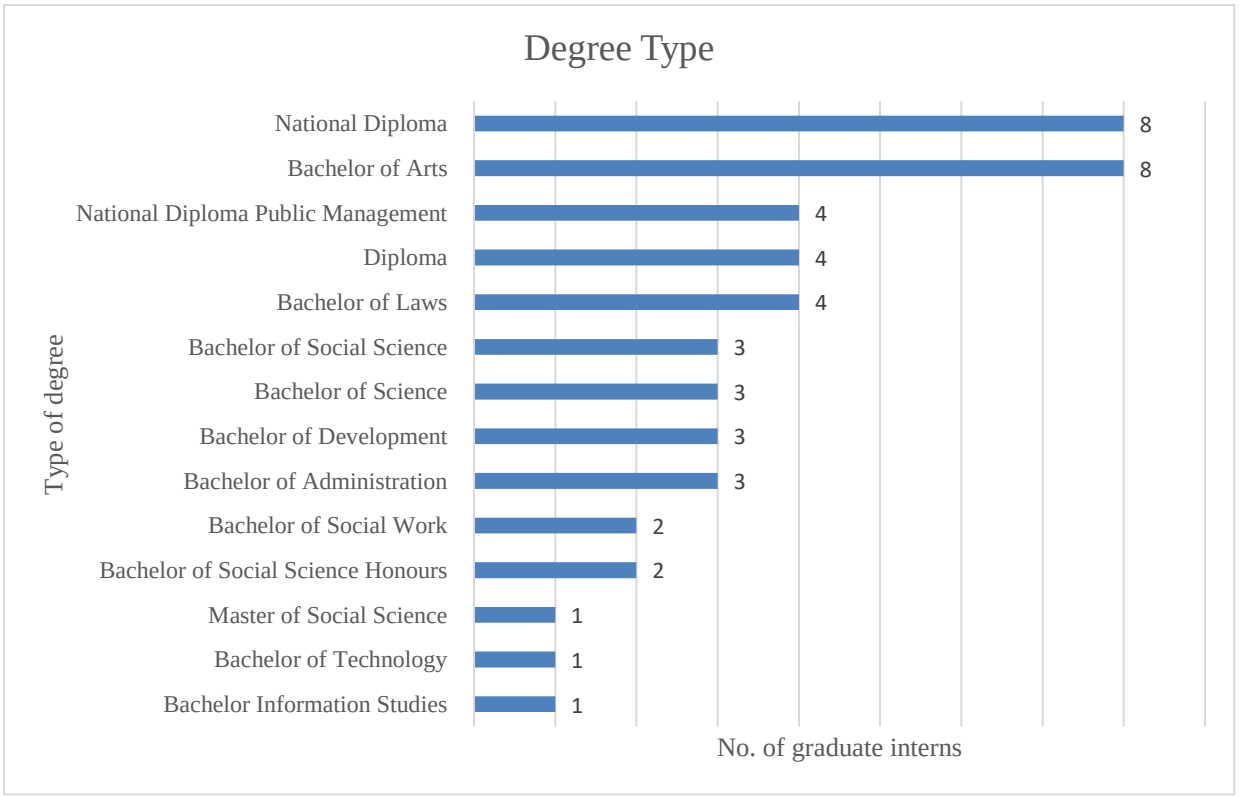
In terms of more granular detail regarding the data provided, Figure 15 outlines the institutional breakdown for 45 graduates for whom data on tertiary institution attended was available while Figure 16 outlines the degree type for 47 graduate interns for whom degree type data was available.

Figure 15: Institutional Breakdown of Interns



Source: Author generated

Figure 16: Degree Type of Interns



Source: Author generated

24 graduate interns were from three universities: University of Limpopo; Tshwane University of Technology; and University of South Africa (UNISA). That is, 53% of graduates for whom there is data on the tertiary institution attended, studied at one of these three institutions. In terms of degree type, Diplomas ranged from Business Administration to Information Technology; National Diplomas ranged from Business Management to Office Management and Technology; while Bachelor of Arts majors ranged from International relations to Communications. Finally, Bachelor of Science majors ranged from Computer Science to Environmental and Resource Studies. Three interns had postgraduate degrees, with two having honours degrees and one having a master's degree. Sixteen interns had either a Diploma or National Diploma. That is, around a third of graduate interns for whom degree type information was available had either a Diploma or National Diploma. In terms of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), a Diploma is NQF level 6; a Bachelor degree is NQF level 7; while a Honours degree is NQF level 8 (South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), n.d.). The significance of degree and institution type in relation to employment and employability has been touched on in the literature section but will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

According to race, all interns identified as African and received a monthly stipend of R 5 354 - except one graduate intern who had a master's qualification and received R6 609. Moreover, it was not uncommon to hear interns coming from rural or township areas, within and outside of Gauteng. Interns were largely female at 72% of the cohort, whereas males comprised 28%. In terms of raw numbers, 36 of interns were female and 14 were male. Additionally, only one graduate intern reported having a disability, with the youngest intern being 22 years old when they commenced the internship and the oldest being 38 years old. For 34 graduate interns for whom age data was available and considered accurate, the average age was 27 years old.

In terms of completion rate, only 32 interns completed the two-year internship programme at the department. The rest secured jobs elsewhere or received short-term contracts within the department. According to HR official 2 this "clearly tells you that the internship itself has helped them *[sic]* a lot in terms of having them now as part of our staff turnover, as opposed to somebody who has not even participated in any internship program". While some interns did receive short-term contracts from the department, many of these roles were mainly

administrative as opposed to being more specialised in nature. In short, in many ways, it was a continuation of their internship as opposed to it being part of their career progression.

With respect to considering this internship programme a low paying opportunity, according to a salary benchmark survey, R 5 354 is lower than what junior employees employed in a call centre (R5 700) and banking (R7 400) would earn (Business Tech, 2019). However, it is above the salary of someone working in retail (R3 100) or what a receptionist (R4 300) would earn (Business Tech, 2019). Considering that many interns relocated to Gauteng province to pursue this opportunity, this can be considered a low paying opportunity against this backdrop.

Most interns at the time of interviewing were unemployed. However, due to the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, it could be misleading to read anything into this as the transition into employment may have been hampered by the economic circumstances brought on by the pandemic.

While the data outlined in this section helps us to understand the overall cohort, the next section will help us understand the interns on an individual level.

3.1.2.2 Individual profiles

The individual profiles outlined in this section to some extent reinforce what emerged in relation to the demographic and educational data, in that interns tended to be from outside Gauteng and have characteristics which indicate that they are from underprivileged backgrounds. For instance, they spoke to not being able to find employment and being grateful for the internship opportunity because it meant that they were able to earn – even though the remuneration associated with the internship was low.

To avoid being identifiable and to safeguard confidentiality, in this section I have labelled the interns in Table 12 using the convention Intern A – Intern K, which does not correlate to the convention used elsewhere. More specifically, Intern 1 and Intern A is not the same person, Intern 2 and Intern B is not the same person, Intern 3 and Intern C is not the same person, and so forth.

Table 12: Intern profiles

INTERN PROFILE BREAKDOWN
Intern A: Intern A is from a small rural village, outside of Gauteng. At the time of doing the interview, they were pursuing a master's degree. They wanted to work after completing their social sciences undergraduate degree but was unable to find employment, and as such decided to pursue an honours degree. They were "not even sure" what they were applying to but were "so grateful" for getting the internship. Their hope was that the internship would enable them to "manoeuvre through government."
Intern B: They are from Mpumalanga and at the time of being interviewed, they were unemployed. They found out about the programme through a friend, while they were completing their honours degree. While the internship had relevance to their degree, their primary reason for applying was because "the year was ending and had no hopes of getting a job anytime soon."
Intern C: They are from Limpopo, where they also pursued their studies. They were on an extended programme at the university, so it took them 5 years to complete their degree. This was owing to some of their matriculation marks being low, such as mathematics. They applied and interviewed for the internship but did not initially get it. However, one of the candidates dropped out of the programme as they got an offer elsewhere, which then created an opening for them.
Intern D: Intern D completed their undergraduate degree in Limpopo and their honours degree in Gauteng. At the time of interviewing, they were completing their master's degree through correspondence. Like many other interns, they relocated to Gauteng for the internship. Speaking to their first time in Pretoria and being in the workplace, they said the experience was "overwhelming". In terms of how they found out about the internship, they got a notification on a student group they were on, in which there were regular notifications about vacant posts and internships.
Intern E: They attended a college in Limpopo, the province in which they are from. They described themselves as someone who is open and who can learn different things.
Intern F: Intern F had no prior work experience before starting their internship. They applied for the internship programme because they were "not busy" and saw it as an "opportunity of gaining experience and knowledge."

Intern G: They completed their undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Limpopo. Unlike many other interns, they did have some work experience through previous volunteer work as well as working part-time in retail whilst they were a student. They applied for this internship as they felt it had relevance to their studies. This internship was one of the many internships they applied for but they were particularly attracted to this one as they saw it as a means of getting practical work experience in line with their qualification.
Intern H: Unlike most interns, this intern is from Gauteng. They had a Diploma but to graduate they had to do in-service training – which they completed in the corporate sector. They applied for this internship to get experience and because they thought it would be good for their CV. Although the recruitment process took long, they were nonetheless happy when they got the position as it meant they had something productive to do with their time.
Intern I: Intern I is from Limpopo and is over 30 years old. They held an undergraduate and honours degree at the time of interviewing. Before starting the internship, they had some volunteer experience. They found out about the internship through a friend. They initially had a job opportunity at a local government department which did not materialise owing to financial issues the department had. Upon receiving the message about successfully getting the internship with this national government department, they "Couldn't believe it" and thought "This cannot be happening." They cried with joy about the news along with their mother and sister, and was overjoyed about having a paid work opportunity.
Intern J: Intern J is from Limpopo, where they also completed their studies. They had completed a 3-month learnership as part of their degree, which enabled them to get experience before starting the internship.
Intern K: Intern K has a Bachelor of Technology degree from Limpopo, the province in which they are from. They had prior work experience in retail, which they acquired on a part-time basis while they were a student. Before the completion of the 2-year internship, the department gave them a 3-month contract. They then went onto get a job with another national government department, which they had not yet started at the time of being interviewed. They applied for the internship because they felt they could not just sit at home and do nothing, and they also wanted the opportunity to put theory into practice.

Source: Author generated

Having unpacked the data in relation to the profile of interns who completed the internship programme in the period that is the subject of this research, the results that emerged regarding the intended and experienced curriculum will be unpacked in the following section.

4.2 What was the intended and experienced curriculum?

This section will first speak to what the intended curriculum was found to be according to the data that emerged. The second section will then move onto unpacking the data in terms of the experienced curriculum.

4.2.1 What was the intended curriculum?

The data in this section should be seen as being complementary to section *2.1 Government's Graduate Internship Programme* in the *Contextualising the study* section. While section 2.1 outlined what the intended curriculum is from the perspective of policy makers and the designers of the internship programme as per government documents, the data in this specific section deals with the data that emerged in interviews that relates to the intended curriculum. More specifically, this section unpacks the data which emerged in interviews in relation to the intended curriculum as envisioned by HR and the department leadership more broadly. As such, while the intended curriculum is defined as the curriculum that is intended to transpire, in this study the intended curriculum is not associated with one set of actors but rather two sets of actors – namely the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) and HR officials within the department. The discussion section in Chapter Five will analyse the intended curriculum using the data from both these sections.

The two HR officials interviewed outlined the purpose of the programme. According to them, the intended curriculum was aimed at giving interns experience in line with their qualifications; enhancing personal development; and equipping them with skills to prepare them for the working world. In this regard, HR official 1 said they wanted to "give them experience in what they have been taught at school, but we also want to develop them further… So it's basically an entire build of the person linked to their qualification, but also the person themselves". HR official 2 made more direct reference to employability and employment and elaborated on the need to give them experience that was beyond the theory they had learnt during their studies:

> The purpose of this is to equip them so that they can be employable. It's job-readiness, job preparedness in all angles. Remember these are graduates who are very much fresh from the school; who are inexperienced coming to work. So when they learn here they happen

> to learn more and practice what they have acquired over the years of their theory. So they put it in practice through experience and then it helps them when they have to go for interviews *[sic]* or in their new careers. So it looks like a step-ladder that takes them to their destinations.

HR official 2 also spoke to how the programme filled a gap that universities did not – which complemented the view held by the programme designers and the policy documents outlined in section 2.1- and that "corporate and varsity life is two different things", with the internship providing interns with the opportunity to "blend the two". While HR 2 touched on what the intended curriculum should broadly encompass, HR official 1 went into greater detail regarding what they thought the intended curriculum should encompass. Firstly, interns should leave with an understanding of the policies and processes of their respective units e.g., Finance interns need to know how to process payments. When knowledge and skills gaps are identified, they may need to go on a course e.g., A supply chain intern may need to attend a supply chain or logistics course. Secondly, they need to have developed themselves on a personal level e.g., How to conduct themselves in interviews and manage their personal finances. Thirdly, they also need to know how to conduct themselves in a work environment. The example given was that of a gender workshop interns attended in which sexual harassment was covered, the department's code of conduct as well as the kinds of behaviour not tolerated in this regard.

On the element of personal development, HR official 1 added that it also provided interns with the experience of how to network with other interns and how to "handle themselves better because now they are in the adult environment". For many of them who moved to Gauteng for the internship, it also enabled them to learn "independence" on "another level altogether" compared to university life. As such, the intention was to expose interns to the world of work as opposed to induct them specifically into the world of government work and to equip them with generic life skills.

One of the HR officials spoke about how interns needed to be assigned "meaningful" work, and in doing so also described what the experienced curriculum ought not to look like. According to them "meaningful" work is when interns do work and get experience that is in line with their qualifications, as elaborated on below:

> Sometimes they would say that they are just making copies. Others would say, "I have to fetch my manager's dry-cleaning." For me that is a problem. We always try to tell them

> that, “Listen, it’s not to say that making copies is not meaningful because you need to start at the bottom. Making copies is part of your job, but only making copies is a problem because you are not here on a daily basis just to give people documents and just to make copies the whole time.” That doesn’t work. So meaningful to me would be if a person is really being given *[sic]* work that is linked to their qualification. So if it’s a person that’s in IT and you take that person with you and say, “This is how we log a call; this is how we solve a problem with a printer; this is what you do when you (for an example) write a software program.” That type of thing. They need to be physically involved with the work, not just doing the mediocre type of thing.

With that said, they did go on to say that to understand “the whole process”, it requires interns to “know how the processes at the bottom of the chain works” and making photocopies for instance is part and parcel of this – “It’s not something that you can get away from” they added. Thus, in conjunction with being allocated “meaningful work”, interns also needed to realise that they could not become a manager just after they finish their studies but rather need to “start from the bottom and work yourself up”. In other words, they would also be implicitly learning their role in the overall hierarchy. Moreover, HR official 2 said that the lens of a “blanket approach” is not appropriate in this regard, as some interns “are far away from even doing clerical job”. As such, “the weight in terms of a clerical job is totally different” for different interns and is a function of their qualifications. In other words, according to them the amount of administrative work done by an intern is not a fixed nor predetermined percentage of their work but rather is dependent on the departmental unit itself; the nature of the work done by the unit; the role interns are given within that unit; as well as their qualification.

In terms of how HR perceived their learning would transpire, in other words how the intended curriculum would be delivered, it would be through interns being allocated tasks as well as receiving support and feedback from their mentors. This is elaborated on below:

> They learn under their key performance areas or the duties that has been assigned to them. That will be the main way for them to learn and grasp everything. And this will be under the supervision of their mentors on a day-to-day basis… Where they are not doing it correct or they are not doing it right, then the intervention steps will be taken against their key performance areas that they have been assigned to. And then it will be fair enough even to realise that, “No I am underperforming coming to this, or I am poor coming to instructions.” Or, “I am poor coming to the job

> knowledge. I am poor coming to the skills that is required for this particular job." So this is where one has to pay much of the attention in order to improve in the next quarter or so (HR Official 2).

The assumption above is that interns will learn through carrying out tasks and in instances where the tasks are not being carried out correctly then an intervention would need to transpire as it signals that the intern is not learning what they are supposed to be learning. In short, the expectation was that the main ways by which interns would learn is through carrying out the tasks assigned to them; getting guidance from their mentor; attending training; and through realising and reflecting on areas where they need to improve.

HR officials felt that their department and the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) - which is the department responsible for overall implementation and oversight – are aligned in terms of the programme's intention. However, when it came to the departmental units, there was sometimes a "disjuncture" between them and HR. When this disjuncture occurred, there needed to be "repercussions" so as to not "taint the whole programme in a bad way", with the unit manager needing to account in this regard. In other words, when HR felt that any individual unit within the department did not perform their responsibilities in relation to the internship, the HR unit would try to intervene to remedy this.

In terms of how the internship facilitated future employment for interns, their understanding of employability was such that they believed that just having the internship experience listed on an intern's CV would open the doors to other employment opportunities in and of itself, regardless of the actual skills attained through the internship. This was explained by HR official 2:

> Remember every single job these days they require somebody who have acquired experience in one way or another. It might be through volunteering or whatever and then the duration sometimes does not even matter, but what matters most is the experience. So that's how it's helping them to give them the ticket to say, "Now you can just go and apply for any post that you think you qualify for *[sic]*. Based on the qualifications to begin with; and number two you will be having an experience." So you will be exposed to a *[sic]* job, and now it's time for you to go and contest with the rest and participate in enhancing the economy of the country.

What this surfaced was the belief that regardless of the substance and content of the intended curriculum - or the experienced curriculum for that matter - the internship would facilitate future employment through the act of completing the programme.

4.2.2 What was the experienced curriculum?

This section will outline the elements that emerged in relation to the experienced curriculum, and which are outlined in Table 13. The number of codes that emerged in terms of each element is included in the table (in descending order):

Table 13: Dimensions of the Experienced Curriculum

Elements of experienced curriculum	No. of codes
Procedural knowledge	52 codes
Personal development	43 codes
Communication skills	22 codes
About Government and how to operate within it	20 codes
Awareness and understanding	17 codes
Teamwork	12 codes
Judgement	1 code
Decision making and problem solving	0 codes

Source: Author generated

With decision making and problem solving having no codes associated with it, there is no sub-section on this included below – the interpretation of this is explained later. However, this empty grouping is discussed in Chapter Five as part of the Discussion chapter. With the different knowledge classifications outlined in Chapter Two, what is also evident is that strategic knowledge and more specialised knowledge in general were lacking from their experienced curriculum. However, important to note that what has been included in this section is sub-section entitled *'Culture of being a public servant'* which was also found to be an element of the experienced curriculum.

i. Procedural knowledge

In terms of this grouping, there were three types of codes in it: Administrative; core functions; and other. Concerning the administrative dimension, all interns reported having learnt how to do procedural work that was administrative in nature, albeit to varying degrees. Intern 1 spoke about the kinds of administrative duties they learnt how to do: "I would do logistics arrangements either that be arranging meetings and venues, parking, your [officials] flights, your [officials] accommodation". Most other interns report doing similar tasks. For instance, intern 3 would make copies; arrange meetings; sometimes help the Administrator with the Director's diary; arrange travelling and make bookings for everyone; and attend to phone calls. Intern 9 used to arrange the Director's diary; do bookings; make copies; arrange meetings; ensure refreshments at meetings were served; ensure delegates were at events; and confirm speakers and bookings. Similarly, intern 11 did printing; made copies; proofread documents; and took minutes of meetings with intern 12 making flight and accommodation bookings as well as arranging meetings.

The above activities formed part of what interns referred to in interviews as *administrative* or *admin* tasks. While not mentioned explicitly by interns, there were processes that they had to learn in order to be able to carry out the above tasks. In other words, the administrative tasks they learnt and carried out were underpinned by a process, with some being easier than others e.g., Booking a flight required knowing how to navigate the travel system compared to making photocopies on a photocopier machine.

According to interns, administrative tasks were however distinct from what they referred to as core activities, which is akin to the description of "meaningful work" described by a HR official. In describing the frustration experienced by interns owing to not being part of the entire value process chain and not seeing themselves as playing a significant part within it, intern 8 made the distinction between core and administrative tasks:

> They [interns] want to be in the content; they want to be in the planning stage; like they want to be in all the organising of the resources but they were not given that chance of being in that part of implementation… they are only given a chance to print papers.

The implication of not being part of the full value chain including the planning stage is that they also did not have an appreciation and understanding of all the work that transpired within their respective units and what it entailed to bring a project to execution.

Only intern 5 reported not having to do administrative tasks like the other interns, but instead did work that was related more to the core functions, which predominantly entailed conducting research. This may have had to do with the fact that they did not have a general degree but rather it was more specialised in nature, although in the interview they attributed this to their mentor who wanted to shield them from administrative work. There appeared to be a difference in the level of responsibility amongst interns concerning administrative tasks. For instance, intern 8 was told: "The whole admin process, it's yours. So you must deal with it. Make sure that everything it's going according to plan". So even though this intern reported like other interns that they learnt how to write minutes; arrange meetings; and print copies, they had more responsibility. While other interns did not report having this increased level of responsibility, some interns did fill in for the Administrator in their respective units when they were not in the office.

With respect to learning how to carry out core functions, interns reported assisting or being involved in the process of carrying these out such as attending meetings in which these activities were discussed and planned. However, while they may have been exposed to core functions and have had an understanding thereof, they tended to not carry it out themselves nor any significant part thereof.

Apart from the core and administrative functions related to the unit they were located in, some interns also gained procedural knowledge about other tasks. For instance, a few interns learnt how to prepare presentations as well as how to use Microsoft programmes such as Excel. In this regard, intern 2 said they learnt a lot while intern 12 said they "actually learned more" compared to what they learned at university.

ii. Personal development

While housed under the banner of personal development, this group encompassed different elements. In particular, it is divided into six sub-areas, namely: Handling emotions; consulting and working with others; empathy; self-awareness and self-evaluation; resilience; and being flexible.

In terms of handling emotions, interns learnt how to control and manage emotions, and developed emotional intelligence. Intern 2 said they "learned to control how I feel" and that they "personally have learned a lot, especially with regard to emotional intelligence". Intern 3

said they also learnt about emotional control, while intern 7 went into some detail regarding this:

> Okay, but then I think mostly it was emotional intelligence – how to manage your emotions you know because you know that whenever you are in that situation your emotions are high as well. You want to say so much but at the same time like, "Okay, I'm learning here and I must not forget that I'm learning. As much as my emotions are high; as much as I'm angry; as much as I'm whatever, but let me calm down. Let me hear what this person is saying. Let me also just sit down and reflect if maybe I was wrong?

About consulting and working with others: Interns reported having learnt how to work with people with different personalities as well as communicate and interact with colleagues in a professional environment. Some quotes related to this are included in Table 14:

Table 14: Dimensions of the Experienced Curriculum

Intern	Quote
Intern 3	"So at some point you need to shift from your personal thinking and then wear this professional jacket within you to understand people, to correct things rightfully and to speak to people in a manner that will show respect and professionalism".
Intern 7	"My first time in a work environment; different personalities; and just trying to maintain a balance and also just to be professional in the mix. So it was just a bit overwhelming. You can imagine like from varsity whereby you're so comfortable, you're around your peers then you go to a work environment and there's just different people, different age, different personalities, different ranks. So that was just a bit overwhelming".
Intern 8	"Like when we say tomorrow we need to submit this information or we need to talk about this, so you must sit as a group and you must discuss and you get to understand other people's perspectives. Like all those things. You will get to see maybe people who are short-tempered and everything. You get to learn how to deal with people at the same time and you get to know how to handle them".

Intern 9	"And also for conflict… So I've learned how to manage different ways of how to deal with people who are fighting with each other, like not to be caught in the middle and taking sides *[sic]*".

Source: Author generated

With respect to empathy, by participating in the intern support group, intern 2 spoke to how it helped develop their empathy for others: "Actually come down to the level of people and get to understand what they are going through."

Fourthly, related to self-awareness and self-evaluation: The internship enabled some interns to learn and take stock of themselves, and to change their behaviour accordingly. For instance, intern 2 said that they "learned a lot of things as a person and I've also learned a lot about myself" which was something they attributed to the fieldwork they did. Intern 8 elaborated on an example of how she was able to become aware of her behaviour and then self-evaluate accordingly:

> At first I was not like interested. I was like, "No I don't wanna do admin work. I went to university*[16]." Like I had that attitude of saying, "No I went to university*[17]… I don't want to be an Admin. I can't be printing papers every day." But then along the way, only to find out that no this is the beginning. This is where I was supposed to start before I know all the implementation and everything, I must also know the admin work because whatever that I'm going to do in the implementation process also has an admin work.

Concerning resilience, interns spoke to developing resilience in the face of difficulty, with intern 2 saying that being mistreated "Didn't kill any part of me because I just persisted and continued doing what I know and what I understood or what I've learned". Intern 3 said they were not "discouraged" and took it upon themselves to engage even though "they did not give me a platform" to participate. Intern 12 spoke about how in the face of a lack of resources, they preserved on: "So I'm saying it was a limitation, but also it was pushing me to find some ways to work it out and to make it possible". Intern 10 spoke a few times about resilience as a

[16] Amended for confidentiality
[17] Amended for confidentiality

component of personal development, for instance: “I’ve learned that even though you are being called names, it’s okay you know. Just let it go”.

Lastly, related to being flexible, intern 7 spoke about how they learnt to be flexible and not to be “narrow-minded”.

iii. Communication skills

In terms of learning and developing communication skills, this transpired in relation to writing as well as speaking and facilitation. In terms of writing, interns learnt how to write memos and engage with colleagues and other stakeholders over emails in a professional manner. Learning how to write in a professional manner was explained by intern 5:

> I think I learned the communication through the emails – how we communicate. The communication is not the same as we’re used to chat in Limpopo. You can see that this is the upper way of communicating – through emails, through us, especially in the meetings you’d learn that actually there is the other part. I’ve learned a lot.

In terms of speaking and facilitation, those who had the opportunity learnt how to facilitate a group of people and how to speak professionally. Some also learnt how to compile and present presentations but with the latter, a few interns complained that while they got an opportunity to compile, they never had an opportunity to present. Only one of the interns, intern 8, spoke to being able to develop their own presenting strategy. They spoke about how they were able to develop this skill which was through guidance from their mentor:

> He also told me that “It will depend on how you want to present it, because where we are going there will be different people using different strategies in presenting, then you will also have your own as long as you are giving out the whole information that is needed”.

iv. About Government and how to operate within it

The Breaking Barriers to Entry into Public Service (BB2E) course enabled interns to learn more about government. The BB2E course is an example of a more formal learning experience[18], which this thesis also included as opposed to merely looking at informal learning which is generally associated with adult learning. Some of the interns also learnt more about

[18] It is unclear whether this course was certified or not. As such, it is either non-formal or formal in nature. However, what is evident is that it was not informal.

government through personal research and in the process of doing administrative work. This also entailed learning about protocol and how government differs from other work environments and sectors. In this regard, intern 3 said that they developed a better understanding of the work environment and that it is "different from what you do in theory". Intern 9 also learnt about confidentiality when working in government as well as government processes.

v. Teamwork

Regarding teamwork, learning was twofold. On the one hand, interns learned various things through engaging in teamwork. On the other hand, they also learnt about the medium of teamwork itself from engaging in teamwork. Through teamwork, some reported learning how to work collaboratively on projects and activities with other colleagues and how to manage team dynamics. Interns 1 and 3 spoke about how enjoyable and beneficial it was from a learning perspective to engage in teamwork, with intern 1 going on to say:

> Yoh I can't stop emphasising that, like even with my supervisor, it was teamwork. When they had to do something, they would call us all in one group (and say) now we have been assigned to do this. So then we sit down and see how we do it.

They went on to say that teamwork made them feel "part of them", and that they had "something to contribute" because they "could also be listened to". Interns 7 and 8 spoke in detail about their learning about teamwork. Intern 7 said that as a team they would be given guidance on how to work together in harmony so as to achieve their collective output:

> With teamwork they actually sat us down and that's where they were like, "Okay, you guys are working as a team. This is what you need to do: You need to ensure that you guys do your work and also try to work with others because if you don't do your work, or if you don't work together, that's where you'll be having a backlog and that's where you'll be not performing well. So just try by all means to just work as a team."

Intern 8 spoke about how they learnt that the working environment was not just about working individually but rather also as a team. They went onto say that "I've learned a lot again with working under the team 'cause it was more like a competition." In other words, they also learnt about the more competitive side of working together as a team wherein it was about trying to outdo oneself.

vi. Awareness and understanding

Interns developed an awareness and understanding of various dimensions of themselves and others through the internship programme, including the roles of different actors such as supervisors and the kind of mentor they aspire to be like one day. For instance, Intern 3 got to understand the role of the supervisor, "This is what the supervisor wants… no matter what my opinion may say". Intern 10 spoke about how they realised that if they were ever a mentor one day, they would not feel "threatened" by their mentee but rather be someone who invests time in them.

vii. Judgement

Only one intern indirectly alluded to being able to develop this area in the internship because of the level of responsibility they had. No supervisor was telling them what they needed to do but rather they would be there "taking decisions" on their own. They also had other people reporting to them because they would be responsible for managing certain processes. The level of responsibility they had which enabled them to develop this area of the experienced curriculum appears to be the result of previous work experience, which was more extensive compared to any of the other interns interviewed.

viii. Culture of being a public servant

Part of what interns were learning or what was being modelled for them was a culture of being a public servant, that is, how you behave and act as a public servant. This formed part of the hidden curriculum, whether interns were conscious of it or not - and whether they were absorbing this or not. In short, this was the culture they were being inducted into. With this dimension not being as easily detectable, it was hard to keep track of the number of codes in it compared to the other groupings.

Interns 2, 4 and 6 spoke to the department being a high-paced environment in which there was not enough time for planning nor time for junior staff, which included interns. Intern 2 said that when it was time for planning, "people would be busy with other things and after some time that's when we start rushing and trying to cover everything at once". This to their mind affected the impact of a project because "you want to rush everything in three days and maybe you would have done it in three weeks". Intern 12 spoke about a human capital shortage, which added pressure on the department, while intern 4 described it as an environment where it was "just meeting, after meeting, after meeting".

Intern 4 also went on to describe it as an environment where it was difficult to try new approaches and to be proactive. Instead, according to them it was like "let's wait for the next problem". They go on to say that this could be a consequence of officials feeling too comfortable as they already "secured their future or secured the futures of their loved ones with… the benefits that come with being in the public sector".

Interns also experienced work cycles of government and uneven workflows. For instance, intern 6 was based in a unit where there were 5-6 events a year. As such, there were periods of inactivity. Intern 3 spoke to how the level of work in the department was a function of where in the financial cycle they were in: "Remember at the Department their financial year starts in April and in April there is nothing that they do… Their work actually started around August".

In terms of workflows, admin work was also a function of the nature of work at hand at the time. Intern 3 says it depended on the "pack of work that we have or if there is anybody that needs to travel… if there are any claims that I have to do, then that's when I'd say I will have ninety percent of admin work on that day".

Interns also experienced issues of rank, protocol and interpersonal dynamics in the department. Intern 3 spoke of their experience of being held back and not being given an opportunity, not only because they were an intern but also because of dynamics between colleagues wherein one supervisor could not tell another supervisor what to do. They explained their experience:

> The other one was willing to give me a chance to present but now there was a conflict between me presenting while my supervisor was supposed to be presenting… So the other supervisor cannot come in and say, "Why don't you give her a chance?" because it will feel like she is disrespecting her. As much as I could ask to actually be given a chance, they felt like, "These people that are here hold higher positions. They cannot just listen to you as an intern." You know that stigma where they felt like you are an intern, you can't actually be presenting to a Director or Assistant Director.

Intern 6 spoke of the visible tension between colleagues and the issues of rank which hindered the ability of HR to speak to mentors when issues arose between the intern and their respective mentor. Below intern 6 elaborates on this:

> You could always feel tension among the senior colleagues, not the interns… if I'm complaining about my mentor there is a sit-down between myself and my mentor and the

> mediator to say, “Okay what is the problem? How do we solve it?” So it’s always like, “Who are you to tell me how to do my job?” or, “You are here as an intern to learn.

Intern 6 also spoke of how they had first-hand experience of “rank in the department” related to gatekeeping which hindered their ability to attend formal courses. As they went on to explain, this was not merely their personal opinion but was something that their mentor also commented on:

> My mentor she said, “There’s a lot of rank in the department where whenever you go to this one they tell you there’s money, when you go to the other one they tell you there’s no money.” So because of the issues of rank you can’t go to the DDG [Deputy Director General] and say, “Okay we want to take our interns to do this or that course.” It has to go through other people in between. So the people in between they were kind of like holding back and not wanting to get money for that personal development.

However, not all interns considered the culture they were being inducted into as negative. For instance, intern 12 spoke of how the internship enabled them to engage with communities which provided an opportunity for them to develop an awareness about people in need. This was “life changing” and their “heart was so touched”. However, not only did they realise that “there’s a lot of work that needs to be done” but also that they could “do so much more” for their country. The remarks of intern 12 speak to the kind of public servant they aspire to be, arising from the experience of being on the graduate internship programme. Thus, while interns may have been inducted into a culture at the department that was fast-paced; where there was little time for junior staff development; where change was difficult to achieve; and that was highly bureaucratic, for some interns they were also inducted into a culture which demonstrated to them the kind of caring spirit a public servant ought to have.

In terms of the overall experienced curriculum, procedural knowledge and personal development dominated the experienced curriculum, and formed the bulk of what interns reported learning. The judgement as well as decision making and problem-solving groupings were near empty (1 code) and empty (0 codes), respectively. Moreover, interns were also inducted into a particular culture which formed part of the hidden curriculum. In particular, they were inducted into the culture of being a certain kind of public servant and operating in a government environment.

After covering the data which emerged in relation to the experienced curriculum along with getting a better understanding of the intern cohort, the process through which interns reported learning will now be covered.

4.3 How did interns learn?

The chief ways by which interns reported learning on the internship were through attending workshops and training; being directly 'taught' and given guidance; as well as participating in group activities. This research was not limited to informal learning, as the focus was on intern learning irrespective of how it transpired, and as such the learning mechanisms which surfaced covered both formal, non-formal and informal learning. In this regard, the full list of learning methods reported is outlined in Table 15 including the codes per method. The codes per method refer to the number of times that interns in interviews reported learning through that particular method.

Table 15: Learning Methods

Learning method	No. of instances of codes
Attending workshops and training	30 codes
Being directly 'taught' and given guidance	29 codes
Participation in group activities	27 codes
Taking initiative, reading and self-learning	21 codes
Seeking help and/or asking questions	19 codes
Learn by doing	9 codes
Watching and listening to others	10 codes
Working with clients	3 codes
Tackling challenging tasks	2 codes

Source: Author generated

Regarding *Attending workshops and training*, interns attended formalised training programmes which they could request to go on. It is unclear as to whether these programmes were certified or not and as such may be a mix of both formal and non-formal learning. Not all interns had

equal access to such programmes, with some attending more compared to others. For instance, intern 6 was unable to attend any training that they wanted to go on, owing to internal politics. For some units that made use of specific types of software, interns assigned to these units had to attend training programmes to learn how to use the required software.

When interns lacked knowledge or were underperforming, they would also be sent on training programmes as part of the department's intervention approach. This was explained by a HR official:

> There will be a last resort where I can say that you are lacking coming into computer literacy or Excel as an example because I think that is the most where they are struggling… So I can say, "Can you please undergo a training under Excel in order to improve your reporting skills; the spreadsheets; and other numerical issues that has to be attended to.

The only workshop that all interns reported going on was BB2E, which they found "productive and helpful". In other words, the only workshop that interns attended that was specifically directed towards them as a formal component of their internship programme was BB2E – formal here referring to both formal and non-formal learning in that it was structured and had a curriculum but unclear as to whether it was certified. *Attending workshops and training* being a significant learning method for interns demonstrates that formal and non-formal learning was important for intern learning, even though informal learning is what is often associated with adult learning and learning in the workplace.

Interns were often directly taught things like how to perform tasks, which fell under the *Being directly 'taught' and given guidance* group - with being given documents to read also being a means of getting guidance. In this regard, the intern supervisor and/or mentor would often be the person 'teaching' them. Intern 1 said that their supervisor was "the best" because she "sat us down and told us this is what you guys are going to do and she took us through every process".

There were however also some 'helpful others' in the workplace who gave interns guidance, which also included fellow interns. Intern 2 reported, "I really had fellow interns from IT who taught me a few things about computer functions and all that". Most often, the admin officers

in their respective units taught them how to carry out administrative tasks and were the helpful others to interns. Intern 3 gave an example of this:

> [The Admin officer] Would actually come to me and ask me if I've got some time so that she could teach me how to do this, or like for example to manage the Director's diary so that whenever she's not around I could take over or to book travelling arrangements for the other colleagues so that whenever she's not there I could take over… So I was more engaging with the admin people in order to help her and learn more from what she was doing, because she was actually doing more than what I was expected or what I had to do.

Being directly taught in this unstructured way compared to attending formalised training, which was more structured in nature, also formed part of HR's intervention strategy. An HR official explained how this unstructured learning would transpire:

> When I happen to see you doing something which might be not optimal, I can sit down with you and say, "No can you please adjust this to achieve this because… this is not how we are doing it, or you made a mistake."

With respect to the *Participation in group activities* group, interns were included in meetings and group activities when work needed to be completed, and through their participation in these group settings learning would transpire. Most interns interviewed also participated in the department's intern support group which contributed to the codes in this group. Moreover, some interns were involved in group sessions with external stakeholders, as opposed to only with colleagues from within the department. Some of the learning interns reported, arising from group participation, was learning how to control their emotions; managing conflicts; working with other people in a team; as well as understanding and listening to the perspectives of other people.

The *Taking initiative, reading and self-learning* group is closely linked to the *Seeking help and/or asking questions* group as seeking help is a form of taking initiative. This idea of taking initiative and the importance thereof as a means of learning was frequently reported by interns. As summed up by an intern, "part of our development it was on us" – which is something many seemed to recognise. Speaking to this, Intern 2 says that they would search online when they needed to know how to do something and would then just follow the steps accordingly. Moreover, they said that if they saw an old memo or report, they would go through it to learn how to structure such documents.

With respect to *Seeking help and/or asking questions*, intern 4 said they would approach their supervisor or the senior person in charge at the time and say, “I don’t understand, and I need to understand this”. As mentioned, there were different helpful others that they approached for assistance when they wanted to know how to do something or required information. Thus, apart from their mentors and supervisors, there were colleagues sitting near them as well as admin assistants and other managers whom they would seek assistance from. The importance of asking questions was epitomised by the quote by intern 4, “The learning was definitely not going to happen if I did not ask any question”. As such, this group has a strong connection to the *Taking initiative, reading and self-learning* group previously outlined. Moreover, these two groups are also connected to the *Being directly 'taught' and given guidance* group. For instance, intern 1 said:

> And I ensured that I used the resources like downloading every document or when my supervisor or anyone else would share something I would ensure that I read read read read. And then I understand most of what they are doing.

In other words, being directly taught and receiving guidance did not mean that interns were passive in the learning process but rather they were also active learners by asking questions and taking initiative. Given that *Being directly 'taught' and given guidance* as well as *Taking initiative, reading and self-learning* were large in number reinforces the idea that interns were not just spoon-fed knowledge but rather a combination of being taught and seeking out knowledge was commonplace.

In terms of *Watching and listening to others* and *Learn by doing*, intern 5 said that by watching their colleague they were able to see how to go about their work while intern 1 said they “would learn on the job”.

As indicative by the above data that emerged, learning methods were not isolated but were often a combination of different approaches. Thus, although in the results section how interns reported learning has been separated out, this has been done to understand their learning more deeply. Another example of this is intern 2 saying they were taken “through the process”, and would practice doing it themselves while also asking questions. Intern 7 went into greater detail regarding this, speaking to how they would watch and listen to others, learn by doing while also being directly taught by their mentor.

Formal, informal and non-formal learning methods emerged in this research as channels through which interns went about their learning on the internship programme. Taking initiative emerged as being important to intern learning which manifested itself in interns doing self-learning, seeking out help and asking questions when they did not understand something or needed assistance. The role of initiative in intern learning was something that interns recognised the importance thereof - whether consciously or unconsciously. While discussed in isolation, learning methods were often combined as opposed to transpiring in isolation.

Having covered what emerged in the data regarding the intended and experienced curriculum as well as how interns went about their learning, the results related to the factors that affected the learning of interns will be outlined next.

4.4 What were the factors that affected workplace learning?

The results related to the factors that affected workplace learning which emerged in the data, have mainly been separated according to learning and context factors. That is, they have been separated according to Eraut's (2004a) model previously outlined. With that said, in the *Discussion* chapter these factors are organised and classified differently – informed by the emerging theory in keeping with a grounded theory approach. In addition to the learning and context factors, there is also a section entitled *Additional factors* that outlines results related to internship management and learning culture – which did not form part of the learning and context factors but rather stemmed from the data.

The learning factors are threefold: Feedback, support and trust; challenge and value of the work; and confidence and commitment, personal agency and motivation. Of the learning factor groups, the last grouping related to confidence was the largest in terms of codes. In other words, it appeared most frequently in the data compared to the other learning factors. There are also three context factors: Encounters and relationships with people at work; allocation and structuring of work; and individual participation and expectations of their performance and progress. The biggest of these code groupings was the encounters and relationships with people at work, which in the *Results* chapter has been separated according to mentors and supervisors, and then all other colleagues. The reason was because of the unique and allocated role that mentors and supervisors played concerning interns.

Learning factors

Feedback, support & trust

Intern 1 had expectations of being trusted with greater responsibility and felt a lack of trust resulted in them having to do mainly administrative related work. Speaking about trust in this way linked trust to the *Allocation and structuring of work* context factor. Interns 3 and 4 also spoke about trust in this way and expressed that the link between being trusted and the allocation and structuring of work was the relationship between the intern and their supervisor or more broadly the *Encounters and relationships with people at work* context factor. This was reinforced by intern 12, who said that access to opportunities and even resources was a function of the "people who are working with you and the confidence they have in you". Intern 4 spoke about how being trusted even led to them having more confidence in themselves because it meant they were able to be trusted enough to be given work and deliver on that work. As such, even though the factors have been separated in the *Results* chapter, they are not isolated from each other – just like the previous section, in which the ways through which interns learnt were interconnected.

As articulated by intern 8, trusting someone means that you believe in them and do not think that their performance would compromise you or the department in any way and was something which "comes first before everything". As such, trusting an intern enough to give them work was not straightforward, as their supervisors needed to ensure that they could perform the task in such a way that there would not be any negative consequences arising from it.

The reason why some interns were trusted more than others and allocated work, as explained by a mentor, arose from the initiative an intern showed:

> I think it's a performance thing. If the intern show from the beginning how she is willing and then you know when you ask someone to do something and that person is getting it right from the first start, you're sort of not going to have a problem giving it to them again. So next time you're going to give it, but you're going to add a little bit. So ja, I think it's performance.

This reinforces the importance of intern initiative to the learning process, which also surfaced in the previous *How it is being learned* section wherein *Taking initiative, reading and self-learning* and *Seeking help and/or asking questions* were important mechanisms in the learning

process of interns. The mentor above also speaks to trust building and the sequencing of tasks because if you can trust them and allocate work to them and they can deliver on that, one is then able to "add a little bit" more next time which ultimately enhances the learning of interns.

With respect to feedback, intern 2 said that interns were not like other people in the workplace as they have not "been in the system for a long time." As such they could not figure things out for themselves which is why they needed feedback. They also felt that feedback would have assisted them in developing trust in themselves as they lacked the experience to be able to assess their performance. They further elaborated on the need for feedback:

> Sometimes I felt like I needed some feedback, or maybe if it's positive critiques, I wished I could get that but sometimes (and most of the time) I didn't really know if I was always on the right track or what. I always figure it out personally, if I'm doing well but I didn't get that feedback. I don't know if this is how it works in government or what but I expected some sort of formal… or not even formal – informal feedback of saying, "You did this and you have done this and this." … I wanted to know so that I can improve or maybe learn other things from them.

This resonates with what intern 1 said in terms of how a lack of feedback from mentors resulted in interns being unable to assess their progress which ultimately affected learning. The above quote also speaks to how they wanted feedback not only in terms of what to do better but also in terms of praise. Some interns did however receive regular feedback in the form of constructive criticism and praise like intern 9:

> So during that meeting they will say like, "Okay for this week you were doing this, and this, and this. This is the progress that you have made." And then they would say, "Last week you were doing this, and this, and this. This is the progress you have made." And then maybe if there's something that I've done then personally they come and say, "Oh thank you for this, and this, and this".

There was also further evidence of interns receiving feedback in the *How it is being learnt section* amongst interns 1, 4, 6 and 7 and interns speaking about how it benefited their learning. For instance, intern 6 said, "I write a report and then I take it to her, she looks at it, compares it to her notes and then she tells me where I need to change or if the report is fine and then we file it".

When asked about whether there was a feedback culture in the department and whether interns received enough feedback, one of the mentors said:

> I think talking about my Department, yes you are right there is no feedback culture. You only know that you not doing right when someone is being harsh on you or whatever, but when you are doing well you assume they are quiet because they don't give you feedback about how you are doing… with us we never sit with them and tell them that, "Hey this is how you did and this is the area where I feel like you are not strong and if you can, please try and focus on this area in your next job or whatever." We don't have that.

In terms of support, intern 3 spoke about its importance and how a lack of support affected their learning. According to them, interns who spoke about how much they had learnt generally had "somebody who was guiding them through… somebody was behind them" who was ensuring that their learning was transpiring. Moreover, when there was an opportunity like doing a presentation, those interns were given these responsibilities and were trusted "no matter how high that work might have been". In other words, they were both supported and trusted and also had access to learning opportunities.

Intern 1 also spoke about a lack of support and the nature of the support they thought they would get: "But as an internship, you would think that you would take me through first and then I would learn". As such, they thought they would be directly taught as they went on to explain:

> For example, as I said before, most of our supervisors, they would not teach us something. We would have to go as an individual to a meeting *[sic]* and learn there and no one sometimes even cares to take you through the process of what was happening… Like going to school and being taught, orientated and then doing the work. Because some of our supervisors don't even tell us we are now busy with this. They assume that we already know but how we just started… How are they supposed to know this without you teaching me, taking me through, orientating me… Sometimes you just go to the meeting and just sit the whole day without even commenting.

Intern 1 spoke about support in a way that was synonymous with explicitly being taught, as opposed to implicit support such as receiving guidance through watching someone or interacting with a group of people. In other words, a kind of instructive guidance was expected

and was considered something that would aid learning as opposed to just general support. The expectations around instructive guidance was similair to the support expectations of intern 2:

> You know, we come to this programme sometimes not knowing anything. Some people have never worked anywhere. They've been students for years, they go there and they don't get that necessary support as people are not available to take them through processes.

In the *How it is being learnt* section, *Being directly 'taught' and given guidance* was the second largest grouping. As such, interns were receiving some kind of instructive guidance but perhaps not enough of it and not all interns.

Intern 4 linked support to initiative, as they would get support if they took initiative - support did not just 'come' to them. Intern 5 spoke about support in both proactive and responsive terms because on the one hand, their mentor was proactive by creating learning opportunities for them, for instance by creating opportunities for them to travel but was also responsive by answering their questions. Receiving this proactive and responsive support resulted in them feeling supported, which aided their learning. This further demonstrates the importance of intern initiative which interns considered vital to their learning, and which was touched on in the previous section. Moreover, intern initiative was of particular importance in this government setting in which work was less structured. While there was supposed to be a work plan in place to guide their work, it was often a matter of what the supervisor/mentor wanted them to do.

Intern 11 spoke about how they gave up trying to attend any formal training because there was no one to help them. While they felt a lack of support affected their learning, it was not divorced from personal agency as they gave up and did not demonstrate resolve in seeking out assistance and getting guidance.

Feedback, support and trust as spoken about by interns appeared to be integral to intern learning. Trust enabled interns to be exposed to learning opportunities, while feedback facilitated learning and confidence building and included both constructive criticism and praise. In terms of support, the kind of support that was expected from interns was 'hands-on' in nature and transcended a traditional understanding of support. In this regard, interns wanted support that was more along the lines of instructive guidance, which entailed being directly

taught how to do things and given information explicitly. This they believed would have enabled greater learning.

Challenge and value of the work

Of the learning factor groups, this had the least number of codes in it. In other words, it appeared the least frequently in the data compared to the other learning factors. Research participants spoke directly to the 'challenge' component while the 'value' component was more implicit. Intern 1 spoke about how there was little learning transpiring for some interns on the internship and that the value derived from the internship stemmed from the money received as opposed to the learning experience itself:

> So most of them, were like no we just came here for a stipend we are getting paid so its fine and some even thought of resigning but you couldn't because you need money and you need experience.

With intern 1, there was a sense of frustration because even though they had learnt a lot and had a "wonderful supervisor", the work was not challenging. They were frustrated and felt the situation was "unfair", and unsuccessfully tried to address the issue with management – this sense of frustration was common in interviews with almost all interns. Intern 3 reported feeling "bored", "not being utilized enough" and "useless", owing to a lack of work allocated to them. When they were given a "platform", they reported that "It was nice because I felt like I was actually appreciated, and they could see potential in me".

Intern 4 spoke to the work being monotonous, which they attributed to the broader organisational culture – which is elaborated on later in the additional factors section. The feeling of being unchallenged was succinctly articulated by intern 7: "Honestly speaking I don't feel it was ever that challenging… there was a time where I feel like I had exhausted everything that I'd learned - can I learn something different? So it was not that challenging".

Intern 7 said that even if they "were to learn something you could learn it in a day or two". While intern 2 was doing administrative work, in their case it was a means to an end as it enabled and facilitated work related to the core activity of their respective unit to transpire and they were also part of delivering their unit's core activity. As such, they were able to derive value from the administrative parts because they were a part of the delivery of the final product. They did empathise with other interns whose role was solely administrative in nature.

Compared to other interns, intern 8 appeared to have had more challenging work compared to other interns, which they attributed to their previous work experience. They also found the administrative work a bit challenging because they were not merely given components of the process but rather put in charge of the whole administrative process for particular projects – as already mentioned when discussing the experienced curriculum. They also empathised with other interns who did mostly administrative work and who did not have the kind of exposure to learning opportunities they had.

While this group was small in terms of codes, there was consensus that the work was not challenging and that the lack of challenging work impacted the learning of interns. This group has a strong connection with the *Allocation and structuring of work* group as interns found work challenging and derived value from work arising from what was allocated to them. It does not appear that work became progressively difficult for interns over time, in other words, there was no sequencing of tasks from easy to more challenging.

Confidence & commitment, personal agency & motivation[19]

Intern 1 lamented that having more learning opportunities - in particular doing presentations as opposed to just helping to prepare them - would have enhanced their confidence while the absence of such opportunities affected their motivation. Moreover, more feedback and "credit" would have also assisted in boosting their confidence and motivation. In the absence of feedback, intern 1 was self-affirming and motivated themselves:

> Since I came here, I have never done a presentation *[sic]*, but I've always been preparing presentations, you understand? So sometimes I feel like why am I doing this? Because I'm not going to even do the work. And if everything goes well, no one will be like, oh, OK, thank you for the good. You wont be given credit, but then usually I tell myself well done. You've done good for yourself. What you were doing was successful.

Speaking to what intern 1 raised, intern 4 spoke about how being trusted did in fact enhance their confidence. However, they felt one needed some level of confidence to be trusted because it is through having confidence in oneself that other people can trust you enough to give you opportunities. This kind of confidence reported by intern 4 did not come naturally to everyone with intern 2 speaking to how their confidence grew over time. For instance, they spoke about

[19] Of the learning factor groups, this group is the largest with respect to codes with 66 codes.

how watching and listening to other people perform tasks developed their confidence and knowledge, which enabled them to be able to perform those very tasks. Intern 8 also spoke about how watching other people do presentations enhanced their self-confidence.

The contexts in which confidence was raised seem to suggest that confidence was not a factor that promoted or hindered learning but rather a by-product of other factors. For instance, being trusted gave interns confidence; learning from others gave interns confidence; getting feedback in the form of praise would have boosted their confidence; and having access to more opportunities would have boosted their confidence. Confidence was thus in contrast to, for example, feedback which was a direct factor in the learning of interns. As such, just because interns mentioned confidence which in turn meant that there were codes which surfaced in the data in relation to it, does not mean that it was a factor in the learning of interns.

In terms of personal agency, intern 1 had to take charge of their own learning and development by going to meetings without being invited, ensuring they "read read read read" every document anyone shared with them, pushed to be included in processes and addressed concerns with mentors. They articulated this resolve and learning attitude:

> So I will say that part of our development it was on us, because we had to read for us to understand what's happening... Yeah, some of our personal growth was based on us, we had to read and if we did not understand, then we had to go back, it was all upon us because your growth does not depend on someone else sometimes.

When asked why some interns had a better learning experience compared to other interns, a HR official spoke to the role of personal agency in learning:

> When you happen to be in a sectional unit where they are not doing much, you will think that that's how you have to be *[sic]*, forgetting that you are in a learning program. In doing so you are killing yourself... This you are going to realise the moment that you get job elsewhere where they are performing, and that's where they are going to test you to say you know less when coming to this… Hence in one of our sessions that we try by all possible means to encourage all the interns that, "You are here for a short while. So make it a point that you will make it a mark that even if you left, they will know that you were once here and you were doing so great.

Intern 9 also spoke in a similar way, and about how taking initiative enabled some interns to have a better learning experience compared to others. According to HR official 1, some interns are “more dedicated than others” and are “really keen to participate”, while others “don’t take initiative”, have a “don’t really care type of approach” and are “just here for the stipend”. According to HR official 2, “individuals are not the same” with some getting “bored” and feeling “underutilised” more easily than others.They have also had interns who came into the department “very shy; too scared to say anything or ask anything” and remained like that throughout the programme (HR official 1). They went onto say that this is where “personality and character also comes in”. HR official 1 said that while one “cannot really change a person’s personality” perhaps behaviour change can be facilitated by speaking to them and providing them with skills development. Moreover, they went on to link this element with mentor selection, and as such made the connection between the two individual factors:

> If you have a really scared person or a really shy person, you need to watch out who you match them with because if you match them with a very powerful person who is always in your face, that won’t work. He will scare that intern even more, you know… If you match that person with the right mentor you can get that person to now sort of come out of their shell.

The personal agency outlined above and further reiterated by other data, indicates that it was the act of taking initiative which had a particular impact on learning. As such, it is when interns took initiative that learning was aided and facilitated. Interns seemed to recognise that taking initiative was critical to their learning, with intern 1 saying “If I didn't take my own initiative, yeah. It would be the same as me being home.” Interns could not simply ‘go with the flow’. Intern 3 also touched on the importance of taking initiative:

> *Interviewer:* How do you feel the internship would have went if you didn’t do this … I’m just using the line that you said, “creating this extra work” for yourself?
>
> *Intern 3:* It would be boring, very much boring because I felt like I was not valued enough, I was not given much of work to do. Nobody actually came to me to say, “You know what …” as an intern you are given a supervisor - somebody that’s going to guide you, somebody that’s going to tell you, “This is what we do in the Department. My job requires me to do one, two, three and four. So as an intern you’re going to be working with me...” So I never got that guideline. I was there, I came in the morning up until sunset I would actually sit down, not do anything up until I could get bored and then I could then go

around to the admin person – ask her if she's got something that I could help her with. That's when she actually saw that I've got nothing to do.

How intern 3 spoke about initiative indicated that it was in response to having an unclear job description, poor work allocation and support. In other words, it was a consequence of the circumstances they found themselves in.

Intern 6 also spoke to taking initiative in the form of articulating one's learning needs as opposed to relying on being "fed": Your mentor can't know that you don't know this or you don't know that. You are the one who's supposed to say, "I don't know this. I need somebody to assist me."

However, in contrast to the claim made by interns that going out and seeking work was integral to learning, one of the mentors said they had not experienced this:

No in my Department, from the people that I know I've never seen an intern coming to ask you for work. They never look for work, even if it's one of your busy weeks *[sic]* where you are very busy… they wouldn't come to you and ask that, "I'm done with this. Can you please give me more or can we learn this or whatever?" No.

While taking initiative may not have been commonplace to all interns, the aforementioned mentor did speak to the advice that they would give interns in this regard. In particular, they would tell them to ensure that their learning was in line with their quarterly reports and if they felt that there were deviations from it, then they should raise it with them. A plan could then be developed to correct the deviation. Another mentor said that their advice to interns was that they should take any opportunity that presented themselves, even if it was not in line with their specialisation. They went on to say that interns should approach their supervisor and say, "Listen here I'm interested. Can I help?". This reinforces the importance of interns taking initiative as a means of advancing their learning, even as articulated on the part of mentors.

An example of an intern not taking initiative, which in turn affected their development was intern 11. While they were encouraged to do so, they conceded that they did not act on this advice:

Yes, sometimes they would advise me to go extra mile; think of something else; maybe we say I can try to work on materials; to go and present it to the provinces and stuff. So but

> because he [mentor] was not always there to help me on doing that, I ended up not doing it.

With intern 11, not only did they not take initiative but they did not demonstrate resolve in the face of what they considered a challenge i.e., their mentor not being present. This links to commitment and in particular having resolve. Having resolve was important to not let their learning experience suffer when they faced challenges, setbacks and disappointments in the workplace. They had to remind themselves that they were "here to learn" as opposed to just sitting and being like, "Okay this is what's happening so let me just isolate myself." Seeing that taking initiative was important to intern learning, so too was having resolve as a lack thereof would have a direct bearing on one's ability to take initiative amongst other things.

While most interns spoke about external forces that inhibited learning, intern 8 touched on how interns may have blocked their learning because of their attitude:

> Yes, 'cause other interns were complaining about that admin work ne? So they didn't know most of the things because… the person is still asking about simple things when it comes to admin. But when I ask they'll be like, "Ah nna I don't know all those things. I don't know all those things because nna I didn't study admin."

A mentor also spoke to how the attitude of interns affected intern learning, and not only raised it concerning personal agency but also with respect to trust building and work allocation:

> I think from our unit the trust comes with attitude. Normally we would have two interns. If one intern is always willing to assist on something, even if they are appointed for admin, we will end up using them for… everything because they are trustworthy, they are willing.

They further elaborated on how interns stood in their own way of learning:

> If there's one thing, interns take care of each other… I'm not sure if jealousy is the right word but maybe it's jealousy between thinking that, "The mentor*[20] is earning so much so she must do the job. Why should we do it? They must do it. They are getting paid for it. We are only getting a stipend

[20] Amended for confidentiality

From the above data, the attitude of the intern mattered and had an impact on the learning of interns. Not only was this spoken about by interns but also mentors.

Concerning the data which emerged in this grouping, taking initiative on the part of interns had an impact on their learning. Initiative as a manifestation of personal agency was integral to learning and, in the data, arose in the form of seeking out work opportunities and being proactive in one's learning journey. The need to take initiative could have been in response to insufficient work being allocated to them as well as the nature of work, which was administrative in nature. However, while taking initiative was important, it did not guarantee intern learning as their initiative did not always facilitate learning and opportunities for learning. As such, interns had to stay committed and persevere in the face of workplace challenges to not let their overall learning and work experience suffer. In particular, they needed to demonstrate resolve. Lastly, interns may have also blocked their own learning owing to their attitude and a sense that they should only be doing certain kinds of work. The attitude of interns was thus also a factor in intern learning.

Context factors

Encounters and relationships with people at work

As earlier mentioned, this factor grouping has been separated into two subsections according to mentors and supervisors followed by all other colleagues. This was owing to the unique and allocated role that mentors and supervisors played concerning interns. In many cases, there was no distinct difference between mentors and supervisors with interns often using these terms interchangeably – and sometimes they were the same person. Moreover, while mentors were allocated to interns by the units they were in, interns would sometimes find their own mentor if they were unhappy with their allocated mentor.

i. Mentor and supervisor

Intern 1 had a "wonderful supervisor" who was instrumental in their learning. However, their relationship was initially problematic as their mentor did not play an active role when it came to quarterly reports. These reports were intended to be a mechanism to monitor and record the progress of interns. Intern 1 addressed the issue with their mentor and subsequently had a "very good working relationship". However, this is not to say their relationship was without problems, as they reported having to sometimes suppress their "voice" to "not cause trouble".

Intern 2 had a "very great mentor" who was always there to answer their questions and assist when they needed something. Intern 5 also had a "good" relationship with their mentor who "had that patience" to answer questions and explain things. The openness of the mentor mattered and was considered instrumental to intern learning. Intern 4 had an "older cousin" like relationship with their supervisor such that they were able to have conversations with them about each other's lives. Intern 8 also reported having a good relationship with their mentor/supervisor[21], who would guide them and provide advice. Intern 8 felt positively pushed and provided with learning opportunities by their mentor/supervisor that was outside of doing administrative work.

Intern 6 reported feeling respected by both their supervisor and mentor, and reported feeling guided through processes and what was expected of them. Their mentor made up for the fact that they could not attend courses by taking them along to courses they were attending - the inability of intern 6 to attend courses arose out of issues with other colleagues in the department who blocked attendance. As such, their mentor was constrained by issues of rank and politics in the department. The issue of internal politics is not accounted for in Eraut's factors model. However, when asked why not all interns were able to go on two courses a year, HR official 1 said that it was a function of the intern's manager and did not raise the issue of politics in the department. They said that if some units travelled a lot and had a lot of work, then owing to being out of the office a lot some interns would not attend any courses. As such, it could be that HR was unaware of the issues that interns faced when it came to attending courses.

Intern 3 did not have a good relationship with their mentor/supervisor[22]: "I couldn't say we had a good relationship because we hardly talked and from the very first day I got there she wasn't somebody who I can say was welcome to see me". In a sense, intern 3 was on the 'other side' of the spectrum compared to most interns interviewed, in terms of their relationship with their supervisor. As earlier quoted in the support related factor group, they did allude to the fact that this impacted their learning because unlike other interns they did not have that supervisory effort where someone was "guiding them" and "pushing them". Consequently, intern 3 found their own mentor, as they explained "I didn't have a mentor but I actually created my own

[21] Their mentor and supervisor was the same person
[22] They used these terms interchangeably

mentor because I found the admin person as somebody I could actually talk to, and I could ask about certain things that involved work or the environment".

Interns raised issues with respect to what they encountered about the experiences of others, even if they themselves had a good relationship with their mentor. Intern 1 said that some mentors "never cared" and that some only met their mentees to sign their quarterly progress reports. Intern 12 said that one intern cried to them because their supervisor did not like them:

> She would come to me crying that her boss is not treating her well… So I mean it's those kind of things that maybe you can't change because of other managers or bosses they have that attitude of not being embracing, not having accommodating heart, not having a heart to mentor.

Mentors had a significant say in the work allocated to interns and the kind of opportunities they had access to. Intern 12 said that access to learning opportunities was a function of whether your "supervisor stands for you and initiates for you". The importance of the mentor in terms of accessing opportunities was also expressed by a mentor, when asked about the reason why some interns had a better learning experience compared to others:

> Management. The unit in which they are at, the managers makes a big difference. In some units, there was interns coming obviously not knowing what's going on you know - still need to find their feet, then the manager immediately thinks, "Listen here you don't know anything. So go sit in the corner and do filing".

They also spoke to how the relationship between the mentor and intern affected learning:

> If you have a good relationship, the intern will go out of their way to assist you and you will go out of your way to make sure the intern is getting the experience he/she needs or getting extra courses he/she can do if they're interested. So it's a two-way street I think.

The link between the mentor and work allocation was reiterated by a HR official when asked about their understanding of a mentor's role:

> Basically they need to give advice to the intern; they need to guide them; they need to support them in their daily activities - not just to let them come here and leave them be you know; give them meaningful work; let them get involved with projects if that's possible at all because we have found that that's the most problematic area, where the interns come and they complain that they are not given meaningful activities to do. So that's the one

> area that we are trying to see how we can strengthen it you know, so that when they get here they really do meaningful tasks that are linked to their qualification.

Intern 1 felt that there was a lack of thought and planning that went into mentor selection, which intern 6 linked to a lack of planning regarding the overall programme: "I feel like the Department really needs to take a look into why they have the internship program. It must not just be, it's a requirement by government. It *[sic]* will be done and that's that". They also got the impression that those assigned as mentors wanted someone to do their administrative work, which is why they opted to be assigned as a mentor. The assertion that mentor selection mattered was also echoed by interns 3: "Actually I'd advise them to consider the kind of… attitude and personality that the supervisors have, especially because it depends on the kind of person that the person is, who is able to engage with people."

They went on to say that just because interns have issues with their mentors, does not mean that it was only because of the mentor as "there were a lot of factors that go into working relationships" and as such "there could be personality clashes". In this regard, one of the HR officials interviewed spoke about personality clashes and the mismatch between the intern and mentor. They said sometimes the relationship "just doesn't work" and the two parties "just don't gel".

According to intern 6, the time availability of the person they were allocated to influenced the workload and guidance they received. For instance, interns who were assigned to Chief Directors who were very busy meant that the Chief Directors did not always have time to assign the intern work. This insight regarding availability was demonstrated by the experience of intern 11 who said that when their supervisor travelled for work, they would be left alone not having anyone to help them with the work they were allocated. Intern 12 also reported that they chose for themselves a mentor because theirs was "never there in the office" and was "always busy and never had time for me". They were a "good person but couldn't really do much for me" and give of their time to intern 12. In these cases, the issue was about accessing the mentor as opposed to the kind of person the mentor was.

However, for intern 6, if their mentor was busy in a given week, they would arrange with other colleagues to assign work to intern 6 and if their mentor was not around, they would approach their supervisor who would "look after" them. They also reported that their mentor attended

the mentor session hosted by the department, which enabled them to "see things differently whenever she engages with me" such that they became more responsive with respect to quarterly reports.

Intern 1 felt that mentors needed to be "standard" in terms of how they engaged with interns, that there should be monitoring in place and that it should form part of their work plans as this may lead to them becoming more "serious" about it. As succinctly put by intern 6, "Each mentor does as they please with the interns". This notion of mentors being left to their own devices was confirmed by one of the mentors interviewed:

> You know what, in that regard they don't give actually guidance or anything. It's sort of, you do your own thing. What the interns usually do is they have a quarterly report listing like all the stuff they did, and we need to write comments. You know, "Done Well", "Was on time for work" you know those type of things and they submit it. But beyond that there is nothing really.

A mentor spoke to how they approached mentoring, which was not standard across mentors:

> With the mentoring… I usually ask is there something specific they want to learn, you know, anything that interests them… Then I will see, depending on what it is, how we can incorporate that into the work. So I try to check their work but also give them something challenging that they can learn.

Another mentor spoke about their approach to facilitating the learning of interns, which likely differed across mentors owing to the lack of standardisation:

> Usually what I do is, when I get an intern I try, I ask the intern usually what work they did at university, what they're comfortable with to see, you know what can I sort of give them to do. If they tell me something… and I will try to supervise it by you know, seeing how they do it. If there's anything they need to improve, or maybe a short cut they can use, and then just maybe the first two, three times check if it's okay, if it's alright or the work is done correctly. But then I usually leave them if they can do it. I try to, from the beginning tell them if there's anything they don't know or they're not sure if there's a mistake… they must come to me.

The above mentor paced the work given to interns, which was the strategy they chose to use. In other words, they would sequence and allocate tasks from easy to more difficult. As such,

mentors were able to use any learning strategy they wanted, if any at all. Intern 10 lamented the learning strategy of their mentor, as they did not want to "teach you everything from the beginning" but then how was she supposed to know things – "being taught by who?"

Mentors/supervisors had a significant say in the work allocated to interns as well as their access to learning opportunities. As such, they were key players in the learning of interns. They were responsible for guiding and providing support to interns, and ensuring that interns were allocated "meaningful" work and that learning was transpiring. Whether the relationship between the two parties was productive was not only dependent on the mentor/supervisor but also on the intern, as there could be personality clashes for instance. Also, the attitude of the intern may have affected the ability of the mentor/supervisor to assign work to them. However, even if the allocated mentor/supervisor was 'good', in the absence of not having enough time for interns, the learning of interns could be compromised. Mentors were given free range in terms of their interaction with interns including their approach to their learning, with little guidance provided to mentors by the department. This gave rise to interns having a mixed learning experience. On the part of interns, they felt that more thoughtful planning regarding mentor selection would have enhanced intern learning.

ii. Other colleagues

Apart from mentors and supervisors, there were other colleagues that interns encountered and had relationships with that played a role in their learning. In this regard, they encountered both helpful and unhelpful others.

Concerning unhelpful others, a few interns spoke about "power dynamics" in the department and the attitude that some colleagues had towards them which hindered their access to learning opportunities. Intern 6 said that owing to issues of rank, their mentor was unable to directly approach the necessary senior official who was responsible for signoff, which would have enabled them to attend courses. Instead, it had to go through other people and these "people in between they were kind of like holding back and not wanting to get money for that personal development." Related to this, intern 1 detailed some personal experiences with respect to attitudes they encountered:

> Based on your position, who are you? You only an intern, don't be smart with us now. I didn't want to indulge on the negatives, but there is also power dynamics in all of this. If you raise a concern, oh my God an intern is voicing, even if it's a valid recommendation,

> not everyone would take it like that. You just an intern so keep quiet. Someone said to me, I attended this meeting and I was talking to that person during tea-break. OK, Yes, I was thinking about etc etc etc, and they were like you don't have to be involved in these things, these things are for senior managers, don't stress yourself. I was oh okay. Sometimes they should allow us to voice, and between me and you, I feel like some of these people are intimidated by interns honestly.

Intern 7 said interns were subjected to bullying, belittling and exploitation by some colleagues: "I just feel like they wanted to more like bully you… You know when someone has been at a place for a long time and they want to show you that... you to bow down to me". Intern 7 went onto add: "I just feel it's that way… "you're not permanent… if we want to exploit you, we're going to exploit you. If we want to make you feel vulnerable, we're going to make you feel vulnerable because you don't know anything"".

They said that other colleagues once denied them a learning opportunity because they were on "contract", which for them goes back to the "bullying part" of the internship. With the above said, intern 7 did speak to the teamwork and sense of comradery in their unit, and how they would "always work in a team". It is unclear whether this issue of bullying was structural and systemic, and experienced across all interns or only specific to certain individual interns. However, while the issue of bullying only surfaced in one interview, the idea of being treated differently by colleagues owing to not being a permanent staff member did come up more than once. In this regard, intern 2 spoke about being treated like a "visitor", "an amateur" and like "being an intern is something that no one cares about". Intern 10 was also once told that they did not need to learn everything because they were working at an intern level. The experiences of intern 2 however were related to officials outside their unit: "But sometimes they would send you somewhere or they would tell you to communicate with a certain person and once they realise that you're an intern they sort of switch off".

Thankfully however, intern 2 did have someone who "played a big role as a mentor, who was just a colleague", and also received guidance from the administrative assistant as well as the person sitting next to them. They further said that they "actually learned from everyone" in their unit, with their unit having a "great" learning culture even though it was not perfect. Intern 1 was able to approach colleagues in their unit, with some colleagues involving them in work activities while others refused. Intern 3 did not have a good relationship with their supervisor,

but other colleagues involved them and made them feel “part of them” and like they “have something to contribute”. While the supervisor of intern 12 was hardly around to guide and support them, they had a colleague who would “protect” them from doing work they should not be doing. Interns 11 and 3 also received a lot of assistance from the administrative assistant.

Intern 6 reported working with “good people” with a “squabble here and there”, in an environment conducive to learning and one in which people “were willing to teach and they were willing to learn”. Despite the issue of being unable to attend courses owing to other officials holding back money, intern 6 reported that they did not remember feeling “disrespected” or “made to feel little”. Intern 8 reported not being made to “feel like an intern” and was introduced as “one of our colleagues”. They further added that their unit was akin to a family and that they felt “spoiled by the unit” once they heard about the experiences of other interns.

Similar to the relationship with mentors and supervisors, the relationship with other colleagues was also a function of the interns themselves. In this regard, intern 10 said that effort needed to be put into developing a relationship with colleagues, which in turn had a direct impact on learning because when their colleagues had time, they would teach them things.

While mentors/supervisors played a key role in the learning of interns, there were also other colleagues who facilitated, shaped, contributed and hindered the learning of interns. Power dynamics within the department affected intern learning, even though the dynamic which played out had nothing to do with the interns themselves – however it ultimately affected them, such as issues of rank. This is touched on later when unpacking the data about the additional elements. In general, interns had mixed experiences when it came to colleague interaction and even when they had positive experiences within their unit, they then went onto have negative experiences with colleagues outside of their unit. For many interns, the admin assistants in their respective units aided their learning and would make time to teach them things. As such, admin assistants often exemplified what Eraut et al. (2004) regarded as ‘helpful others’.

Allocation and structuring of work[23]

There was general disappointment amongst the interns interviewed regarding the work allocated to them, which they felt hindered their learning. A major source of discontent was being allocated mostly administrative work. A frustrated intern 1 felt that interns being allocated work that was primarily administrative was "unfair", as they were on the internship to get experience and to do work in line with the core functions of the department.

While intern 1 did not want to undermine administrative work such as booking flights and arranging meeting venues, they did not expect that their role would mainly entail learning that was aligned with this. They went onto add that management should do more to ensure that interns were learning what they were supposed to be learning, and they considered quarterly reports to be an insufficient mechanism to monitor this. The reason is that, in their view, the HR unit does not check these reports and as such does not do follow-ups regarding insufficient or inadequate learning.

Interns did try to "push" and use their initiative to get allocated the kind of work they wanted to do. This however was not always successful and when it was, it was on an ad hoc basis. This was touched on in the *Confidence & commitment, personal agency & motivation* learning factor group.

While widespread, this dissatisfaction was not the case with all interns. Intern 5 hardly did any administrative work as their mentor ensured that they did work in line with their speciality and the core functions of their unit. Similarly, intern 12 spoke about being shielded from administrative tasks by their supervisor and other colleagues. As such, they too were able to do work that they considered demanding in nature, and which they felt facilitated greater learning compared to administrative work. Intern 4 was allocated work considered to be on the level of middle management or higher - elsewhere, they spoke of the trust and confidence colleagues had in them which enabled this work allocation. Again, we see here the role of the mentor/supervisor in the learning of interns through the function of allocating work to interns which facilitated learning.

[23] This factor grouping had 125 codes in it

In terms of the scale of experience interns acquired during their internship related to administrative duties, one of the mentors said it was "a scary thing to witness" because even though interns had a particular specialisation, they knew how to "check a tray after it's been delivered", how to do filing as well as procurement. For them, this indicated that interns were not learning what they were supposed to be learning but instead knew how to do all kinds of administrative tasks, which even mentors did not know how to do.

Being allocated this kind of work was, according to intern 3, a consequence of being at a national department as opposed to a provincial government department. National departments are the "highest hierarchy" and "monitor the people at provincial level" and it is at a provincial level where "practical work" gets done, according to them. As such, the department itself was constrained in terms of what could be allocated to interns as the work was specialised and was not at the level of implementation – with implementation work lending itself to on the ground and practical experience. In this regard, intern 7 lamented doing work that was "mostly administrative", not getting enough "exposure outside" the office as well as a lack of "field experience".

None the less, learning opportunities could have been created for interns within these constraints. For instance, intern 3 was frustrated that they were never allowed to present "maybe a slide or an introduction, or conclusion or anything" – with presentations to stakeholders being an integral component of their unit's work. Thus, while they were always helping to prepare presentations, they were never given a chance to deliver any presentations.

A few reasons as to why administrative work formed the bulk of tasks performed by interns were offered by mentors. According to one mentor, it was a consequence of units not needing interns but rather doing it for the sake of compliance:

> It just feels sometimes like the interns are just here because they are, and departments I know we're doing a good thing getting the interns, but I also feel just because it's compliance and we need to appoint 20 interns, it doesn't necessarily mean we have to appoint 20. A lot of the stuff just feels like compliance... We just have to shove it down your throat... In most of those cases *[sic]*, the intern becomes like that person's personal PA (personal assistant), you know running mundane errands or mostly admin work or just little things just to keep him/her busy… Ja, a lot of them just got them because they could, and now they will send them to buy the milk and cookies for the unit, that type of thing.

According to another mentor, administrative work was also a consequence of workload pressures, which translated into mentors being consumed by work and feeling like they could not afford to risk poor performance on the part of interns. In such cases, the intern was considered "useless" and did not carry out tasks related to the core function and was also given less work to do. They went onto explain this:

> I think that is when something that happened to me, where I was overwhelmed with my work and we try to keep someone, and now you are busy and you are overwhelmed, and your senior is overwhelming you, or they are overwhelmed themselves*[24]. You end up doing all of those things because you deem them [the interns] useless because there is nothing they can do because you can't trust them with an important report that must go to other outside stakeholders. So I think that's the challenge that I'm witnessing a lot.

Interns were not only disappointed about the kind of work allocated to them but also the volume of work. Intern 3 expressed frustration about the insufficient workload interns had: "I'm not being used, I'm not given much work to do hence I feel like I'm being useless here". Intern 11 felt disappointed when they realised that other interns had more responsibility than them and it would "feel like you are not doing anything".

Many interns did not get experience in line with their qualifications. According to intern 5, some of the work allocated to them had little to nothing to do with their qualification, while intern 3 said that one does not get "much learning based on the career that you have actually chosen as a person". An intern advised that interns should be placed "in the correct places", "so if it is an admin intern, make sure that someone that actually wants to be an admin assistant… So if you're in law but you sit here as an admin assistant, you're not even going to bother." Intern 7 felt that those interns whose qualifications aligned with the unit they were placed in had a good learning experience, which was unlike what had transpired for them. For instance, "you have an IT qualification, you're working in IT… like if it's a finance unit, get an intern who did finance so that they can learn finance".

One of the mentors interviewed did want to ensure the work they assigned was in line with the qualification of the intern assigned to them and that tasks were structured in such a way that they progressed from easy to more difficult. However, as mentioned elsewhere, mentors and

[24] Amended for confidentiality

supervisors were not given guidance on how to approach the learning of interns, so this approach did not emerge as being widespread.

Interns did report feeling like the work was unstructured, as well as ad hoc in nature. Interns 3 and 11 said that there was a lack of clarity regarding their role, with intern 11 saying, “They said they were going to give us the scope of what we’re going to do but they haven’t given us anything. So we ended up doing whatever they want us to do”. Intern 7 did not strictly follow their work plan but rather did what they needed to do each day, and would also assist people who came to them for assistance. Learning was also according to intern 6, influenced by the unit as “there were units that had a lot of work” and some that did not. The lack of structure regarding the work they did, was also influenced by the availability of staff. As mentioned in the previous context factor section, if interns were assigned to busy staff members, it translated into them not having anything to do.

Interns indicated that they wanted to rotate to other units but were unable to. In the words of intern 7, this was owing to there being “a lot of procedures and like protocols to be followed”. While they did not comprehend the bureaucracy preventing rotation to other units during their internship, interns did feel that doing so would have enabled greater learning as opposed to being placed in one unit for the full two-year period.

The data which emerged related to this group demonstrated that it was commonplace for interns to be assigned work that was administrative in nature. In cases where interns were able to do work in line with the core activities of their unit or not, the volume of work was considered insufficient. As such, they did not feel fully utilised. Some factors that influenced the work allocated to interns were interns being allocated to units in which they were not needed; workload pressures which made supervisors feel that the work was too important to be entrusted to interns; senior management not making time to allocate work to interns; as well as the nature of the department itself, which was a national department that oversaw implementation – as opposed to doing implementation themselves. There was no real evidence of interns having a particular role and the basis for allocating work to them was not necessarily a function of their qualifications, which meant learning was often not in line with their intended careers. The work allocated to interns was unstructured and did not follow a specific work plan. Instead, work would come up on an ad hoc basis which they then had to do. There was also no standard approach to sequencing tasks from easy to more difficult for them, which hindered

their learning. Rather the work they did was on a similar level throughout their internship. This reinforces the lack of challenging work which has already been spoken about elsewhere.

Individual participation and expectations of their performance & progress[25]

In terms of their motivation for applying, interns 1, 4 and 5 were unemployed and also wanted public sector work experience. For intern 4, it meant they could "wake up in the morning and just do something that can make me feel good about myself". Intern 10 applied as they completed their studies and were "not used to that thing of just staying at home and not doing anything", while intern 11 also applied as they were "not busy" and saw it as a means of "gaining experience and knowledge". For intern 2 it was in line with their qualification, which they wanted to get practical experience in.

While interns primarily applied because they needed employment, this was not their only motivation as many wanted to get on the programme to get hands on experience in the public sector. Intern 3 did not know what to expect of the working environment but had high expectations of how the internship would develop them and what they would be learning, as expounded on below:

> I expected so much because you know when you're from Varsity you don't know how it feels like working and being in a working environment… So during the course of the internship I was hoping to actually learn and actually find out if for the things that I did theory actually were needed within the workplace.

While intern 1 was "not even sure" what they were applying for, they did expect to be taught how to perform the core functions of their unit. After this, they assumed they would be trusted enough to perform these functions with minimal supervision. They also expected to be able to shape the workplace by voicing their concerns and suggestions, as touched on elsewhere. Apart from what interns thought the experienced curriculum would entail, some interns also had expectations regarding how their learning would transpire and the kind of support they would receive. Intern 6 expected to be in "a conducive environment with people who are willing to teach, but also willing to learn". In other words, they expected to be explicitly taught things which was a common expectation amongst interns. Moreover, they expected to be in an environment in which one could "whenever you needed assistance" receive it.

[25] This factor grouping had 73 codes

In terms of whether intern expectations were met, intern 3 said that they "never expected much, but then I got less". Intern 3 was not given "a specific role" and job description; was not explained what was expected of them; and often had to "create work" for themselves. They were also not explained the role of their supervisor in relation to their learning. This lack of clarity may be why it took time for them to find their way around the department – "the first few months while I was in the department I didn't know what to do. I didn't know how it works".

While most of the expectations of intern 6 were met, they did however feel that intern expectations were not effectively managed at the start of the internship as they were never told about the kind of work they would do, the volume of work to expect and that they would be doing "mostly administrative work". Not managing these "high" expectations was deflating: "There's a lot of expectations when you're going into internship and then when you find that those expectations are not met, you find that it's a bummer".

In a similar vein, intern 7 who came from university had expectations of what their internship would be like and found a mismatch between what they had expected and the experience they received. They thought they were going to be doing more fieldwork as opposed to work that was mostly office based. So the experience was "totally different" but nonetheless "good exposure." According to intern 8, many interns were not given the opportunity to participate "in the planning stage" of projects and "organising of the resources" but were mostly given administrative related tasks. However, they did go onto say that the attitude of some interns served to hinder their learning, which was touched on in the *Confidence & commitment, personal agency & motivation* group.

Intern 2 said "eighty per cent of my expectations were met" and that it was "only few things" that were not covered. They did however feel that more feedback would have enhanced their performance and learning. They were able to perform better than anticipated, with many things coming "naturally" to them, which they also attributed to the guidance they got from their mentor.

Intern 3 expressed that the internship should "learn more on the field that you're actually based on, other than having to learn more on something else that you are not actually going to use as an experience when you look for your career". As such, it should be a stepping-stone in their

career, which is what HR official 2 also spoke about regarding the intended curriculum and how the programme ought to achieve this.

Coming straight from university meant that this was for most interns their first experience of the working environment, which meant that some of their expectations may have been unrealistic. However, at the same time, very little to nothing was done to manage their expectations. When asked about whether the expectations of interns were fair, one of the mentors said that "when you are straight from varsity, your bar is very high" and "you think it would be easy" to complete projects not bearing in mind that there are constraints such as financial, which end up delaying project delivery. In other words, interns had high expectations regarding the work they would do as part of the internship as well as the number of projects they would be involved in, not realising that project delivery can be prolonged owing to constraints. The latter translated into interns being involved in fewer projects throughout their internship, meaning less experience and exposure for them.

According to HR official 1, in the job interview interns were told that they were not going to be client facing as they are not a provincial department but instead would do more policy related work. When probed further to see whether they thought there was a lack of expectation management on the part of the department, they went on to say:

> I think there's a mismatch. I think from their side, they have a different expectation in their mind and maybe from the unit's side is that they tend to put stuff down on paper but when the intern arrives it's almost like they have forgotten. What we normally tell the mentors during our meetings is to please involve them in projects; give them stuff to do; let them run a project by themselves. Or at least if you don't want an intern to run a program by themselves, take them to the meeting; let them feel part of the team. Don't just let them sit there in the office and not be part of stuff.

Interns came on the programme with having no previous experience to shape their expectations of what the internship would entail, with many having high and perhaps unrealistic expectations. At the level of a national government department, some interns expected to be doing key pieces of work and even managing projects which for new workplace entrants may be impractical owing to a lack of work experience. Unfortunately, their expectations were not managed regarding what their internship would entail which left some of them disappointed and feeling like they did not learn much. Moreover, they expected their learning to align with

their qualifications, which was not always the case with many interns doing primarily administrative work.

Additional factors from Eraut's typology

There are different ways to organise the factors that affect workplace learning, with Eraut's (2004a) typology being one that resonated with the data. There was however data that emerged in this research that did not find expression in these groupings – with some elements of the typology also more strongly resonating with the data compared to others. As such, this warranted a section which has been labelled *additional factors* that capture results related to internship management and learning culture, both of which were found to affect intern learning. As mentioned in the Methodology chapter, grounded theory entails a mix of inductive and deductive approaches which this section demonstrates.

Thus, while the learning and context factors just covered arose through imposing the typology on the data - arising from literature engagement and following grounded theory methods - the internship management and learning culture sections were from the data itself and from being 'led' by the data.

Management of internship[26]

The management areas that arose that affected intern learning were threefold: Programme monitoring; induction process; and the mentorship and supervisory system. With respect to monitoring, interns spoke to the system that oversaw the learning of interns, including work plans, quarterly reports and job descriptions. As mentioned elsewhere by intern 1, quarterly reports appeared more about compliance as opposed to ensuring that interns were learning.

When asked about whether the department had monitoring systems or processes in place to help ensure that the programme's outcomes were achieved, HR official 2 spoke to the need for improvement in this area:

> Yes the monitoring systems are there, however, they still need to be enhanced to really achieve it. As I've said that system number one is our quarterly reports for both interns and mentors, and general reports, and we are even reporting to DPSA. So those are our systems that we are having in the department. But to me where I'm sitting, I think at some

[26] Full quotes for this section are included in appendix 8

> point that's not even enough. We still have to pick up our socks or come up with something even far better than this, what we are doing because at the end of the day we have to produce the quality that is expected but if there are some grey areas here and there which means there is more still to be done.

With the experienced curriculum having encompassed administrative work, which was not what they had anticipated nor was it aligned with the intended curriculum, some interns spoke to the need of having job descriptions in place that were monitored by HR officials. This was seen as a means of ensuring that interns did "more of what they came there for", according to intern 2. While most interns had quarterly reports with some also having workplans, it was not checked by the HR unit and as such no one was able to pick up: "Ah no man this person has been doing an admin for the whole three months." From the HR unit's perspective, they reported often not getting the quarterly reports timeously from mentors and experienced issues with the content of these reports as they were not completed properly. To deal with cases of non-compliance, there was a need to "come up with a way to sort it out before it gets out of hand" according to HR official 2. In other words, before it went from bad to worse, HR needed to find ways to intervene.

The lack of monitoring systems in place was seen as a manifestation of a bigger issue, according to an intern, which is that "the department does not have a plan in terms of what to do with the internship, what to do with the interns." This was also demonstrated by a "lack of proper planning" as "that section knows that they will be expecting an intern but there is no proper planning in place which shows that the intern will be placed where." One of the mentors expressed the sentiment that government "are the killers of people's careers because if you start there as an intern, you end up only knowing just admin – "Copy this; print this; drop this; fetch this." Having monitoring systems and processes in place may have been a means of preventing this.

With respect to the induction process, on the first day of their internship interns were generally taken around and introduced to colleagues in their respective units. However, intern 3 said after this they "just sat there… the whole day doing nothing." Some of them were taken to the boardroom where their contracts were explained, after which point they were handed over to their mentors. One of the interns said that this is "where the problem started to say we were never briefed. We were just taken to the unit and there the mentor takes over." Moreover, "they

never got into the details of what I'm really going to do. So I think there is a lot of training that needs to be done there in terms of how should interns do their work actually *[sic]*." Only after a few months interns attended the BB2E with the National School of Government - which many found useful.

In relation to the mentorship and supervisory system, interns expressed the need for the mentors and supervisors of interns to be trained regarding what they needed to do for the interns they were responsible for. It is assumed that mentors know how to train, manage and mentor interns, but some appear to lack this ability which ultimately affected the learning of interns. In short, as articulated by intern 9, "They should be mentored before they can mentor someone". As further explained by intern 11:

> Yes, because I see the challenges because our supervisors doesn't have knowledge of how to work with interns. I think they just pick someone to work with the particular intern, not having that knowledge to supervise or to mentor somebody. So I think maybe they need to work on their supervision. Maybe they go to workshops and stuff so that they would have an understanding working with interns. And then they tell you, you have to go through maybe in the internet maybe learn more of things.

HR official 2 also expressed that regarding internship management, there was a need to review mentor selection. They spoke to mentoring being a "calling" and "not for everyone", with some "good" at it while others were "bad". They went on to add that mentor selection was something that needed to be reviewed "so that we can have a better programme".

The overall management of the internship itself was found to be a factor which influenced the learning of interns. In this regard, programme monitoring which included work plans, quarterly reports and job descriptions; the intern induction process; and the mentorship and supervisory system, were found to affect learning. Both interns and HR spoke to the need to enhance these dimensions, and how focusing on these areas may have enabled greater learning and alignment between the intended and experienced curriculum.

Departmental culture [27]

The data from this section did not find expression in the factors typology that was imposed on the data. Nonetheless, the data that emerged indicate that it affected intern learning. How departmental culture affected the learning of interns, demonstrates how intern learning did not transpire in a bubble but rather how dynamics that were sometimes unrelated to them, had a personal impact on them. More particularly, departmental time pressures; attitudes towards them; as well as rank, protocol and interpersonal dynamics, affected their learning.

Related to time pressures in the department, there was an urgency to deliver projects within short periods, with these pressures also translating into having less time for interns. Speaking to this issue, intern 4 says: "It's just meeting, after meeting, after meeting so they never really have time for you as an intern or as a junior if you had just arrived". This was touched on earlier concerning the culture interns were being inducted into.

With respect to attitudes they experienced within the department, some colleagues were "willing to teach them about everything" while others "just don't want to associate themselves with interns". Regarding the latter, there was a discouraging attitude amongst some colleagues, as explained by intern 11:

> Like with the people you are working with when they don't take you serious, they discourage you by saying you're just an intern – there's nothing much you can contribute to the unit and stuff. So I think that's the most discouraging factor, yes.

The negative attitude that some interns experienced may not have been from within their respective units but from colleagues from other units. Examples of this were included when discussing unhelpful others in *Encounters and relationships with people at work.* There were however some interns who reported that the culture was conducive to learning such that they felt at home and were not disrespected – whether it be inside or outside their unit. For these interns, this positive attitude aided their learning.

There was a difference in accounts by mentors regarding how interns were treated, and the departmental culture in which they operated. According to mentor 1, "They get all the crappy work that you don't want to do. I've heard many times, "Argh no man give it to an intern"".

[27] Full quotes for this section are included in appendix 9

That type of discard… So I think in a way they do get treated differently." On the other hand, mentor 2 said "you wouldn't even be able to tell that this is an intern" because there is no difference in how they are treated compared to other staff. They went onto say that there was "no rank conscious" such that "you would be sitting in a meeting with all of us… you wouldn't know that this is actually our intern because we wouldn't be sending them around to "pour me water; go find me coffee; go do this.""

The different reports from interns and mentors regarding the culture demonstrate an environment which is not mono-cultural. This was appropriately summed up by intern 12:

> Directories are different. So the treatment will not be the same. It's amazing, it's one department but we are in many directorates so we have different experiences I can tell you. So we have different experiences.

However, while there may have been some differing accounts, what was evident was that a negative attitude towards interns inhibited intern learning, while a positive attitude aided their learning. In terms of the former, colleagues with a negative attitude towards interns for instance felt that interns only needed to know a limited number of things – which in turn impacted what interns were able to know and the activities they could participate in. As such, the culture within the department that interns encountered affected both the experienced and intended curriculum. Related to the intended curriculum, even if the unit in which interns were based did not envision and plan around interns learning anything, this was not in line with either the intentions of the HR unit or the overall responsible department.

Issues of rank, protocol and interpersonal dynamics also surfaced in interviews as a factor which affected the learning of interns. This formed part of the data which was discussed related to the experienced curriculum and in particular, with respect to the *Culture of being a public servant.* Interpersonal power dynamics included conflict and tensions amongst colleagues as well as a negative attitude towards interns, which formed part of the data discussed in the *Other colleagues* sub-section of the *Encounters and relationships with people at work*. These dynamics while touched on elsewhere, were a factor that appeared absent within the confines of the Eraut typology, which was imposed on the data. As such, it warranted a separate mention. How this shaped the theory that emerged in this study is discussed in the *Discussion* section.

4.5 **Other (intern support group)**

While not a learning factor, the support group surfaced in intern interviews on several occasions. In the context of using a grounded theory approach in which data forms an integral role in a study, given the frequency of its occurrence and the platform it provided to interns, unpacking the data in relation to it appeared warranted.

Intern support group

The intern support group was comprised of interns, with HR officials playing a supportive convening role. There were also social worker experts who would attend when their expertise was needed. The social workers would "talk confidentially on the side if there's anyone" who needed anything "but if there's anything affecting the whole group they would just give overall feedback about how to go about whatever that it is[28]." Regarding session topics, there was a small team that made decisions regarding this, and speakers were invited accordingly. For instance, they invited someone from the Department of Labour to speak to interns about CV writing and how to conduct oneself in interviews, and another time someone spoke about business ethics. The group was initiated a year before this cohort of interns joined the department, with its genesis explained by intern 6:

> No it actually started a year before… Interns don't really have a place where they can get the support that they need because a lot of the time… there were a lot of interns who complained that they don't get the necessary support from either the mentor or the people in their unit… They realised that there was no support and suggested to the unit to say that [*sic*][29], "Maybe we should have intern support."

As spoken about above, the intern support group was a means of bridging the support gap experienced by interns. For interns, it provided an opportunity for them to "voice out" concerns[30], to "vent[31]" and to hear about the experiences of other interns[32]. For instance, it would be where interns complained about not being "part of the core functions of the department"[33] and how one came to the department with a particular qualification but "like through the whole internship it's like now you are an admin.[34]" The group also helped them

[28] Intern 2
[29] Amended for confidentiality
[30] Intern 3
[31] Intern 1
[32] Intern 1
[33] Intern 1
[34] Intern 8

emotionally as it made them feel like they were heard and that their concerns were valid. Moreover, it provided a platform to develop their emotional intelligence as they got to "understand what other people go through"[35]. The learning that being part of the support group facilitated, was elaborated on by intern 2 - as touched on in the *What is being learnt* section:

> So we have learned a lot about listening to each other and understanding what people are going through, and we actually advised each other. We just learned… I really learned a lot about coming together with the same group of people, with different perspectives, we shared different experiences and we helped each other where we can but sometimes we'd just talk to them and ask for help... I've really learned to understand what other people go through and we talked about a lot of things.

Not all interns had access to the same information and as such it was a place in which they could share information with each other, such as training opportunities within the department as well as information on external opportunities such as business opportunities. Communication amongst interns from the support group continued beyond the internship via WhatsApp where they would share information.

Intern 2 said that they had a friend in another department who was also on an internship programme, who "wished they had" an intern support group in their department. However, while beneficial the group was not without problems. Interns 2 and 3 lamented that the content generated from the sessions could have been shared with supervisors so that they know what interns "feel or how we see things within the unit". Unfortunately, this did not transpire and some interns felt that the convenors of the group were not speaking to the "right people". This created frustration and disillusionment as articulated by intern 7: "I went but… we were not touching on the real issues. It was a cover up. Then I was like, okay can we just be real about whatever that we're experiencing?". Intern 9 also felt that while the topics were helpful, they did not pay enough attention to "the things that needed to be addressed in that moment".

Intern 7 blamed interns themselves for it not being as effective as it could have been: "I think we are the ones who should have made it work like as a group." They felt that greater unity amongst intern support group members could have made it more valuable and gave the following example:

[35] Intern 2

> Because I remember there was a time where our contract [before it was extended], it was about to end and people were not sure what's gonna happen. So I was like, "Okay let's draft a letter to the Minister and ask the Minister what is happening? What is what? It's that time when DPSA was introducing two years it was quiet. So it was like okay let's draft, even if it's not to the Minister but then let's draft a letter or a submission just for us to be heard since we are all also concerned about our internship. Then a few people would be like, "Err okay. Err, oh well." So I just feel like we were not united.

The support group was a platform that enabled interns to share information, a space to debrief any issues they experienced and was a convening space that facilitated emotional development. In the face of insufficient support on the part of mentors and supervisors, the group was a means of filling this gap for interns. While useful, there was an expectation on the part of interns that the issues raised through this platform would be taken up with mentors and supervisors, and then be addressed. In other words, interns wanted it to be more than just a place to debrief but rather a platform that facilitated problem solving some of their issues.

Summary

Chapter Four, entitled *Results*, was aimed at unpacking the results that emerged in this grounded theory study. The first section provided a better understanding regarding the profile of graduates who were on the graduate internship programme, in the department under study. The second section, commenced with outlining the data that emerged in interviews related to the intended curriculum. As mentioned, the following Discussion chapter will synthesize the data related to the intended curriculum from this section along with the data gathered from government documents which was covered in section 2.1 in the *Contextualising the study* section. After outlining the intended curriculum, the second section then moved on to outline the data related to the experienced curriculum, that is, the curriculum that actually transpired. To do this, it covered the seven code groupings that emerged in the data, with procedural knowledge having the highest number of codes in it. *Decision making and problem solving* had no codes in them, and as such there was no sub-section on them. It being empty still however had relevance which is touched on in the following chapter. Moreover, the culture of being a public servant which emerged as an element of the experienced curriculum, was also covered in this section.

After having covered what the experienced curriculum entailed, section 3 detailed how interns went about learning these components of the experienced curriculum. Nine learning methods were outlined, with attending workshops and training; being directly 'taught' and given guidance; as well as participating in group activities, being the main ways through which interns reported learning.

Together the data on the 50 interns suggests that these are low paying intern positions which attracted mostly black underprivileged young women from outside the Gauteng province of South Africa. This is also substantiated by the institution and degree type data which revealed that most interns did not attend universities nor held tertiary qualifications that were considered prestigious. More specifically, 65% of them attended formerly black tertiary institutions and universities of technology as well as studied through correspondence, while 34% of them had a Diploma or National Diploma. These qualifications are considered less desirable compared to Bachelor degrees and were typically not specialist in nature but rather generic and general. Thus, while it was the view of a HR official interviewed that the best candidate of the day was selected during the interview process, there appears to be self-selection onto the programmes whereby a particular kind of graduate is applying for the programme, and then from this cohort the ‘best’ is selected.

While defined as the curriculum that is intended to transpire, the intended curriculum was not unitary in that it was associated with two sets of actors – namely the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) and HR officials within the department. While there is overlap between the intended curriculum of policy makers and HR officials, there was however a difference in terms of how they understand the internship as a facilitator of future employment prospects.

There emerged various factors which had both a direct and indirect bearing on the learning of interns. These factors related to the interns themselves and the people around them, the institutional environment in which they operated as well as the work they did. To understand the data around the factors that affected the workplace learning of interns, section 4 unpacked this according to learning factors; context factors; and additional factors. Additional factors which were management of internship and departmental culture, were those factors that arose in the data as being significant factors which affected the learning of interns but were considered ‘additional’ as it did not form part of Eraut’s (2004a) factor typology. The

implications of this and the factors which were found to have particular relevance to this study is covered in the *Discussion* chapter to follow, and forms part of the theory that was generated through this research. Lastly, this chapter also outlined the data related to the intern support group. While the intern support group was not a factor in the learning of interns, it nonetheless surfaced frequently in interviews as something of interest and as such was unpacked.

Having outlined the key data that emerged, Chapter Five will move beyond just describing or exploring what transpired in this research and will move towards theory building. This is in line with a grounded theory approach which was adopted in this study.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The demographic of young people that are on these internship programmes are young unemployed black graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds who in the absence of this opportunity may be unemployed. Many interns heard about these internships through friends or adverts they had seen, so an elementary level of social capital would have enabled them to find out about the opportunity. Given this target audience for the internship, this internship could be considered part of "rebuilding the structured pathways into work" that Kraak (2010) called for as it was a means of helping young black graduates have a link to the labour market in ways that do not already exist for them (p. 100). This resonates with the context which government outlined as the backdrop for the implementation of this internship. According to them, universities are not adequately preparing graduates for the workplace and jobs are not being created quickly enough for young people – the confluence of which fuels graduate unemployment. Using the machinery of the state, government is trying to 'correct' this by intervening in the labour market through the introduction of this internship. It is a response to prevailing socio-economic conditions and forms part of their developmental agenda. The imperative for this is critical seeing that government cannot have a situation in which young black people in a post-apartheid South Africa continue to face marginalisation even after attaining a university education, which is meant to open doors for their future. In plain terms, it cannot be that after having been excluded from higher learning during apartheid, they go onto be excluded from the labour market in democratic South Africa. Thus, while we are looking at this internship in this research from a learning perspective, it is also a labour market intervention to help correct and fix the bias towards these graduates that they are experiencing. In particular, it is meant to assist black graduates who experience a lower labour market absorption rate. With it being a labour market intervention by the South African government as well as an under researched area, served to make it an area of research that warranted deeper understanding and research.

This chapter is organised around two main sections and one auxiliary section. The *first section* outlines the intended and experienced curriculum that emerged in this study. This is followed by a discussion about the alignment and misalignment between these two curricula. The *second section* then unpacks the theory that has been generated through this research and discusses the different components thereof. Unlike other research approaches, grounded theory is orientated

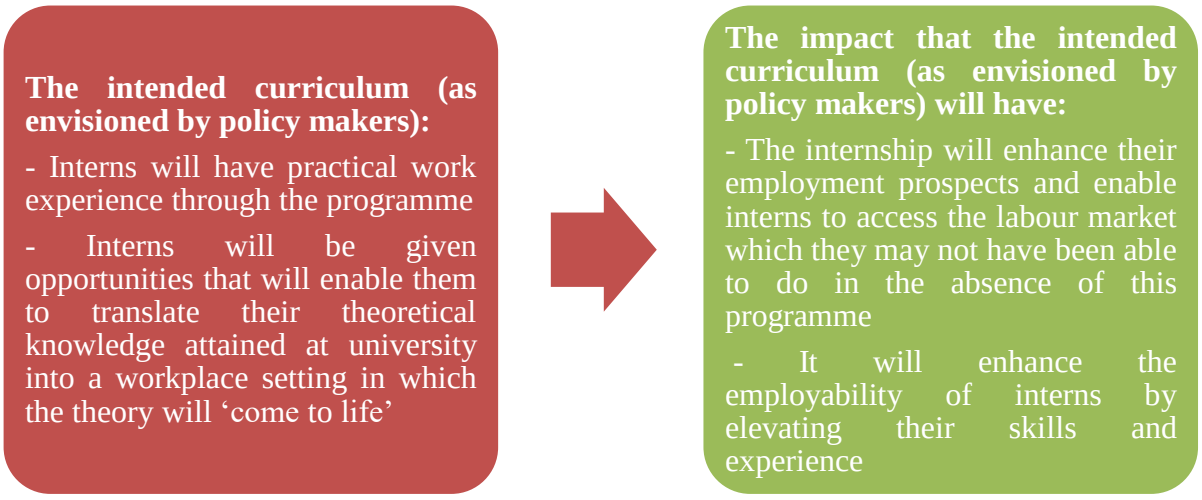
towards explaining a phenomenon through theory building as opposed to just describing or exploring a phenomenon. As such, this second section adds a level of completeness in this regard by fulfilling all the requirements of a grounded theory research study. Lastly, the *third section* then speaks to the intern support group, which while not directly related to the emergent theory and key research questions, was considered something that would add value to this research area owing to it expanding existing knowledge.

5.1 The intended and experienced curriculum

5.1.1 The intended curriculum

From a policy perspective, the intended curriculum - as envisioned by the designers of the programme which includes officials within DPSA - will provide practical work experience for interns and enable them to translate their theoretical knowledge attained at university into a workplace setting in which the theory will 'come to life'. In so doing, the belief is that this programme will enhance the employment prospects of interns and enable them to access the labour market which they may not have been able to do in the absence of this programme, as well as elevate their skills, experience and employability. In short, owing to this programme prospective employers must want to employ them – which they may not have been willing to do before interns completed the programme. This understanding regarding the intended curriculum and the impact it will have on the individual is summarised in Figure 17.

Figure 17: Summary of intended curriculum and its impact, as envisioned by policy makers



Source: Author generated

Policy makers are articulating what can be considered ‘best practice’ and ultimately what internship programmes ought to do, which is to create a pathway for young people to connect to job opportunities beyond the internship and capacitate them such that they can make the most of those future opportunities.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, the intended curriculum is not associated with one set of actors but rather two sets of actors – namely the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) and HR officials within the department. Both actors envisioned the intended curriculum as encompassing four main components. Firstly, it should not be divorced from the academic qualifications of interns but should build on this in a way that enables them to put theory into practice. As such, work tasks allocated to interns and the units they are placed in should align with this. Secondly, the intended curriculum should make interns ‘employable’ so that they are job ready. To do this, it should balance interns performing tasks which aid the department’s operational needs while also developing and enhancing the employability skills of interns. Developing their skills in this regard is critical as it will prepare them for the working world and give them the workplace exposure that they need to enhance their prospects of future employment. While the intended curriculum should facilitate this and expose them to as many areas as possible, they will still undertake administrative work such as making photocopies, as they need to “start at the bottom” and understand the whole process of the value chain. Thirdly, the intended curriculum should also develop the knowledge and competencies of interns in the context of government, which means learning how to communicate within a government setting; understanding government processes and culture; as well as being able to assist in the delivery of relevant public services of the department interns are located in. Lastly, the intended curriculum should develop the individual on a personal level such as developing their confidence.

The convergence between the two levels of officials - the policy makers who developed and designed the internship as well as HR officials in the department - is summarised in Table 16.

Table 16: Intended curriculum from the perspective of policy makers and Human Resource officials

Intended curriculum component	Intended curriculum from the perspective of policy makers	Intended curriculum from the perspective of Human Resource (HR) officials
Should be linked and build on the academic qualifications of interns and enable them to put theory into practice.	Enable interns to apply their knowledge in a workplace setting.	Expose interns to meaningful real life and professional work experiences that complement their classroom experience, with "meaningful" referring to work that is aligned to their qualifications.
Develop the individual on a personal level such as developing their confidence.	Develop their soft skills including their communication skills.	Developing the individual intern so that they can for instance know how to manage their personal finances.
Have an understanding of how to work and operate in the context of a government department but also a work environment in general.	Enable them to understand what working in government means including understanding government processes and how government delivers its services.	Develop an understanding of government policies and processes of their respective units, and understanding how to operate in government. For instance, this includes treating all information as confidential and being integrated into government's culture.
The intended curriculum should make interns 'employable' so that they are job ready.	Enable them to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge that will improve their employment prospects and make them more productive so that they can contribute effectively to their future workplaces.	Develop and enhance their employability skills so that they can be employable and also improve the employment prospects of unemployed graduates who find it difficult to secure employment, while also enhancing government's capacity to do its work.

Source: Author generated

In terms of how the intended curriculum is to be achieved, there is also no indication of consequential deviation between policy makers and HR officials. For HR officials, the intended curriculum would be achieved through interns carrying out the tasks assigned to them; getting guidance and feedback from their mentor; attending training; and through realising and

reflecting on areas where they need to improve. While policy makers were not as specific, they did emphasise the role of mentors so there is no reason to assume deviation on this point – as mentors would be the ones allocating tasks and giving guidance.

There is however a difference in terms of how HR officials and DPSA officials understand the internship as a facilitator of future employment prospects. For HR officials, in terms of how the internship facilitated future employment for interns, they believe that just having the internship experience listed on an intern's CV would open the doors of other employment opportunities in and of itself, regardless of the actual skills attained through the internship. As such, regardless of the substance and content of the intended curriculum - or the experienced curriculum - the internship would facilitate future employment through the act of interns completing the programme.

The view of HR officials is not unsubstantiated. For instance, using Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) of South Africa from 2008Q1 to 2014Q3, Anand et al. (2016) finds that having prior work experience translated into an almost 50% higher job-finding rate than those without experience, with this being important for especially young people looking for employment. In particular, they find that for 15-24 year olds and even 25-34 year olds, not having work experience was associated with a reduced probability of finding employment compared to those who have worked before. They go on to add that this supports the view that employers use experience to screen potential employees during the hiring process. This leads them to conclude that providing work experience opportunities to young people, women and black people "holds the key to lowering unemployment in the short term" (Anand et al., 2016, p.5). Moreover, the importance of having two years of work experience was reiterated by the South African Graduates Development Association [SAGDA] (2013), whose report did not favour one year internships as "the employment market generally requires a minimum of two years of working experience before considering someone for a full-time position (p. 96). As such, while not an unfounded view, the belief that this is sufficient in and of itself is debatable – and will be touched on in relation to the warehousing discussion.

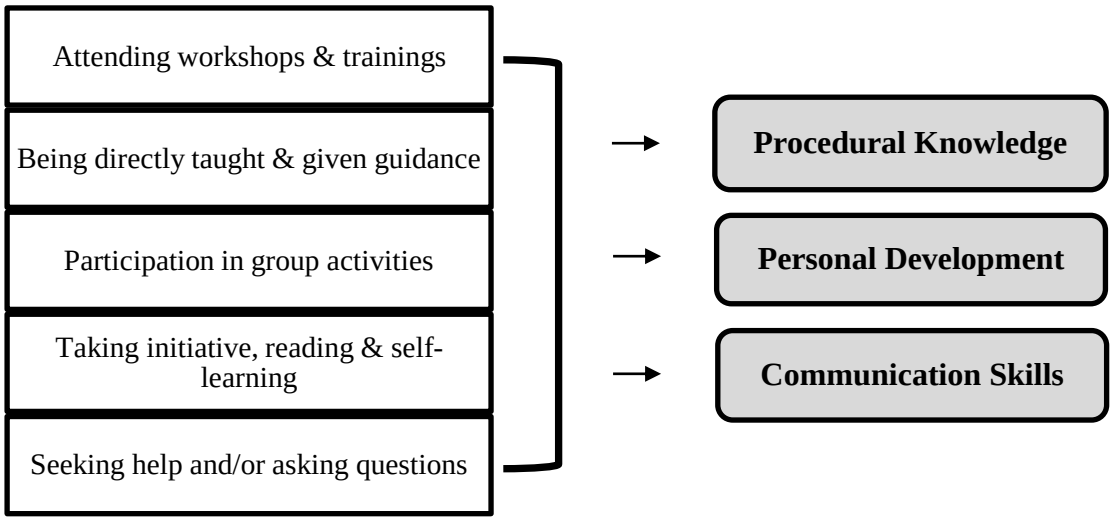
In contrast, policy makers did not articulate the employment mechanism in these terms but rather that the overall experience including the skills interns developed would give rise to employment. However, this is not to say that HR officials - including mentors and supervisors - did not concern themselves with developing the skills of interns, but this outlook may have

given rise to a situation in which being 'warehoused' characterised the internship experience of some interns.

5.1.2 The experienced curriculum

Figure 18 outlines the five main ways interns reported learning as well as the three main things they reported having learnt. In other words, the learning mechanisms on the left gave rise to the learning on the right of the diagram. The five learning mediums are what interns are generally accustomed to in a university setting, which is perhaps why it was easy for them to identify and articulate – and why it also appealed to them. As mentioned, the focus of this study was on intern learning, whether it transpired formally, non-formally or informally. Doing so would have excluded the learning that transpired through attending workshops and training programmes, which was found to be important to intern learning. Thus, while workplace learning can sometimes exclusively focus on informal learning, this was not the case in this research. This is because I wanted to understand the totality of the graduate internship learning experience, regardless of how it occurred.

Figure 18: Reported Learning Mechanisms and Learning



Source: Author generated

Procedural knowledge encompassed mainly administrative tasks which were not aligned with the respective academic backgrounds of interns. As such, interns tended to not get experience in line with their qualifications as demonstrated by quotes from interns 5, 3 and 7. While some

interns may have developed an understanding of their respective unit's core functions, they did not carry it out themselves nor any significant part thereof. In general, this was a product of interns not having access to "meaningful activities" related to the core functions of the units they were located in. Procedural knowledge dominating the experienced curriculum corresponds with Dreyfus's (1982) knowledge phase of novice. While, according to Smith (2003) should not be unsurprising at an intern level, this however in this research does not align with the intended curriculum. Reinforcing the notion that elementary and entry level knowledge and skill is what they developed during the internship is the fact that the decision making and problem solving groups did not have any codes in them. This deficit in relation to the skills they were able to develop during the internship was a consequence of the work allocated to them, which was mostly administrative in nature, and which did not allow for decision making and problem solving skills to be developed. This is in line with the research of Mkhize (2019), who focuses on interns who completed internships in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. He finds that 52.6% of interns were either neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed that there was a direct link between their tertiary qualifications and the tasks allocated to them. Most interns reported mainly doing administrative work with only 7.9% of interns (a total of three out of 38) reported doing work that entailed "problem solving and taking significant decisions" (p. 145). According to research conducted by The South African Graduates Development Association [SAGDA] (2013), interns did "more general office administration activities instead of meaningful work" (p. 17). Their research methodology entailed conducting surveys, focus groups and in-depth interviews with interns who completed internships at organisations who had partnered with the Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA), Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority (merSETA), and the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA).

Regarding the experienced curriculum, it did include personal development components such as handling emotions; consulting and working with others; and empathy development. The personal development learning emerged from observing and working with other people, which included situations of conflict. This demonstrates modelling as a mode of instruction in the workplace, albeit even if not deliberate in nature. As such, it highlights the importance of interns being exposed to other colleagues during the internship for learning purposes, with communication skill development also arising from colleague engagement. With that said, while observing and listening were integral to intern learning, they may not enable learning

knowledge that is more hidden or opaque nor enable progression from a legitimate peripheral participant to a full participant.

Interns were also inducted into the culture of government which comprises the hidden curriculum. 'Hidden' because they were inducted into this knowingly or unknowingly, with this behaviour being modelled for them regarding what it means to act and behave as a public servant. Interns spoke to the environment being high paced with insufficient time for planning; where significant time was spent in meetings; where there was a monotony to the work; and an environment in which work was reactive as opposed to proactive. Interns were also not immune to feeling uneven workflows, which was a function of the financial cycle. There were also periods of inactivity, for different reasons, in which interns did not have much to do e.g., owing to their mentors being busy or the yearly event calendar of their respective units. Moreover, they witnessed and experienced issues of rank, protocol and interpersonal dynamics between colleagues. For instance, intern 6 experienced not being able to go on courses, which their mentor attributed to issues of rank and power dynamics. Thus, while they were inducted into the culture of government and learnt how government worked, it was not always a positive experience. As such it can be assumed to be in contrast with the intentions of the intended curriculum as envisioned by both policy makers and HR officials. In other words, while policy speaks to inducting interns into government culture, it was spoken about in positive terms associated with graduate intern learning and development.

While not every intern would have acquired the same knowledge and skills, as Burford et al. (2020) points out, this section looked at intern learning in broad terms and aggregated it across the interns interviewed. Having discussed the results that emerged in this study in relation to the experienced and intended curriculum, the alignment and misalignment between these two curricula will be explored in further detail in the following section.

5.1.3 Alignment and misalignment between the intended and experienced curriculum

In contrast to the intended curriculum, the experienced curriculum was not characterised as being a bridge between the theoretical knowledge of interns and workplace practice. Moreover, the workplace practice they did acquire was not aligned with their academic qualifications. As such, it did not "complement their classroom experience" as stated in the departmental internship and learnership policy (2010). The potential for what the experienced curriculum could be in this regard does not seem to have been fully exploited. In other words, in the context

of the public sector internship programme within the department under study, there was potential for the experienced curriculum to be enhanced which would have facilitated the development of greater skills and experience – enhancement here referring to greater alignment with the intended curriculum. Factors which contributed towards this, and ultimately the alignment and misalignment between the intended and experienced curriculum, are explored later. With respect to whether the experienced curriculum developed the employability of interns through the development of their skills and experience, while it did expose interns to mainly procedural tasks which could assist them in gaining entry level jobs elsewhere, the internship did not develop their skills and experience that mirrored the intentions of particularly policy makers at the level of the intended curriculum.

The example given by a HR official, who wanted to convey the point regarding interns getting work experience that was linked to their qualifications, was that of an IT official who for instance learnt how to resolve issues with printers. What this example demonstrated - unconsciously on the part of the HR official - is that this does not translate easily for interns who do not have specialist backgrounds. In terms of degree type, we know that their qualification majors included Business Administration, Information Technology; Business Management, International relations and communications; Computer Science; Environmental and Resource Studies. As such, it may be difficult for interns to have an internship experience that aligns with their qualifications when their qualifications are general as opposed to specialised. This is not to say that these majors do not have value but if the internship is being positioned as something that builds on their qualifications and enables them to put theory into practice but then their qualifications are general in nature, it then becomes difficult to link their internship experience back to their qualifications because there is no link to make.

While this could have posed a challenge to those actors allocating tasks - such as mentors and supervisors - as there would be a lack of tasks they could allocate to interns that were aligned with their academic background, the results do not lend themselves to the view that this was a significant barrier to intern learning. Instead, there were a host of other factors which emerged that caused a misalignment between the intended and experienced curriculum. These factors are discussed in detail later in this chapter. In short, interns could still have had the opportunity to do ‘meaningful’ work and while it may not have been in alignment with their qualifications, it would have aligned with learning about the core activities of their respective units. This is

something which emerged frequently in interviews whereby interns complained about being allocated tasks that were mainly administrative.

Assigning mainly administrative tasks to interns was not the envisioned mechanism for achieving the intended curriculum, and is not what the policy, DPSA as the overseer of the internship nor the HR officials in the department itself had in mind. With that said, according to departmental HR officials, interns needed to understand the full value chain of processes and activities which required being exposed to administrative tasks. However, interns were being exposed to only certain parts of the value chain and were unable to understand, be exposed to or carry out responsibilities in line with the components of the value chain that were more 'higher up'.

Interns were not able to gain an understanding of the whole value chain process within their respective units, nor did it expose them to a wide range of different areas of work. While the intended curriculum wanted interns to "start from the bottom" and develop their skills and experience progressively, most interns were not able to progress in this way. In short, they started at the bottom and stayed there. Interns were however able to develop government specific knowledge and competencies including understanding government protocols, bureaucracy and systems; learn about government itself; and its organisational culture. Moreover, the internship did enhance interns in terms of personal development such as handling their emotions as well as self-awareness and self-evaluation, as detailed in the Results chapter.

Given the frequent reference of the term *administrative* by both interns and officials, there is a need to clarify what is meant by this as it differs from the specific usage in the public administrative discipline. The term administration means management of affairs, derived from the Latin words *ad* and *ministrate* meaning 'to serve' or 'to manage' (Marume, 2016). Herbert A. Simon defined the concept as "activities of groups cooperating to accomplish common goals" (Marume, 2016, p. 15). Similarly, Pfiffner and L.D White defined it respectively as the "organisation and direction of human and material resources to achieve desired ends" and "the direction, coordination and control of many persons to achieve some purpose or objective" (Marume, 2016, p. 16). With the term administration used in relation to the public sphere, the usage of the term could be conflated with public administration. Some of the definitions for public administration are "all those operations having for their purpose the fulfilment or

enforcement of public policy" by White; "the activities of the executive branches of the national, state and local governments" by Simon; or a longer definition by Waldo, "actions involved in affecting the intent or desire of a government… 'business' part of a government, concerned with carrying out the law as made by legislative bodies (or other authoritative agents) and interpreted by the courts, through the process of organisation and management" (Marume, 2016, p. 17). Generally, the concept is either used in a wide or narrow sense. In a wide sense, it refers to activities by the legislature, executive and judiciary while in a narrow sense it only refers to the activities carried out by the executive branch of government. This is linked to two views on the nature of public administration, namely the integral view and the managerial view. The integral view, which is associated with the wider sense of the term, is the view that public administration includes managerial, technical, clerical and manual activities. In contrast, the managerial view holds that public administration encompasses only managerial activities that are carried out by senior officials, which do not include activities which are clerical and manual in nature.

From the interviews conducted with interns, it is evident that these definitions do not capture what interns or officials had in mind when they deployed the term. Instead, administration; administrative; and admin were used interchangeably to refer to clerical activities such as making copies, booking flights and organising meeting rooms. With grounded theory, it is important to use the terminology that emerged in the data and as such, the reader should bear in mind that it refers to clerical activities and its usage signals a contrast to *core activities*. Core activities described by intern 8 are activities related to developing content, planning interventions, organising resources including budgeting and overall implementation as well as that which is related to the functioning of a particular unit. When a HR official used the phrase 'meaningful work', they were also including activities in line with an intern's qualification but which ultimately was also deployed to contrast it to administrative related work.

To further make sense of the intended and experienced curriculum, three questions are probed regarding the data that emerged: *Was the experienced curriculum in line with intern expectations? What is the programme trying to achieve?* And as a follow-up to the preceding question, *are interns being warehoused?*

Was the experienced curriculum in line with intern expectations?

While interns were unaware of the intended curriculum, there was a mismatch between what they hoped the curriculum would be compared to what they experienced. In other words, at an intern level, there was an expected curriculum and an experienced curriculum. At the outset of the internship, the expectations of interns were not adequately managed which led to a significant gap between their expected and experienced curriculum. However, what they hoped they would learn was in line with the intended curriculum. In other words, had the intended curriculum been realised, it would have been closer to what they had hoped to gain from the internship.

While the expectations of interns were poorly managed, the failure of the internship to live up to the expectations of interns does not warrant a breach of the psychological contract. The notion of the psychological contract comprises the mutual obligations of employees and employers, from the perspective of the employee but not all expectations can be classified as forming part of this contract (Smith et al., 2011). Rather, it is "only when employee expectations are based on perceived implicit or explicit promises made by the organisation" (Smith et al., 2011, p.10). Moreover, according to Dabos and Rousseau it "involves agreement on specific contract terms (mutuality) and on the reciprocal contributions that these terms imply (reciprocity)" (2004, as cited in Smith et al., 2011, p.10). Sometimes parties may not have a clear and common understanding regarding these expectations, and sometimes there is confusion regarding who in an organisation is responsible for delivering on these different expectations. The promises and expectations in the psychological contract literature are typically referred to either as hard or soft in nature. An example of a hard promise is remuneration, while a soft promise could be one's expected level of commitment. Thus, while there was disappointment on the part of interns, there does not appear to be any breach of contract – whether it be in terms of the psychological contract or otherwise.

With that said the age and level of experience of the interns is such that failure to manage their expectations is not merely a minor oversight or shortcoming but rather one that has a bearing on their experience during the internship. Smith et al. (2011) found that younger trainees generally had different expectations compared to their older counterparts who had previous work experience and that providing an induction programme was important and needed to transpire early on in the process (Smith et al., 2011). In the research of Smith et al. (2011), sound performance management processes were considered a means of reinforcing and

clarifying expectations and promises for both employees and employers, in addition to better training of managers. In one of the companies they studied, there were regular quarterly reports which formed part of the 'early intervention' approach to identifying problems timeously and it was found to be an effective means of reinforcing the commitment of all parties and maintaining an acceptable standard of work and training (Smith et al., 2011). Unfortunately, expectations could be ill-matched owing to employers not having the expertise in dealing with apprentices and trainees (Smith et al., 2011).

The intended curriculum did envision interns being inducted into their respective departments, there being performance management systems in place and the training of mentors, amongst other things – in line with what Smith et al. (2011) suggested. Yet, the experienced curriculum did not align with the intended curriculum and as such, in general, the experienced curriculum was not in line with either the intended curriculum nor the expectations of interns.

What is the programme trying to achieve?

In the introductory remarks in Chapter One, an intern is quoted who posed the question during interviews regarding what it is that government "want to see at the end?" This question along with the data that emerged demonstrates a lack of intentionality around the programme's implementation. The most frequent aim mentioned around the purpose of the programme is around employability and employment. While other objectives such as the internship playing a role in helping with government capacity constraints also surfaced, this is subordinate to the bigger aim of employment and employability enhancement. However, in this regard, there were different understandings regarding how the internship can facilitate this with HR officials appearing to have a more pragmatic understanding regarding how the internship enables labour market access compared to policymakers. In this regard, apart from the content of the experience itself, merely having the internship experience listed on an intern's CV is considered an enabler for future employment and a sufficient signal to future employers. In other words, in their eyes, employment begets employment so providing employment through this public sector internship will facilitate other employment for interns - particularly of a non-internship nature - as having some work experience is generally a prerequisite for employment.

This public sector internship differs from an apprenticeship programme, in terms of the intended and experienced curriculum, how it is operationalised and in particular the retention dimension – with there not being an assumption of retention on completion of the internship

programme. Apprenticeship programmes encompass both employment and training dimensions, with the costs entailed in the delivery of the programme 'shared' by both parties. As such, employers need to have certainty that their trained employees will not leave after being trained or before the investment made in them has been recouped – this referring to when they become proficient and productive in their respective trades over time (Casey, 1986; Bilginsoy, 2003). However, while employers pay for training, employees also in turn accept low levels of remuneration during training to 'compensate' for the training they receive (Bilginsoy, 2003). This produces a common understanding on the part of both parties regarding retention after training.

Thus, employers operating apprenticeship programmes or any programme in which there is retention upon completion have incentives which officials in the context of the internship programme do not have. Firstly, unlike apprenticeships, the internship 'system' lacks incentives to ensure that intern learning is transpiring at all. With the impact of the internship programme not having a bearing on the department, this may contribute towards department officials not being invested in its outcomes. Secondly, in the case of the internship, there is no incentive to ensure that there is alignment between the intended and experienced curriculum as a lack of alignment will not have a medium to long-term bearing on the officials or department.

Also, in terms of retention, while interns may go on to be employed within the department after the internship, the experience that is being offered to them is not primarily geared towards this. Instead, the internship is trying to equip them with a generic set of skills as opposed to specialist skills. While the intended curriculum speaks to wanting to expose interns to skills and knowledge that align with their qualifications, this was often not the case which also reinforced the generic nature of their learning. Thus while it is commonplace for new entrants such as apprentices to receive training that is more general in nature (Casey, 1986), for graduate interns on this programme it was even more so as it was not directed nor centred around a particular set of skills such as metal working. They were however socialised into the workings of government, which while general, is context-specific and may differ from other contexts. For instance, it may differ from a private sector company or non-profit organisation. In terms of the curriculum, it translates into the curriculum also not being geared towards a particular outcome – let alone one that government officials are invested in. As such, as long as interns get an 'experience' and are on the internship, that suffices.

Even if the internship outcome was employment as opposed to something learning related, employment post the completion of the internship is not monitored either at a policy or implementation level. The only mechanism that was in place to monitor outcomes was quarterly reports, which are meant to monitor and track learning. Thus, regardless of the theory of change and the programme's intent, the absence of measuring could be said to reinforce the view that the internship is seen as an enabler in and of itself, and as such only completion needed to be measured. While there are quarterly reports in place that are intended to be a mechanism to monitor and track learning, these were considered ineffective and done merely for the sake of compliance. This begs the question of whether the internship is a form of warehousing graduates.

Are interns being warehoused?

When considering whether the graduate internship programme is a form of warehousing graduates, the research of Cornish (2018) is relevant. He wanted to understand the educational experiences of young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) but who were pursuing further education. In the United Kingdom (UK), young people who are NEET or at-risk of exclusion from schooling are of socio-economic concern to the country – one could argue this is also the case for unemployed graduates in South Africa. These young people are considered unproductive members of society, not well educated and social outcasts, making them a grouping of people which could threaten the democratic fibre of the UK. The policy intervention targeting them is a pre-vocational course aimed at enabling disadvantaged young people attain qualifications as well as develop confidence and employability skills - which is believed to lead to employment. However using a case study approach, Cornish (2018) finds that the aim was not so much about outcomes but rather about 'keeping students busy', and as such the curriculum lacked purpose, academic focus and relevance. More specifically, it was about keeping "students busy, with any kind of work" (Cornish, 2018, p. 104). As such, students were being 'warehoused' which played out such that there was no incentive to do additional classroom activities that increased the knowledge of students. Students ended up doing tasks that lacked purpose, and which students themselves considered random, unmeaningful and mundane.

The argument could be made that the government's public sector internship is a form of warehousing. Firstly, interns reported doing unchallenging tasks, not having enough to do as well as having periods of inactivity. Secondly, the notion of warehousing resonates with the

graduate internship programme because even if it is not beneficial to them in their future careers or something that would develop their employability skills, they are kept busy. After all, the idea is that having this on their CV will help them. With the internship having been extended from one to two years, this idea is further reinforced because the time extension did not necessarily mean increased learning, but their CV's will reflect two years of work experience and will 'keep them off the street' for longer. Also, as commented by a mentor, having interns was more about compliance as opposed to something based on departmental needs. Thirdly, while students in the pre-vocational course lamented not receiving a "real and meaningful" education, wanting to be taught "skills to achieve" and "proper English and maths" as well as the slow pace of learning (Cornish, 2018, p. 108), graduate interns also complained about an insufficient workload and about wanting to be part and parcel of doing core activities of their respective units. As such, like the pre-vocational students, interns also wanted a "different form of knowledge" but which they were unable to access owing to the effect of being warehoused (Cornish, 2018, p. 108). The interns whom government is trying to help through this internship programme did not in the cohort under study have specialist backgrounds. As such, it could be that the intended curriculum is also trying to address this by providing them with a compensatory experience which can make up for the general and generic qualifications they have. With that said, and in line with what has already been discussed, interns tended to do administrative related tasks and were not able to progress from low to more specialised tasks.

Fourthly, seeing that the labour market in South Africa is not absorbing graduates as quickly as it should, the internship programme is a means of keeping them 'off the street'. However, in this regard, it could be that it is not a programme that can be considered at all times as a form of warehousing as warehousing could be a function of prevailing economic conditions (Avis et al., 2017). In essence, during times of an economic boom, it could be perceived as "valuable work-related education and training" but during a time of economic stagnation or downturn, it could be perceived and implemented as a form of warehousing (Avis et al., 2017, p. 304).

Lastly, the low expectations that tutors had of students, Cornish (2018) found, reinforced their practices of warehousing – that is, just keeping students busy as opposed to providing them with an academically rigorous education that was aligned with the intended curriculum. While the attitudes of tutors may not have been intentional, it nonetheless had an impact. Overall, these young people were groomed for routine and low paying employment. This influenced the nature of the education they received with less being expected of them, and in turn less being

taught to them (Cornish, 2018). This is despite the at-risk young people on the programme wanting what they considered a proper and real education. In some way, this too resonates with the internship programme. If the experience of being on the programme is considered sufficient in and of itself, then keeping interns busy with any tasks – even if unrelated to their careers and not contributing meaningfully to their development – or interns having an insufficient workload, may not be seen as problematic because they are not expected to get much out of the internship experience. Moreover, the attitude of some colleagues in the department under study was such that they did not think that interns had much potential to be of assistance to them which meant they were not invested in the learning of interns and did not think teaching them made any difference. With not much expected of interns, less time was invested in them by some officials.

Related to this is the issue Cornish (2018) raises regarding how pre-vocational courses reinforced and consolidated the negative learning identity of students. In other words, these students were seen as marginalised but went on to receive a sub-standard education that sought to 'warehouse' them, which in so doing consolidated the "negative learning identity for these students" as "disengaged and disaffected" (Cornish 2018, p. 110). In practice, it produced and reinforced the very identities that the policy sought to undo instead of helping to facilitate new identities. As such, there was a counter discourse at play as the opposite of what was meant to be achieved was being done through factors such as tutor attitudes, broader socio-economic factors and management strategies. Thus, while aimed at young people who were excluded in some way, it sought to exclude them even more according to Cornish (2018).

This is not dissimilar to the graduate internship programme. It took young graduates who would otherwise find it difficult to find employment, provided them with a sub-optimal internship experience and in so doing, reinforced their status as young people in need of an intervention - which was further cemented by negative attitudes they encountered in the workplace. In this study, many interns arising from being an intern faced discrimination and were allocated mainly administrative tasks. If the marginalisation of interns - as signalled by their demographic background such as university attended - influenced their selection onto the programme, and they went on to be further marginalised then this may also have the effect of reinforcing their marginalisation. However, in contrast to the students in the study of Cornish (2018), if these interns went on to find employment thereafter – which may be more likely

compared to the pre-vocational students who did not complete schooling – then this may serve to ‘undo’ the negative learning identity of interns.

According to Cornish (2018), the overall data which emerged in the study suggests a policy disconnect between the purpose and implementation of the programme. The particular type of education made available to students was influenced by "a complex interplay between broader structural factors, inherent assumptions and underlying ideologies" (Cornish, 2018, p. 109). For Cornish (2018), the themes which emerged were namely: Influences of institutional and departmental factors; the role of underlying stereotypical assumptions and conceptualisations of these particular student participants; and lastly, structural factors and contradictions in a neo-liberal knowledge economy. In the case of the research of Cornish (2018), the need to keep bums on the seat appeared driven by financial incentives between the college and funding body. In the case of the public sector internship in this study, the incentive for officials within the department appears to be compliance related which is reinforced by what a mentor said regarding the programme being forced down their throats.

Many interns at the time of conducting interviews were unemployed, which may serve to reinforce the notion that the internship was a means of warehousing interns and keeping them ‘off the street’ as opposed to it being a bridge towards employment. With that said, interviews were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic which may have had a bearing on their employment prospects. Against this backdrop, it is difficult to draw any decisive conclusions regarding their employment status and the internship.

While it is useful to deploy the language of warehousing to a South African context, how it is used in this instance does have nuance to the UK context. In South Africa, there is a political and social intention and a transformation component which is not as strong compared to how warehousing is spoken about in the UK.

While workplaces are not associated with being environments in which learning is the primary objective, the graduate internship programme that the South African government operates is unique in terms of the impact it can have. While it would be beneficial for any government to have a situation in which graduates can comfortably transition to the workplace, our historical context as a country places a ‘special burden’ on workplaces – not only the public sector. This is because owing to the socio-economic conditions in which particularly young black South

Africans find themselves - not arising from their own actions but rather imposed on them by our colonial and apartheid history - every proverbial ‘corner’ of the country has a role to play in addressing these unjust imbalances. Thus, it is not about how to just keep troublesome youth off the street so that they do not get into crime or be a menace to society but rather in South Africa deploying the term has more positive connotations. There is also a regional dimension to this warehousing with young graduates being *warehoused* in the Gauteng province (where this particular internship programme operates), with these interns coming from other provinces in South Africa where there is less economic activity and development such as the Limpopo province where many graduates were from.

With a better understanding regarding the intended curriculum and the experienced curriculum, the former being that which was intended to transpire and the latter being what interns experienced, as well as having discussed the alignment and misalignment which surfaced, the following section will move beyond simply describing and exploring what transpired and will delve into the theory that emerged.

5.2 Emerging theory

5.2.1 Part 1: Curricular fission

I came into this study wanting to know more about what interns on public sector internship programmes learned and how they went about learning these things, with data collected from one national South African government department. Using a grounded theory approach meant that I had to allow research questions to evolve in a way that was led by the emerging data, and the interplay between the data collected and the literature. While I gained an understanding of what and how interns learned, these questions became secondary. Instead, what emerged as primary was the *factors which affected intern learning*, and how in turn these factors played a role in creating an alignment or misalignment between the intended and experienced curriculum. The intended curriculum is the curriculum that was intended to transpire and which is desirable (Billett, 2006; Moercke & Eika, 2002; Harris, 2011), while the experienced curriculum is what interns actually "experience, construe and learn as a result of its enactment" (Billett, 2006, p. 2; Moercke & Eika, 2002).

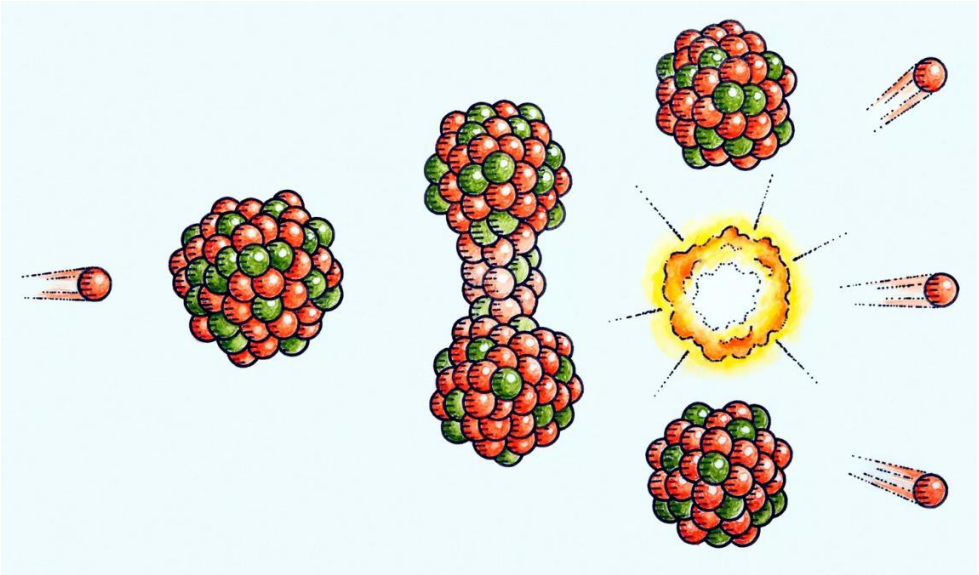
At the heart of grounded theory is the pursuit of trying to use practical methods to help researchers make sense of complex social problems. Central to this is the process of identifying a main analytic idea or central phenomenon and being able to articulate this regarding the other

categories that emerged – which may be conditions, actions, interactional strategies, or consequences.

In this research, I have developed and deployed the concept of *Curricular fission* and use it as a metaphorical device to describe the situation in which factors that affect learning create a disjuncture between the intended and experienced curriculum - with *curricular* being a reference to the workplace curriculum. Using this metaphor enables me to succinctly speak about the two key elements of this research simultaneously, that is, it allows me to speak to the misalignment between the intended and experienced curriculum while also surfacing the factors dimension which influenced this misalignment.

Fission refers to the process in which a large atom is split into smaller atoms owing to a neutron slamming into it (Office of Nuclear Energy, 2021) – with the proverbial neutron being the various factors at play. Each time the reaction occurs and breakaway cells are generated, energy is produced (Galindo, 2022). A way to understand fission is to contrast it to fusion, its antithesis, which is when two atoms converge into one (Office of Nuclear Energy, 2021). According to its more colloquial usage, fusion is defined as "fusing or melting" or "blending" (The Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 1993, p. 356). The fission process, as Helmenstine (2019) outlines is visually illustrated in Figure 19:

Figure 19: Fission Process



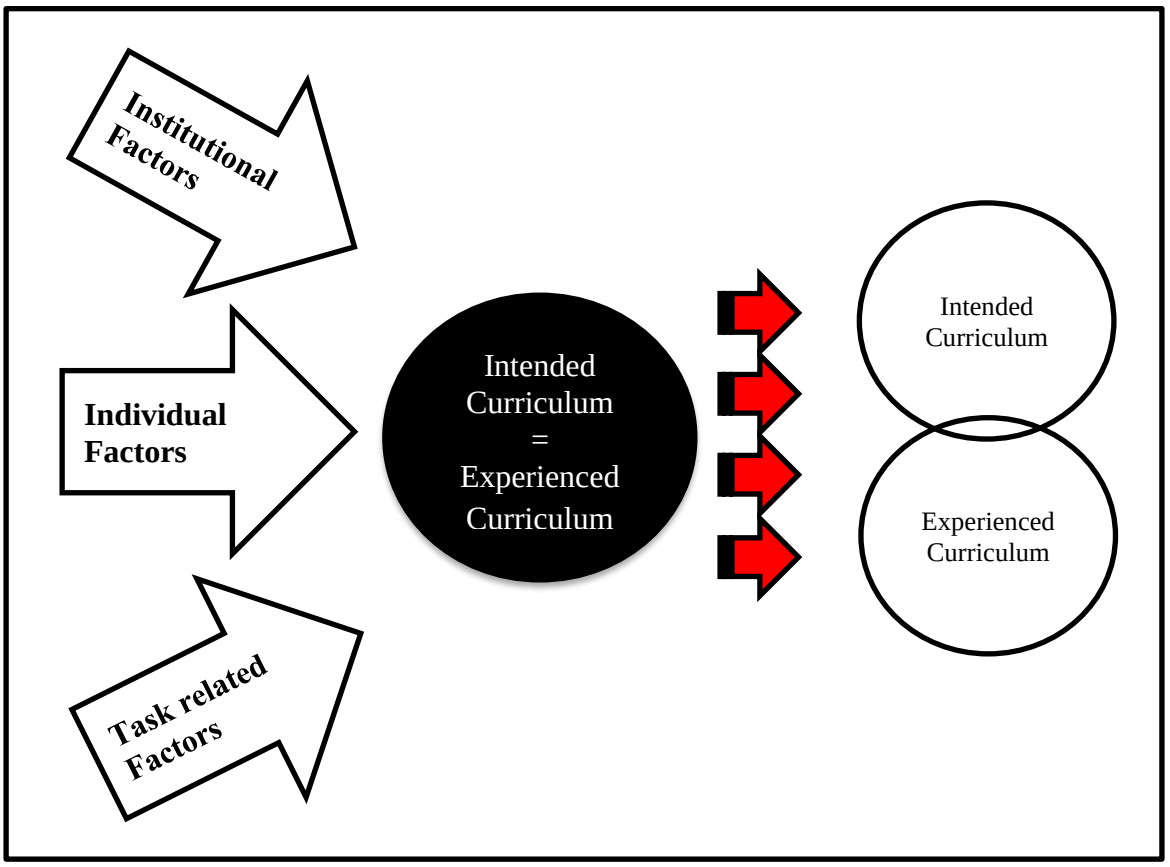
Source: Helmenstine (2019)

In this study, the factors that were found to have affected intern learning and which created a rupture and split between the intended and experienced curriculum are threefold: Institutional factors; individual factors; and task related factors. These factors 'collided' in a way that gave rise to curricular fission which created this division, and which is depicted in Figure 20: Curricular Fission. Instead of energy production, in the context of this government internship programme which is the subject of this research, frustration and impaired learning on the part of interns were generated. Impaired here refers to learning which is hindered by the misalignment of the intended and experienced curriculum.

In terms of how this research is situated within Tynjälä's (2013) 3-P model (in section 2.4), it covers all three domains regarding the presage, process and product dimensions unlike much of the research that Tynjälä (2013) sited which tends to focus on only one aspect of the model. While the 3-P model enables researchers to locate themselves within the broader literature as opposed to espouse and advocate for workplace learning to transpire in a specific way, the concept of *Curricular fission* captures in more dynamic ways how learning is influenced by factors and how a disjuncture is created between the intended and experienced curriculum arising from them.

While the factor typology classification developed by Eraut (2004a) was applied to the data and found resonance, some elements were more relevant to this research context compared to others. This is in line with what Eraut et al. (2004) acknowledge, which is that in different contexts the significance of different factors will vary and will play out in different ways to shape the overall learning experience. Based on the data that emerged in this study, there were three categories of factors which gave rise to curricular fission, which are outlined in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Curricular Fission



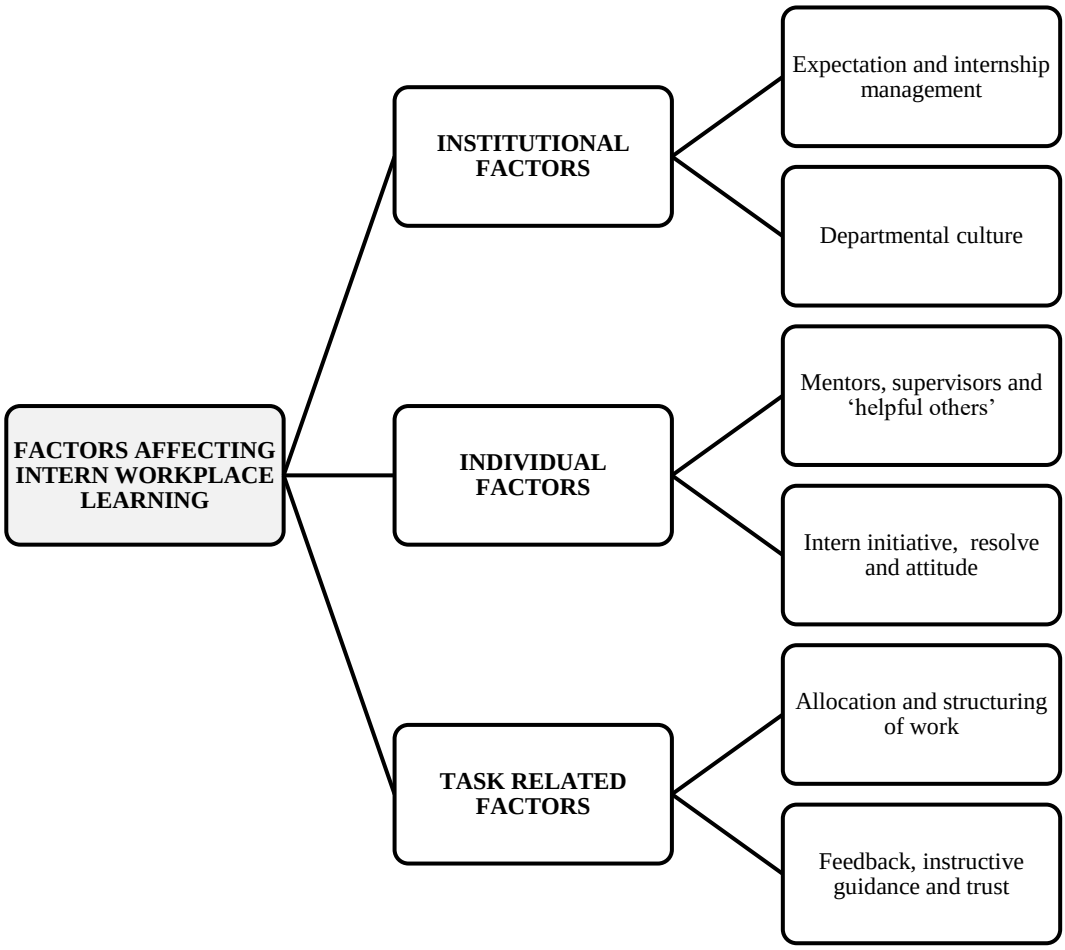
Source: Author generated

Institutional factors, individual factors and task related factors are comprised of sub-categories, as outlined in Figure 21. Institutional factors are comprised of expectation and internship management along with departmental culture. These factors are considered *institutional* as they operate at the level of the department. Individual factors are made up of mentors, supervisors and 'helpful others' as well as intern initiative and resolve. These are considered *individual* factors because they involve the individual – whether that be the intern themselves, the officials interns reported to or the people they interacted with. Lastly, task related factors include allocation and structuring of work along with feedback, instructive guidance and trust. Task related factors concern in some way the tasks allocated to interns, which had a direct bearing on intern learning.

As highlighted by the literature, an individual's learning is a product of the interplay between the learner and their milieu, which means learning can be inhibited by factors beyond the

individual. However, with that said, the individual also influences the learning process and as such they are also a factor in their own learning. The factor categories outlined above and illustrated below are what emerged in the data as that which affects the misalignment between the intended and experienced curriculum.

Figure 21: Categories and Sub-Categories of the Factors That Affect Workplace Learning



Source: Author generated

The research of Phaeton and Stears (2017) demonstrates that assumptions are made by the developers of the intended curriculum regarding how the curriculum will be implemented. In this study, for instance, the officials within DPSA who oversee the internship and developed the policy around it and the HR officials within the respective department under study assumed that there were incentives in place which would enable the proper interpretation, realisation and implementation of the intended curriculum. However, the graduate internship programme – unlike apprenticeship programmes as discussed – does not operate with the kind of incentives

which lend itself to bringing about an alignment between the intended and experienced curriculum. Amongst other things, mentors/supervisors and other colleagues have little incentive to ensure that intern learning transpires, which can also be reinforced by the belief that merely completing the internship programme is enough of an enabler – regardless of what interns learn. Phaeton and Stears (2017) advise that the curriculum should be thought of as a "web of interrelated and aligned activities" (p. 737), and this perspective also lends itself to the understanding that the factors affecting workplace learning need to be understood and managed, as a failure to do so ultimately impacts intern learning.

Having outlined the theory which emerged in this study, the succeeding section goes into greater detail regarding each of the factors which gave rise to curricular fission.

5.2.2 Part 2: Factors Affecting Workplace Learning

As mentioned, while the learning and context factors developed by Eraut (2004a) helped to shape the findings of this research, the factors that surfaced in this study are outlined in this section. A grounded theory study needs to stay 'grounded', bearing in mind both the deductive and inductive approach in this regard. To reflect this, Table 17 gives the reader a sense of how the evolution transpired from the factors typology that was applied to the data and ultimately that which were found to be of particular relevance to this research study.

Table 17: Evolution of Factor Typology

Factor typology applied to the data	Emerging factors
Learning factor: Feedback, support and trust	This sub-category was renamed ***Feedback, instructive guidance and trust***. Instructive guidance was more along the lines of what emerged in the data in terms of what aided and hindered intern learning, as 'support' did not adequately capture what interns felt they needed to enhance workplace learning and what was lacking. This could be owing to interns, as indicated by the literature, needing more support compared to other more experienced workers. In this regard, *Feedback, instructive guidance and trust* was a more appropriate sub-category in line with the data.
Learning factor: Challenge and value of the work	This group had the least number of codes in it, which reinforced the fact that there was a lack of challenging work for interns which hindered their learning. This group had a strong connection with the *Allocation and structuring of work* sub-category, and in this research the lack of challenging work was a consequence of the work allocated to interns and as such, it was absorbed into the ***Allocation and structuring of work*** sub-category.
Learning factor: Confidence and commitment, personal agency and motivation	With respect to this group, taking initiative on the part of interns was an important factor that influenced learning. However, this initiative did not always translate into increased access to learning opportunities for interns. Moreover, they were sometimes faced with challenges which could have derailed their learning. As such, they needed to have resolve, persevere and not let this deflate them. Additionally, the attitude of interns also influenced learning and the depth thereof – as opposed to personal agency which is more general in nature. Against this backdrop, this sub-category was renamed ***Intern initiative, resolve and attitude***.
Context factor: Encounters and	Mentors/supervisors had a significant influence in terms of the work allocated to interns and the extent to which the work was 'meaningful'. They were also key actors when it came to feedback

relationships with people at work	and instructive guidance. However, while mentors/supervisors played a key role in the learning of interns, other colleagues also facilitated, shaped and contributed to the learning of interns. As such, this sub-category was renamed ***Mentors, supervisors and 'helpful others'***.
Context factor: Allocation and structuring of work	This sub-category strongly resonated with the data and remained as is in terms of naming convention.
Context factor: Individual participation and expectations of their performance and progress	The expectation component was most prominent in this dimension and was linked to how the internship was managed. It was evident from what emerged in the data that management issues were educational issues, and as such internship management was a factor in intern learning. As such, this sub-category morphed into ***Expectation & internship management***.

Source: Author generated

In terms of terminology applicable to grounded theory, institutional factors; individual factors; and task related factors should be seen as categories, with the elements within them considered sub-categories. While Eraut (2004a) used the language of context factors and learning factors as overarching factor categories, the rationale for this language was unclear. Kyndt et al. (2009) makes the differentiation between context factors and learning factors with the former being those conditions which are present in the learner's context while the latter are conditions which are more directly related to the learning process. However, Eraut (2004a) for instance labelled *individual participation and expectations of their performance and progress* as a context factor while *confidence and commitment, personal agency and motivation* a learning factor, but these two factors do not seem to operate on different levels. The same could be said about the classification of some of the other factors.

In terms of the *departmental culture* sub-category - which is not outlined in ***Error! Reference source not found.*** as it stemmed purely from the data – which forms part of the *institutional factor* category, it was discussed in the *Results* chapter as a factor which affected the learning of interns and which affected the alignment of the intended and experienced curriculum.

However, it was absent from Eraut's original and revised typology. Power dynamics within the department affected intern learning, even though the dynamics which played out had nothing to do with interns themselves – however, it ultimately affected them, such as issues of rank. This reinforces what Boud and Walker (1991) touched on which is that learning is not merely dependent on the intern but is influenced, promoted or inhibited by factors beyond them. This is in line with the more socially informed learning perspective. It is important to note that graduate interns formed the focus of this study, and as such the factors that affected the learning of other kinds of employees such as contract or full-time employees may have differed.

The sub-categories of the three categories of factors that were found to affect intern learning in this study will be further elaborated on in the following sub-sections.

i. Institutional factors

The two institutional factors which affected learning are expectation and internship management as well as departmental culture, which are considered *institutional* owing to it operating at the level of the department. Each of these institutional factor components are further expounded on based on the data that emerged.

Expectation and internship management

Interns seemed to have had high expectations of the kind of learning opportunities and responsibilities they would have access to in the workplace – as put by one of the interns, they "expected so much". These high expectations may have set interns up for failure. For many, this was their first experience being in a working environment - and in the public sphere - and their expectations do in fact seem to have been too high. Their expectations at the start of the internship were not properly managed in terms of the volume of clerical work they would have to do, which led to a misalignment between their expectations and the internship itself. Expectation management did not seem to have transpired during the recruitment or orientation stages, with many speaking to a lack of a structured orientation programme at the commencement of the internship.

Interns also had expectations regarding how their learning would transpire apart from what they would be learning. In particular, interns had an expectation that they would be taught how to do things and that their mentor/supervisor would play a more active role in their learning. These expectations appear strongly shaped by their university experience. However, unlike

educational institutions, the government department they were based in - like many workplaces in general - was one in which learning or the facilitation of learning was not the primary activity. The advice of Cupps and Olmosk (2008) is relevant here concerning how supervisors ought to resolve uncertainties early on, including discussing responsibilities and expectations with interns, with the first few days setting the tone for the rest of the internship. This is relevant at a departmental level as expectation management and the training of mentors/supervisors is not institutionalised in that it is not standardised across the department. In contrast to the findings of this research, Mkhize (2019) finds that amongst other things, 73.7% of interns who completed internships in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal found their induction effective and relevant; 81.6% of interns said they had a workplan or job description at the commencement of the internship with 58% having found the job description effective and sufficient. This demonstrates how national government departments may differ from the local government sphere, which is why looking at intern learning at a national level is relevant and a contribution to the literature.

Overall internship management is linked to expectation management because one way to manage intern expectations is through the overall management of the internship. The management of the internship section in the *Additional factors* section in *Chapter 4* details how the management of the programme - including programme monitoring; induction process; and the mentorship and supervisory system - had a bearing on intern learning. In this regard, while the focus of this research was not on Human Resource (HR) practices or the management of the internship programme, management or mismanagement of the programme affected the learning of interns and the bringing about of curricular fission. Thus, in the context of this research, management issues were also educational issues irrespective of whether the people managing the programme perceived this in educational terms. The interns themselves articulated these issues in some of their responses regarding what affected their learning and what could have enhanced it. For instance, interns spoke about how quarterly reports were an insufficient mechanism to monitor learning and how HR also did not do follow-ups when insufficient or inadequate learning was reported within them.

Also, regarding internship management, according to the department's intern policy there ought to be performance management systems in place that evaluate and monitor intern performance – but this needed to be strengthened as conceded by a HR official. This surfaced in interviews in which interns raised the issue of quarterly reports and how it was not taken

seriously by some mentors. While a problem in the context of the internship, it could be a manifestation of a departmental wide issue around performance management. For instance, Cameron (2015) who looked at performance management in the South African Department of Labour finds issues with its performance culture. There were also issues with the performance management system - while comprehensive - in its implementation was arbitrary and subjective amongst other things (Cameron, 2015). Moreover, in line with this study, the lack of performance management systems could also be a manifestation of departmental attitudes around warehousing and the purpose of the internship itself.

Part of internship management is the proper placement of interns. Intern 7 spoke about how those interns whose qualifications aligned with their respective units were the ones who had worthwhile learning experiences, which is supported by the findings of a research report developed by the South African Graduates Development Association [SAGDA] (2013) in association with the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) who found that interns with specialist backgrounds such as finance and health, experienced greater alignment between their qualifications and work activities. In comparison, they found that for interns with a humanities background and related fields, there was less alignment (SAGDA, 2013).

A way to approach thinking about the internship management dimension is to think about what the experienced curriculum would be like if the programme was better managed. Firstly, more robust monitoring would mean that it would be detected if interns were only doing administrative work; if there was a lack of variety in their learning; and whether there was learning progression from the time they started until programme completion. Secondly, it may mean that departmental units are better prepared for the arrival of interns; mentors/supervisors know what is expected of them as well as what they could do to enhance intern learning. Thirdly, a structured induction programme may also help manage the expectations of interns upfront. In this regard, it would be implementing what government documents already state which is that interns are entitled to an induction programme.

Against this backdrop, a failure to effectively manage the overall internship by not having programme and performance monitoring systems in place, an induction process for interns as well as a mentorship and supervisory system, combined with not managing the expectations of interns, had a bearing on the learning of interns.

Departmental culture

As outlined in the *Results* chapter, interns experienced issues of rank, protocol and interpersonal dynamics in the department. In this regard, the literature of Billet (2011) and Vaughan (2008) discussed earlier concerning how political and power dynamics affect access to opportunities and guidance resonated with what was found in the data. For instance, intern 6 was not able to attend any training programmes that they wanted to go on, owing to internal politics. This dimension is not accounted for in Eraut's factor typology, and this dimension of conflict and unequal power relations - in terms of how it affects learning and relationships in communities of practice and the broader context - is also not fully explored by Lave and Wenger (Fuller et al., 2005). In contrast, Fuller et al. (2005) did find that power dynamics shaped the opportunities and barriers newcomers experienced - as found in their case studies - and as such their overall learning. As found in the research of Raliphada et al. (2014), officials can sometimes hide behind protocol and authority structures to avoid adopting new ways of doing things, which may be a function of their insecurity.

In general, there were hierarchies at play within the department, with these unequal power relations also manifested in interns being given "all the crappy work". Here the image of Fuller et al.'s (2012) Russian doll comes to mind, with respect to the different layers within an organisation and how one's place within it affects learning. Fuller and Unwin (2011) and Lee et al. (2004) also speak to how organisational structures affect learning and the need to locate workers within organisations to better understand their learning and the factors that can promote their learning. In this study, the data demonstrated how the attitudes within the department affected the learning opportunities which colleagues within the department facilitated for interns, how being categorised as an intern affected how people responded to interns - and ultimately the knowledge and advice that colleagues were willing to share with them - as well as their receptiveness towards giving assistance and answering any questions interns had.

Apart from departmental attitudes towards interns, which formed part of the culture of the department owing to it being widespread, other elements of departmental culture had a bearing on intern learning. In this regard, the time and work pressures on officials and the interpersonal dynamics between colleagues had implications on intern learning.

While not mentioned by interns, it is plausible that negative attitudes and behaviours towards them may have affected their confidence levels. Especially seeing how confidence did not come naturally to all interns, with intern 4 speaking to how for them it grew over time. Also, we see with intern 1, how they got deflated when it came to raising learning issues and how it led to them remaining silent. In the language of communities of practice, newcomers could be perceived as a threat to 'old-timers' who could disempower legitimate peripheral participants. Fortunately for interns, even if colleagues were not intentionally trying to play a supportive learning role to them, interns nonetheless did learn from interacting with them e.g., Being belittled by some colleagues taught them resilience.

Interns also spoke to some positive experiences such as working with supportive colleagues in their unit who were willing to teach and mentor them, answer their questions, look out for their interests and who treated them as equals. As such, the culture was not mono-cultural but rather each unit had its own sub-culture, which while influenced by the broader departmental culture was unit specific, and which in turn had different implications on intern learning. As expressed by intern 12, interns were treated differently by the directorates they were in – "Some are treated like this; some are given more opportunities; some are given less opportunities."

The sub-categories of the institutional related factors were discussed with HR officials to get their input regarding how these factors affected the learning of interns on the programme. The expectation management and overall internship management component was considered "spot on" by HR official 1. HR official 2 also agreed that there was "no doubt" a need to strengthen the induction process.

With respect to departmental culture and in particular having a positive attitude towards interns, both HR officials experienced this. Some interns are treated with an attitude of "No, why are you here? What do you want to do here? You are just an intern" and "You sit down and shut your mouth because you're an intern. You cannot raise your voice because you are just an intern", as said by HR official 1 and 2 respectively. According to HR official 2, some interns do not speak out against this kind of treatment because "they are looking for employment at the end of the day". HR official 1 also linked intern resolve to a positive attitude towards interns because interns should have the emotional intelligence to know "it's just one or two people, it's not everyone", which is something they tried to convey to interns in the information sessions they had with them.

As Billet (2006) reminded us, the workplace is not necessarily a welcoming environment to learn in. As mentioned, while there were some differing accounts, what was evident was that a negative attitude towards interns inhibited their learning, while a positive attitude aided it.

Having discussed the two sub-categories of institutional factors, individual factors are expounded on.

ii. Individual factors

The two individual factor elements which affected learning were mentors, supervisors and 'helpful others' as well as intern initiative and resolve. Based on the data, each of these institutional factor components will be expounded on.

Mentors, supervisors and 'helpful others'

Encounters and relationships with people at work were found to be the strongest factor which influenced intern learning and in particular, relationships with mentors, supervisors and helpful others were considered instrumental in the learning process for interns. In other words, the interactions they had with individuals in their principal community of practice. While a mentor/supervisor may be important for many employees, it is of particular importance for interns who are novices as they rely on them for support, knowledge and direction.

Interns who had good relationships with their respective mentors/supervisors reported being able to ask questions and have them answered which was important to their learning. Only intern 3 reported having a completely negative and unproductive relationship with their mentor/supervisor, while other interns had more mixed experiences in this regard. The widespread complaints conveyed in interviews regarding mentors/supervisors were often things interns had heard from other interns in the intern support group or from general interactions with other interns. In other words, it was not their personal lived experience but rather they were reporting in interviews on the experiences of other interns. While this makes it challenging to assess the real extent of the issue in terms of mentors/supervisors, there were common areas reported in which the relationship could be improved upon to aid intern learning – which was a sentiment shared by interns. The shared pool of resources of stories regarding mentors/supervisors that surfaced in interviews demonstrates the idea of the intern support group as a community of practice – something which will be discussed later.

The importance of the mentor/supervisor was of particular importance to interns when it came to accessing learning opportunities, which impacted the alignment of the intended and experienced curriculum. Intern 12 said that mentors/supervisors needed to initiate learning opportunities for interns, with one mentor also expressing that management made a difference when it came to some interns having a better learning experience compared to others – with *management* being a dual reference to officials that operate within the units and the officials that directly mentor and supervise interns.

Mentors appear to have had free range with interns, which was confirmed by one of the mentors who said "You do your own thing" when it comes to mentoring. This translated into a lack of standardisation in terms of how mentors interacted with interns and the support they gave them. Mentors having the freedom to do as they please with interns indicates a lack of thoughtfulness and planning around programme design and curriculum, as the role of the mentor was not defined in a way that created an alignment between the intended and experienced curriculum. Some interns felt that not everyone had the kind of disposition for being a mentor and that the department needed to be mindful regarding mentor selection. In the data, HR officials themselves expressed the need to review mentor selection as it had a bearing on intern learning. As Swap et al. (2001) mentioned, knowing how to impart knowledge may not come naturally to all mentors with some being patient at imparting knowledge progressively and using language that interns understand, while others may not be. Moreover, in this research, depending on the position of the mentor, some were also said to be too busy for the interns allocated to them which affected intern learning – this was touched on by Swap et al. (2001) and highlighted in the literature engagement section. Being a mentor did not seem to be part of the performance plan of mentors, which is perhaps why it was difficult for the department to coerce mentors to perform in a certain way such as attending mentor meetings. As part of the data that emerged through document analysis, mentors ought to receive training so that they can aid in the professional development of interns as they were identified as underpinning the transfer of relevant work knowledge and skills and providing overall support to their development – however, this did not effectively transpire. While the focus of Raliphada et al.'s (2014) research is not on interns but rather on the question of why public servants do not deliver the kind of services that meet the expectations of South African citizens, many of their findings around how supervisors influence learning resonates with the findings of this research. For instance - as mentioned in the literature engagement section - Raliphada et al. (2014) finds that

supervisors lacked interest in the growth and development of subordinates and did not genuinely engage in performance review sessions.

While the bi-lateral relationship between an intern and mentor/supervisor was important to realising a closer alignment between the intended and experienced curriculum, there were also other relationships at play which had a bearing on intern learning. For instance, interns reported being able to approach colleagues who sat near them for assistance, which also came across when unpacking how interns went about their learning. Moreover, with a lot of the work being administrative in nature, interns interacted a lot with the administrative officials in their respective units – many of whom took interns 'under their wing'. Thus, while interns may have remained peripheral participants to some of the core activities within their unit and the overall department, their interactions with administrative staff enabled them to develop more proficiency in relation to the administrative dimension of their work.

Some interns did experience challenges with individuals from other units i.e., People outside their principal community of practice. In this regard, they were made to feel like a visitor; that things were too "advanced" for them, were belittled and that because of being an intern they were inferior which meant they could not give input and ask questions in the way that they wanted to. As such, the behaviour of some within the department directly hindered the learning of interns, which affected their access to opportunities. This resonates with the departmental culture component spoken about as part of the institutional factors, which demonstrates the overlap between some of the factors – with the interplay between the various factors being something that will be touched on towards the end of this chapter.

While *mentors, supervisors and 'helpful others'* are an important individual factor in the learning of interns and in avoiding a situation of curricular fission, interns also have an integral role to play in their learning. This second dimension of this factor category will be covered in the succeeding sub-section.

Intern initiative, resolve and attitude

Eraut's (2012) revised his typology from *Confidence and commitment* to *Confidence and commitment, personal agency and motivation* which demonstrates the role of the individual in shaping their own learning, as they make determinations regarding how to participate and learn - as opposed to just the environment and other individuals affecting learning (Fuller & Unwin,

2011). In this regard, Fuller et al. (2005) reminded us that individuals within communities of practice bring with them into the workplace dispositions that are separate and formed outside of the community of practice. In the same vein, newcomers are not empty vessels but rather come to the workplace with beliefs, skills and attitudes amongst other things. In short, they bring "'dispositions' to life, to work and to learning" (Fuller et al., 2005, p. 66). This dynamic process was explained by Fuller et al. (2005):

> Rather, prior learning, including education, has helped construct the whole person who arrives. This embodied person learns to belong in their new setting, adapting, developing and modifying their whole person in that process. Furthermore, as Lave and Wenger (1991) acknowledge, by bringing their whole selves into the community, new members change the nature of that community in ways which depend upon the specific interrelationships between person, community and wider context (p. 66).

What surfaced several times in the data was the importance of interns taking initiative and how this shaped their learning. In the data, the code groups of *Taking initiative, reading and self-learning* and *Seeking help and/or asking questions* were large in number in terms of the number of codes within them which reinforced the idea that interns were not just passive in their learning. Like Eraut (2004), I was struck by how proactive interns needed to be in terms of seeking out learning opportunities. As succinctly put by one of the interns, part of the development of interns was on them. Interns seemed to recognise this and the need to be proactive, and that in the absence of this, their learning would have been severely limited. Against this backdrop, many of them spoke to how they would go out in search of work or in search of people to help them when they needed assistance as well as take initiative in the form of doing additional reading, asking questions and filling knowledge gaps they had. Some also realised that they needed to speak up for themselves because one's "mentor can't know that you don't know this or you don't know that".

The initiative interns took may have been in response to the lack of support they received and displeasure at the kind of work allocated to them. In other words, a response measure as a consequence of the context they were operating in. For instance, intern 3 did not have a specific role and job description – which was commonplace amongst interns in this study - and often had to 'create work' for themselves. As earlier discussed, this served to make intern initiative especially important considering they operated in a government context in which the work was

less structured i.e., their work was a function of what the supervisor/mentor wanted them to do as opposed to a fixed workplan.

However, one mentor did dispute this by saying that they had never seen an intern ask or look for work. They did however go on to touch on the element of taking initiative, and in this regard would advise interns to learn as much as possible and engage with one's mentor when learning deviated from the agreed upon work or when they considered it insufficient. Another mentor also reinforced the idea of the importance of taking initiative, while an intern commented that it was initiative which enabled some interns to have a better learning experience compared to others. According to the department's policy on interns, discussed in the *contextualising the study* section, the expectation was in fact that interns would demonstrate a willingness to develop and learn and make the most of the internship opportunity.

While intern initiative was important, this does not mean that interns always bore the fruits thereof. For instance, an intern spoke about taking initiative and pushing to be included in meetings but this was declined by officials. This demonstrates the interdependency of the different factors. Similar to the relationship with mentors and supervisors, the relationship with other colleagues was also a function of the interns themselves – both their attitude and their initiative to build relationships with others, which demonstrates the interconnectedness between attitude and initiative.

In terms of *attitude*, the term as used by the research participants refers to a "way of thinking" or behaviour that reflects this thinking (*The Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 1993, p. 47). One of the mentors spoke about how if one of the interns in their unit showed interest and asked questions, then they would expose that intern to more opportunities compared to the intern who had an attitude of only wanting to do things they studied and who did not want to do administrative work. Another mentor also spoke to how interns can develop an attitude of "Why should we do it? They [officials] must do it. They [officials] are getting paid for it. We are only getting a stipend", and in so doing, they were limiting their learning. Moreover, intern 8 also touched on how some interns limited their learning because they felt they did not need to know some things and that some activities were 'below' them. When interns had a positive attitude towards learning, which entailed being open to doing a variety of tasks; not thinking they were too qualified for specific tasks; and in general wanting to learn as much as possible, then this enhanced learning.

Lastly, in terms of resolve, this mattered because interns faced personal and/or professional difficulty, and as such they needed to show resolve in the face of these challenges – an absence of doing this would have resulted in them giving up, which in turn would have impacted their learning. Interns demonstrated resolve in different ways, whether it be remaining confident in the face of problems experienced or persevering even when they were undermined. They did however show some signs of giving up at times when they were not allocated the kind of work they wanted or were not getting the intern experience they had hoped for. This in part resonated with the caution of Cupps and Olmosk (2008), who warned that allocating interns mostly administrative tasks hinders motivation. Interestingly, intern 8 spoke about how some interns blocked their learning and were thus their own impediments to learning. They gave the example of administrative work, whereby interns felt that this kind of work was not the kind of work they wanted to do and so they did not master it or learn everything possible concerning it, as it was considered unimportant.

The subcomponents of individual factors were discussed with HR officials. Officials spoke about how the mentor relationship was "critical", and that a good relationship with one's mentor made interns feel "comfortable" and "valued". Busy mentors posed a challenge and the "higher up the mentor is in terms of rank, the more difficult it becomes". HR officials interviewed had useful input with respect to intern initiative and resolve, which aided my thinking. Their input helped me to link the two sub-categories of individual factors by pointing out that you needed to match the supervisor with the intern in such a way that the attitude and other characteristics of the intern were well suited to the kind of person allocated to them. For instance, having a shy person allocated to a supervisor who has a strong disposition may scare the intern and it may in turn restrict the learning of the intern.

Individual factors were those factors that involved the individual, whether it be mentors, supervisors, 'helpful others' or the intern themselves. Concerning the latter - that is the intern themselves - and how the actions and perspectives of individual interns influenced their learning, there were three dimensions to this which is reflected in the name of this sub-section i.e., initiative, resolve and attitude. Having covered this, the last factor category will be outlined.

iii. Task related factors

Task related factors had a direct bearing on intern learning, with there being two components of this, namely: Allocation and structuring of work; and feedback, instructive guidance and trust. These will be expounded on in succeeding sections.

Allocation and structuring of work

The exposure of interns to learning opportunities and how tasks were sequenced – or the lack thereof – is linked to the notion of work allocation and structuring which emerged strongly in the data. This is somewhat intuitive, as the experienced curriculum is a product of the work allocated to interns, and as such a factor creating a split between the intended and experienced curriculum. Billet (2006) described how the intended curriculum should be viewed as a "sequencing of a pathway of activities" with this pathway comprised of the required knowledge which would enable a novice to participate effectively in their workplace (p. 3). Apart from what needs to be learnt, how this learning is to transpire should also be considered. Taking these considerations into account would enable the development of an ideal intended curriculum for the workplace. The intended curriculum at a macro level did to some extent outline what interns should learn and how their learning should transpire such as having a mentor and going through an induction programme. However, it did not go into specifics. It could be that owing to it being a government wide programme, it would be difficult to go into specifics as the nature of each department and their work differs. Looking then at the departmental level policy, this too does go into some detail regarding how and what should be learnt such as the need to identify learning assignments that are appropriate for interns and providing them with adequately supervised, varied and professional experience that supplements classroom learning. However, this was not the mapping out of learning in an ideal intended curriculum that Billet (2006) spoke about. As such, it was not as planned and intentional as it could have been.

In the absence of learning opportunities, whether it be deliberate or unplanned opportunities, the learning of interns was hindered. Attending workshops and training is an example of more deliberate learning opportunities, while unplanned opportunities would arise from colleague interaction such as participation in group activities – both of which emerged as important learning mechanisms for interns in this research. Unlike any of the other sub-categories, *allocation and structuring of work* remained unchanged and as such this sub-section is

complementary to the group by the same name in the *Results* chapter – by unchanged, I mean that it is the same factor grouping that was imposed on the data.

What emerged was a lack of learning opportunities that interns had access to during the internship programme, with interns also feeling like they did not have enough work and that the work allocated to them was not in line with their careers. In other words, they felt they were not afforded enough opportunities that would enable them to move from legitimate peripheral participants to full participants as their expected curriculum entailed getting experience in line with their careers such that it would be a stepping-stone – which was also in line with the intended curriculum. Not being allocated work that was in line with one's intended career was defeating and as mentioned by an intern "you're not even going to bother".

Interns also did not seem to be allocated work which facilitated achieving the desired depth of learning, and they did not find the work challenging. As reported by intern 7, they never felt challenged and when there was something to learn they were able to do it within a short timeframe. In general, there was no deliberate effort to sequence tasks from easy to more difficult over the course of their two-year internship.

Coetzer & Perry (2016), who wanted to understand the factors that affected employee learning from the perspective of owners/managers in 27 New Zealand small firms in the manufacturing and services sectors, identifies the learning potential of the job itself as a factor which influenced learning. The complexity of the job, how varied the tasks encompassed in it are and the actions which can arise from it influences the learning that can transpire (Coetzer & Perry, 2016). For interns, with many of them being assigned mostly administrative tasks, the characteristics of their role was such that it did not encompass much learning. In other words, their role was inherently limiting.

The above explains why the *challenge and value of work* learning factor group had almost no codes in it, which resonated with the low code group of *tackling challenging tasks* (two codes) in relation to how interns learnt, as well the empty *decision making and problem-solving* group in terms of the experienced curriculum. This reinforced each other as being allocated challenging work is a way in which decision making as well as problem solving ability is developed. Only one intern seems to have had challenging work allocated to them on a regular basis, which they attributed to their previous workplace experience. Coming onto the

internship, interns did anticipate being allocated challenging work, which again speaks to their expectations not being effectively managed or considered.

It was evident that interns wanted to do more activities related to the core work of their respective units compared to administrative work – which is also what HR officials had in mind for them. This does not mean administrative work was not important because it sounds like it was vital to the running of the department, but the quantity of administrative work was not what interns were expecting. The difference for intern 2 was that they did administrative work in preparation for delivering components of the core activities. In contrast, other interns were not generally involved in the delivery component despite wanting to be. Interns did take initiative in trying to alter the kind of work allocated to them, as mentioned in the *individual factors* section. Administrative work as outlined by interns included arranging meeting venues; parking; travel including flight bookings and accommodation; and printing and making copies. Here the advice of Cupps and Olmosk (2008) has relevance as they advised a phased approach to assigning work activities because only allocating administrative related work to interns can impact their levels of motivation and their quality of work – stemming from their experience of managing a public service internship programme in South Carolina. In this regard, task complexity and variety were factors identified by Ellström (2011) that affect learning, while Eraut (2012) spoke to how being over-challenged or under-challenged does not promote learning and should be factored in when allocating and structuring work activities. As spoken about in relation to the data that emerged, intern 12 also would sometimes "sit here the whole week" without doing anything, while intern 6 would sometimes go "a week without literally doing anything".

What influenced work allocation is the nature of the department's work. The structure of government was such that national government departments tended to do work related to policy development and provincial monitoring, compared to client facing work. Consequently, the work allocated to interns was a product of this, which some interns themselves said differed to the work done on a provincial level which was more implementation focused. This resonated with the research of Clarke (2017) who found a lack of suitable work at graduate level and no clearly defined role which gave rise to interns being allocated tasks that was unchallenging, considered low-level and which entailed low levels of responsibility. One mentor suggested that intern initiative and willingness to participate influenced the work allocated to them, which reinforced the notion that factors in this study were not independent of each other. However,

with a lack of challenging work and varied levels of support, the mutually enforcing connection and the triangular relationship between confidence, challenging work and support that Eraut (2004a) encountered were not evident in this study.

What could have also influenced the work allocated to interns was how mentors and supervisors perceived and made judgements about the competence of interns. Hughes (2004) spoke to how trustworthiness and competence could be presumed by some on the basis of asking practical questions and showing independence amongst other things, while incompetence could be assumed by asking what are considered silly questions and taking too long to understand concepts and process. According to a HR official, applicants in the interview process who articulated themselves well in English were the ones most likely to get the position – which they considered "unfair" – and as such it could be the case that this also influenced the work and opportunities allocated to interns, and ultimately their learning.

While mentors interviewed spoke to pacing work activities, allocating work in line with the qualifications of interns and being mindful of what they know and do not know, the interviews with HR officials and interns suggest that this was not common across mentors.

Having outlined this task related factor sub-category, the final sub-category of *feedback, instructive guidance and trust* will be outlined.

Feedback, instructive guidance and trust

It was commonplace to hear from interns that a lack of feedback hindered their learning and development, and in turn the knowledge and skills they were able to develop. Feedback enables learning as interns can know what they did well and what they can improve upon, which also serves as motivation for them. The importance of feedback to interns is in line with the research of D'Abate et al. (2009), who found that feedback influenced intern satisfaction. Interns in this research spoke about feedback in a way that also included praise for good performance.

While interns said feedback would have served as a kind of compass for them, this may not necessarily have been the case as Kraiger et al. (2015) points out. This is because interns may have reacted differently to feedback, which could have been a function of the nature of the feedback they received and how they received it, such that it could have been beneficial for some and harmful to others. Nonetheless, seeing that the internship was for most interns their

first taste of the working environment, feedback may have been of particular significance to them as their lack of experience made it difficult to assess their own performance. Moreover, as pointed out by Eraut et al. (2004a), a deficit of feedback can trigger feelings of self-doubt. Feelings of self-doubt can in turn affect one's learning as it can for example affect engagement with colleagues and one's ability to take initiative. The lack of feedback culture, according to one mentor was a departmental wide issue. According to them, the culture was such that officials and interns alike were generally not told when they were doing things correctly nor about areas to improve. Even those interns who had a good relationship with their mentor/supervisor did not receive regular feedback.

As newcomers to the workplace, interns required instructive guidance. This is linked to them being directly taught and given guidance which emerged in the data. This is beyond support and is more along the lines of being taught how to do something before carrying it out. Interns needed this instructive guidance as they lacked any previous knowledge and experience on how to carry out particular tasks, and as such they had no reference point. As mentioned by Billet (1994), observing and listening are important but not sufficient, as experts need to make tacit and hidden parts of their role accessible to novices. Moreover, to advance beyond being a novice, instructive guidance and feedback are required (Smith, 2003).

In this study, graduate interns spoke about how a lack of trust affected their learning because being trusted influenced the kind of work allocated to them. This resonates with what Raliphada et al. (2014) finds in terms of a lack of trust translating into supervisors not trusting subordinates to execute their responsibilities independently. Being trusted enough to be given work outside of administrative tasks meant that the allocating mentor/supervisor did not think anything would go "wrong". Thus, trusting and giving an intern work was "not easy" and straightforward. Perhaps there is an inherent tension with internships because the perception of someone on an internship programme is that they have things to learn which is why they are on the internship, so there could be a lack of trust already built into the internship. In short, if they could do the job, they would not be on the internship programme. Also, it could be that interns see their ability as being higher than what others perceive their ability to be. Most interns did not articulate the complexity of being trusted in a government setting, in the sense that they did not account for the lack of trust in relation to the nature of government work itself in which the stakes can be high if mistakes are made. In other words, even though they were based in a national government department in which successful and unsuccessful projects can

have implications on the country, they felt that they should be trusted with running projects or significant components thereof.

The subcomponents of the task related factors were also discussed with HR officials who were interviewed to get their input regarding how these factors affected intern learning. HR official 1 said that the progressive sequencing of tasks as part of how work is structured made "absolute sense" and that "you don't throw them with the same ball from start to end" but rather should "give them activities as the months progress and challenge them".

Regarding feedback, instructive guidance and trust, HR official 2 remarked that this was "one hundred percent correct". Interns do need instructive guidance, especially when it came to operating systems they have never worked with before. They also considered feedback important and said that it develops one's confidence and enables one to "become the better you".

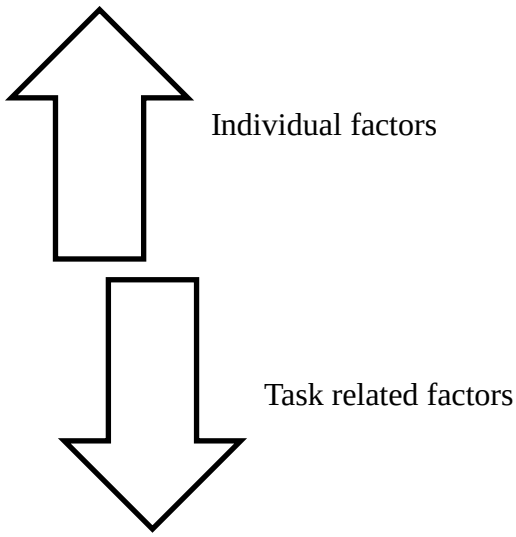
Overall, both sub-categories of the task related factors spoke to the work allocated to interns; how tasks were sequenced when allocated to them; the general lack of feedback after task completion; the instructive guidance they required before embarking on tasks; and the trust which preceded the allocation of tasks to interns.

In the context of the discussion regarding the misalignment between the intended and experienced curriculum, various factors emerged as contributing towards this divergence. More specifically, three factors contributed towards a situation of curricular fission which were elaborated on in the preceding sub-sections. While the interns themselves had control over some of the factors, many of the factors were 'beyond' their control which reinforces the view of learning as being shaped, hindered or aided by factors beyond the learners themselves.

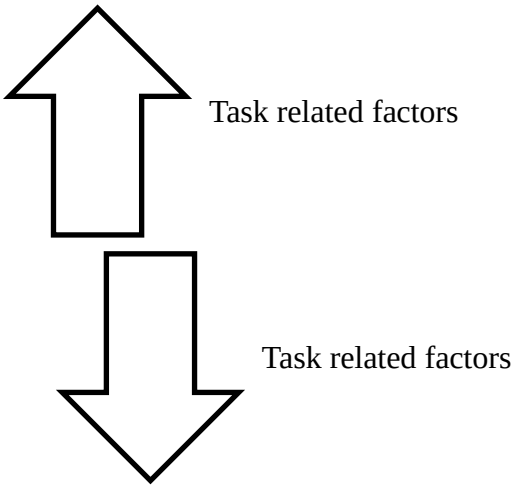
The factors have dynamic relationships between them, and while the various sections outlined each of these factors in isolation, the following section will discuss the interplay between them.

iv. The interplay between different factors

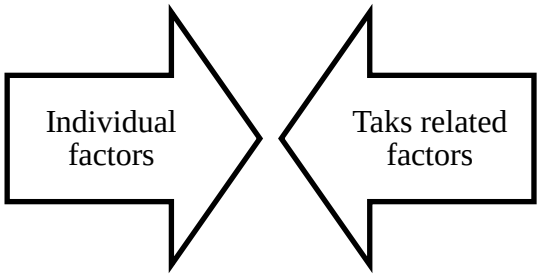
The following section shows different examples which emerged in this research regarding the interplay between the various factors. Factors can work against each other to hinder learning or can work together to reinforce it.



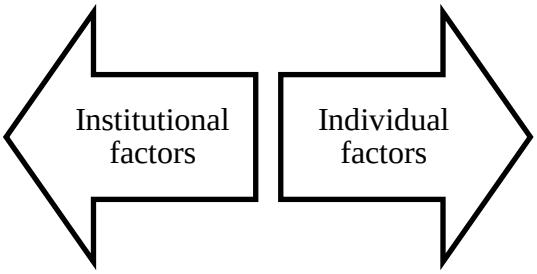
Individual factors can work towards advancing learning but task related factors can work against this, giving rise to curricular fission. An example of this is intern 1, who reported learning a lot from their "wonderful supervisor", however, the work allocated to them was unchallenging which they found "unfair".



The different sub-categories of a factor can work against each other, for instance in relation to task related factors. Interns were allocated work but reported not receiving adequate feedback and instructive guidance. This means they were unable to assess their performance and use the feedback to develop progressively.



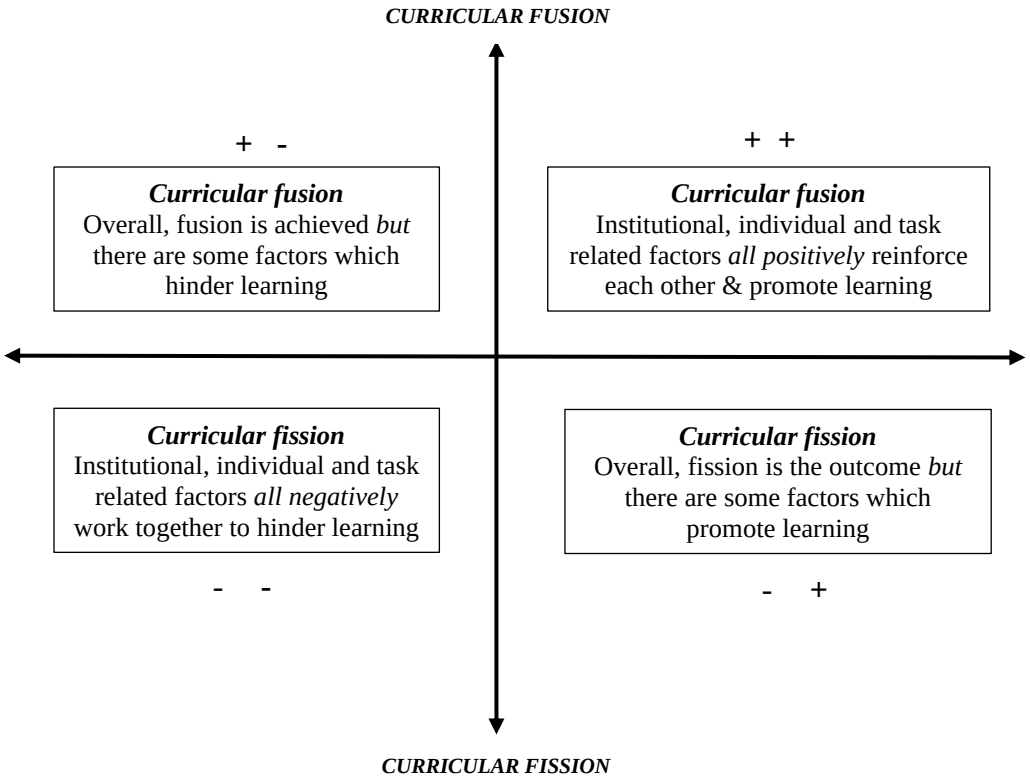
Individual factors can positively reinforce task related factors, which together advance learning and brings about a closer alignment between the intended and experienced curriculum. In the data, the initiative of the intern played a role in them being trusted and being allocated work. A mentor interviewed spoke to how interns who took initiative were allocated more work and more learning opportunities.



The impact of mentors who did not adequately fill their role in promoting learning was reinforced by the poor internship management system. Intern 1 said that some mentors "never cared" and that some only met their mentees to sign their quarterly progress reports.

While the above examples demonstrate how two factors can interact with either other, all the factors work together or against each other – which overall either gives rise to curricular fission or fusion. This is depicted in Figure 22. For instance, interns may have good relationships with their mentors/supervisors – who are committed to their learning and who give them instructive guidance. As part of wanting to enhance intern learning, their mentors/supervisors may want to allocate work to their allocated interns. However, owing to departmental culture, they may not be able to do so owing to issues of rank. The example of intern 3 was cited in which "The other one was willing to give me a chance to present" but owing to departmental power dynamics and culture, the one supervisor was not able to tell the other supervisor to give the opportunity to the intern to present. Moreover, there was a stigma that officials "cannot just listen to you as an intern" and cannot be "presenting to a Director or Assistant Director".

Figure 22: Interplay of Factors



Source: Author generated

Having outlined the theory which emerged in this research, including each of its various components as well as the dynamics between the various factors, the following section will discuss the intern support group. While not part of the factors which affected intern learning, the intern support group arose frequently in the data as it was a platform through which some of the interns interacted with each other, learned about the experiences of other interns, gained new knowledge as well as developed on a personal level. Given the frequently with which it surfaced in interviews as well as it not typifying a traditional community of practice, the next section will discuss it in more detail.

5.3 Intern support group

Owing to interns speaking about learning in relation to the units they were based in, and with this being their main concern, this was considered their principal community of practice in this research. This determination was influenced by the research of Fuller et al. (2005), who when

studying teachers and departments, found that the subject department appeared to be the main concern for teachers and as such was deemed their primary community of practice. Thus, while communities of practice may not align to organisational units nor reporting structures and can cut across organisational structures, as well as have imprecise and subjective boundaries, this was not found to be the case in this research as the respective units of interns tended to be their primary communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). With that said, the intern support group can also be considered a community of practice. As discussed in the previous chapter, it was not something that arose organically as it was established by the department for the benefit of interns. In a community of practice, members define what constitutes competence within their context (Wenger, 1998). In this case, through the support group, interns developed an understanding of what an internship experience should encompass and what their work ought to entail – shaped by the experiences of their fellow interns.

The three elements of a community of practice were present in relation to the support group, which is that of domain, community and practice. Although interns were scattered across different units in the department, there was still the presence of a common domain and shared competence as they were all interns, which served to differentiate them from other people. They formed a community, engaged in discussions as well as shared information and helped each other. With respect to practice, there was a shared pool of resources such as experiences and stories, which will be demonstrated later. The support group could thus be seen as a community of practice that perhaps operated in "the context of much larger systems" with these larger systems being "constellations of interrelated communities of practice" (Wenger, 2000, p. 229). In other words, they simultaneously belonged to the community of practice operating within their respective units, as well as the intern support group – with each comprised of different members. There was even the presence of some interns not sharing the same sense of identity, something which Wenger (2000) spoke to as some of them did not label themselves as interns and/or did not consider the intern support group useful either directly or indirectly from a learning perspective.

However, the intern support group can be said to differ from a typical community of practice in one chief way. As mentioned, the concept is said to be useful when speaking to processes and experiences of new entrants in the workplace (Fuller et al., 2005; Wenger & Trayner, 2015), as it can help describe how newcomers move from legitimate peripheral participants to full participants in their respective communities of practice. In the context of the intern support

group in which participants are interns - with the exception of some invited speakers and individuals from the department managing the group - what constituted a full participant is less evident compared to other settings. However, one could consider a full participant to be those interns who managed to effectively navigate the system and attend training courses, who advised other interns, and who had the overall work allocation and internship experience that other interns aspired to have. In short, interns whose experience was characterised by curricular fusion as opposed to curricular fission.

As mentioned, the frequency of occurrence of the intern support group in the data as well as its existence expanding our understanding of what can constitute a community of practice, served to warrant a separate discussion on it. The formation of the support group did contribute to and influence the experienced curriculum and was also a means of emotional support for interns. In essence, it offered a kind of refuge and support system to interns. While valuable, it was not a factor which brought about curricular fission in the way the other three factors were found to be. It nonetheless was a useful learning platform for interns who participated in it.

Summary

In this chapter, how interns were trapped in a vicious cycle where they come from disadvantaged backgrounds only to attend institutions and attain qualifications that are not considered prestigious, were highlighted. They go on to obtain generic and general qualifications which combined with their personal backgrounds makes low paying government internship programmes appealing. In this research, interns were found to have been assigned mostly administrative related tasks that were unchallenging, and which did not develop their decision making and problem-solving skills during their internships at the department under study. While the internship experience of many interns could be described as warehousing, a situation in which interns are employed and kept ‘busy with any kind of work’ as a means of 'keeping them off the street', this is not to say that it was not beneficial. While not aligned with the intended curriculum in terms of depth of experience and skills, interns did develop procedural knowledge, growth on a personal level as well as developed communication skills. Moreover, there is also some evidence in the literature that having work experience on one’s CV can facilitate future employment regardless of the quality of the experience.

The South African government’s efforts to intervene in the labour market to assist these interns are laudable, even though greater effort needs to be paid to institutional, individual and task

related factors which affect intern learning to avoid a situation of *Curricular fission* which describes a situation in which factors create a disjuncture between the intended and experienced curriculum. In the absence of this, resources dedicated to this programme could be more productively spent elsewhere in a way that delivers more developmental outcomes for the country as a whole and for the demographic of young people that government is targeting through this internship programme.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

In this research, a grounded theory approach was used to understand the factors which affected the learning of interns on a graduate internship programme run by the South African government, with a focus on one national government department. In particular, it sought to understand how factors worked to create a disjuncture between the intended and experienced curriculum. The intended curriculum is the curriculum that was intended to transpire for interns as envisioned by policy makers and HR officials, while the experienced curriculum is what interns went onto experience. To carry out this research, 12 interviews were conducted with interns who completed their internship in the 2018-2021 period, two interviews with HR officials as well as two mentors – all of whom were in the department of focus. Moreover, document analysis formed part of the data generation process. Data was also obtained from the department that is the subject of this research for 50 interns, with 47 graduate interns being those who commenced the internship during the April - May 2018 period as well as three interns who commenced in April 2019.

The context and backdrop for the implementation of this internship, according to government, is related to both employability and employment. From an employability perspective, universities are not adequately preparing graduates for the workplace. From an employment perspective, jobs are not being created at the desired pace for graduates. As such, they are attempting to 'intervene' in the market in response to these socio-economic conditions from both a supply and demand side perspective. From this perspective, this research is relevant to both individuals and society – which is what is trying to be achieved through this policy intervention. As such, while the interest in this subject matter was from a learning perspective, that is to understand the learning that transpires in a workplace setting, this programme is also a labour market intervention to help alter the bias towards these young, black and unemployed graduates who are the target audience of this internship programme.

Using a grounded theory approach gave me the flexibility as a researcher to pivot from initially looking at *what* and *how* interns went about their learning, to exploring the factors which affected intern learning and how these factors created an alignment or misalignment between the intended and experienced curriculum. In line with the grounded theory approach, constant comparison and theoretical sampling were used throughout this study. Constant comparison

entails simultaneously collecting data and analysing it as well as comparing components such as incidents with other incidents. As such, data generation and analysis were intertwined processes in this research, which were also interspersed with literature engagement. This dance between data generation, data analysis and literature engagement, is reflected in *Figure 12: Interplay of Grounded Theory Methods* and *Figure 14: Coding and Re-Grouping Process* and was guided by theoretical sensitivity. Having followed these grounded theory methods which also included extensive coding as well as grouping, re-grouping and categorising of codes, the central phenomenon that emerged is that of Curricular fission.

'Curricular' refers to the curriculum with 'Curricular fission' being a metaphor to describe a situation in which various factors create a rupture between the curriculum that was intended for interns and the curriculum that interns experienced. In short, curricular fission describes a situation in which there is an absence of a unified curriculum or put differently, where there is a misalignment between the intended curriculum and the experienced curriculum. The metaphorical large atom which caused the disturbance in this study is the various factors at play. In this study, institutional factors; individual factors; and task related factors were found as sources of the rupture – in other studies, these factors may differ. Institutional factors were at the level of the department; individual factors involved individuals whether it be interns, mentors/supervisors and 'helpful' others; while task related factors concern the tasks allocated to interns, the sequencing of tasks or a lack of feedback after completing tasks. These factors reinforce that an individual's workplace learning can be inhibited and promoted by factors beyond the individual but also that individuals themselves play a role in their learning process.

Each of these three factor categories consists of sub-categories. Expectation and internship management along with departmental culture constitute institutional factors. Individual factors are comprised of mentors, supervisors and 'helpful others' as well as intern initiative and resolve. Lastly, allocation and structuring of work along with feedback, instructive guidance and trust are the components of task related factors. Using the language of communities of practice, these factors prevented interns from moving from legitimate peripheral participants to full participants. While some factors identified were more fusion in character in terms of aligning and creating harmony between the intended and experienced curriculum, this however was not the essence of what this research found with curricular fission characterising the overall intern learning experience. The benefit of utilising this metaphor is that it enables me to

simultaneously speak about both the intended and experienced curriculum dimensions as well as the factors dynamics which influenced this misalignment.

This research found that the experienced curriculum tended to not complement the formal university learning experience of interns such that interns could translate their theoretical knowledge into workplace practice. Moreover, in general, the experienced curriculum did not develop the skills and experience of interns in line with the intentions of the developers of the intended curriculum. Interns learnt mostly procedural knowledge which is centred around administrative work as opposed to learning about the core functions of their respective departments and gaining knowledge and experience in carrying out some of those functions. In the context of this research, administrative work refers to clerical activities such as making copies, booking flights and organising meeting rooms.

Arising from the experience of interns, warehousing could be used to describe the experience of some interns on the graduate internship programme within the department under study. In the context of this research, warehousing is more about keeping interns busy with any kind of work and 'off the street', as opposed to giving them an experience that propels their development. The graduate internship programme took black young graduates, many of whom were women, from disadvantaged backgrounds and provided them with a sub-optimal internship experience. This had the effect of reinforcing their status as a demographic of young people in need of an intervention. With that said, some officials may have believed that the internship programme is enough of an enabler for employment, and as such the programme being a form of warehousing would be a means of leveraging future employment prospects for interns – while developing their employability skills per se was perhaps of less relevance.

These dimensions may have fuelled a situation in which the curriculum was not geared towards a particular outcome that officials were invested in because as long as interns got an 'experience' and were on the internship, that sufficed. This also helps to explain why employment post internship was not monitored, with the only mechanism that was in place to monitor outcomes being quarterly reports, which according to many interns was an insufficient mechanism to monitor and track learning.

In terms of how the concept of warehousing ties back to the metaphor of curricular fission, the 'system' lacked incentives to ensure that intern learning was transpiring in line with the

intended curriculum, and as such the graduate internship programme lent itself to curricular fission. There were thus various assumptions made by the intended curriculum developers regarding curriculum implementation, particularly that prevailing incentives would enable the proper interpretation and implementation of the intended curriculum.

Unlike how the concept of warehousing is used in the UK context, in a South African context there is a political and transformational dimension to its usage. In other words, there is a dual intention in the South African context to both keep them 'off the street' while also giving them a 'step-up' in the form of personal and employability development. Moreover, workplaces in South Africa – including the public sector – have a 'special burden' when it comes to helping graduates transition to the workplace which arises from the socio-economic conditions in which particularly young black graduates find themselves in. Thus, while workplaces are not commonly thought of as environments in which learning is the primary objective, the South African public sector graduate internship programme is unique in terms of the impact it can have.

If we were to imagine a scenario in which there was alignment between the intended and experienced curriculum and interns achieved greater learning outcomes, this does not mean that these young people would necessarily go on to secure employment post the internship. This is because the internship is a supply side intervention by the South African government and in the absence of there not being enough employment opportunities for the grouping of young people that government is targeting through this programme, limitations will remain in terms of what can be achieved.

Various methodological and theoretical contributions have been made by this research, which will be outlined in greater detail in the following sub-sections. The methodological contributions made by this research are twofold. It applied a grounded theory approach to the study of graduate internship programmes within a geographical area, sector and setting that has not been done before. Moreover, it provided a systematic explanation of how grounded theory can be carried out - which is an explanation which is not commonplace - and in so doing, it made a contribution to the grounded theory field itself. In terms of theoretical contributions, what emerged in this grounded theory research is the phenomenon of how the various factors identified can work together to create a misalignment and disjuncture between what people in

that workplace were intended to learn compared to what they actually learned – with this research specifically focusing on interns.

Through this research, the shortcomings and strengths of an existing factor typology were explored and our understanding of communities of practices expanded. Lastly, this research looked at workplace learning, which is not commonplace for graduates who are no longer students, and in the context of a South African government national department.

6.1 Research contribution

6.1.1 Methodological contribution

Using the grounded theory approach enabled me to curb the influence of any pre-conceived ideas I had, which could have affected the literature engagement process, research design choices and ultimately the findings of this research. While I did have a sense of some of the factors which affected the workplace learning of graduates arising from my previous work experience, using the grounded theory approach enabled me to be open to findings that I found surprising. For instance, I did not anticipate *Expectation and internship management* to surface as a factor nor knew how it interfaced with other factors. If I had used a qualitative approach, and not necessarily a grounded theory approach, I would have only been focused on what was in the data and would have neglected what was not in the data. Here I am referring to judgement, decision making and problem solving not resonating with the data – with its absence reflecting the aspects which interns were not able to develop through the programme. Moreover, using the approach forced me to deploy a variety of methods to make sense of the data. I imposed existing typologies on the data, disregarded what did not resonate with the data in favour of what did and engaged with the literature to find the vocabulary to manage what was arising.

From a methodological standpoint, various contributions have been made while pursuing this research agenda. Firstly, no other research could be found that used a grounded theory approach to study graduate internships in South Africa – whether it be in the public sector or otherwise. The second methodological contribution made by this paper is the systematic account of how to carry out grounded theory research. This is beneficial to the grounded theory field itself, whether it be for researchers wanting to use the approach in its entirety or merely components thereof. In this regard, I made it explicit how I managed the messy, non-linear and ambiguous

nature of the approach. In particular, I have been explicit about my research approach and methods and have detailed how the core components of the approach were followed, how the data was used to generate conceptual categories as well as the approach to data generation and analysis.

As I engaged more with the approach throughout this research, I realised that researchers can be true to the methods of grounded theory while still having varied practices and outcomes. Apart from the benefit of the detailed account presented in this research from a transparency perspective, it expands the understanding in the field regarding how to interpret and realise the procedural flexibility that Corbin and Strauss (1990) spoke about. Thus, while grounded theory is often theorised and philosophised, it is often less spoken about in practical terms which is why it can be challenging to use. Regarding the constant comparative approach - which entails the oscillation between data and analysis - while central to grounded theory, the practicality of engaging in this process is assumed and detailed accounts are not commonplace. *Figure 12: Interplay of Grounded Theory Methods*, which is an original illustration of the overall process during the initial round of interviews, demonstrates how constant comparison can play out in practice. Moreover, this diagram also illustrates the iterative nature of the grounded theory approach and expands on *Figure 11: Interplay of Theoretical Sampling And Constant Comparison* which is a reproduction of Birks and Mills' (2015) diagram, who aimed to illustrate the interplay between the constant comparative and theoretical sampling elements. *Figure 12: Interplay of Grounded Theory Methods* that was developed is substantially more detailed than what Birks and Mills (2015) developed in this regard.

The contribution made through this research arising from the systematic account I provided, is also in relation to literature engagement. In a grounded theory study, this subject is often a contentious one with there being differing views regarding when to engage with the literature and the extent thereof. In this research, I spoke to how literature was embraced after doing an initial round of interviews and open coding; how it was also done for practical reasons in the coding process; its usefulness in elevating the data groups created; as well as the overall process of combining data and literature. For instance, I spoke about how engaging with the literature enabled me to think in a more nuanced and deeper way regarding the labelling of the confidence and commitment learning group, which enabled me to associate confidence with initiative and self-learning that I had not done initially. These kinds of practical examples provided insight into how engaging with literature has value to the open coding process and can provide

guidance in terms of where to 'go' next, as opposed to only for purposes of theoretical sampling. How literature can shape and influence research varies and again, while theorised and debated, less is spoken about in terms of how literature can be practically engaged while still being faithful to grounded theory. In this research, I found existing typologies in the literature that shaped the research which may differ for other researchers owing to the nature of what they are researching. As such, in this research I helped show the variation within grounded theory with respect to how literature can interact with emerging data. This kind of approach may be useful for other novice grounded theory researchers as it can guide them through the 'messy' approach that grounded theory is often associated with.

Lastly, this research also outlined extensively the coding process with examples from the data. Utilising the grounded theory approach meant having to manage a substantial number of codes. As mentioned, the first five interviews generated over 700 unique codes which I had to sort through and make sense of. I detailed how I managed the large number of codes and the overall coding process. While the literature on grounded theory methods speaks about codes and categories, I used an intermediary grouping step to manage and make sense of all the codes. This intermediary grouping step was used because I felt like I was drowning in code. This intermediary grouping step was a precursor to the development of categories. I illustrated this process in *Figure 14: Coding and Re-Grouping Process*, and in so doing connected this process to the process illustrated in *Figure 12: Interplay of Grounded Theory Methods*. The reference to 're-grouping' in *Figure 14: Coding and Re-Grouping Process* refers to the process of moving codes across groupings, developing new groups with codes taken from other groups or the renaming or merging of groups.

Grounded theory is not mechanical, and going through the series of steps that accompany the approach is not sufficient to produce meaningful insights. Researchers must make an effort to interpret what is before them, with this creative dimension of grounded theory being the departure point between the founders of grounded theory. Bearing this area of dispute in mind is another reason why researchers need to be transparent about how they were both creative and demonstrated openness on the one hand while still following the grounded theory procedures on the other hand.

Two final minor points regarding how this research is a contribution arising from the detailed account it provided relate to theoretical sensitivity and memo taking. For purposes of

theoretical sensitivity, I tabled my assumptions and biases, experiences, theoretical knowledge and expectations around outcomes. This was done to assist in mitigating against these elements affecting theoretical sampling and to enhance theoretical sensitivity. I consider this good practice and not something that I have seen in other research studies. Moreover, I also gave examples of memos written that made my thoughts and research processes even more transparent and informative for other researchers. Again, I have not seen in other published postgraduate studies examples of memos being given in this manner.

6.1.2 Theoretical contribution

In addition to the methodological contributions made, I also make several theoretical contributions in this research. The first contribution relates to the concept that was developed through this research. The notion of curricular fission is unique and not found elsewhere in the literature, and is a metaphor which enabled me to simultaneously capture the misalignment between the intended and experienced curriculum as well as the factors which brought about this misalignment. In doing so, the metaphor can encapsulate succinctly the contributions I made through this research.

Secondly, while researchers often explore intended and experienced curricula in the context of schools, higher education and in relation to students, here I applied this lens to a workplace setting and in relation to graduate interns. Thus, not only was doing so a novel approach but it also expanded the field's understanding regarding the usefulness of this curriculum lens when researching workplace learning.

Thirdly, the extent to which the dimensions of Eraut's (2012) factor typology resonated with the data was also discussed. As highlighted by Eraut et al. (2004), this typology may not "extend across all learners and all contexts" and the relative importance of each element may vary (p. 2) – while speaking to Eraut's (2004b) earlier version, this holds relevance to his revised version as well. As such, applying the typology to a new context to understand the bounds of it has value as it adds to our understanding of its application and usefulness. Moreover, through this research, elements were discovered which were not captured in Eraut's typology. This was namely *learning culture and internship management.* As such, by using a grounded theory approach, Eraut's factor typology was able to be revised through this research.

Concerning learning culture, issues of conflict and unequal power relations and their impact on learning are not something that was fully explored by Lave and Wenger, nor is it accounted for when we speak of 'factors' that affect workplace learning within Eraut's typology. This however emerged in the data. In terms of internship management, while the focus of this research was not on HR practices or overall programme management, these components were found to affect intern learning. As such, there was an intersection between management issues and educational issues. An example of this is quarterly reports and how the improper submission and completion of quarterly reports by mentors/supervisors affected intern learning, and how HR did not do follow-ups when insufficient or inadequate learning was reported within them.

A fourth theoretical contribution lies in looking at the curriculum within a workplace setting. Curriculum is often associated with schools, universities and other learning institutions as opposed to a workplace. Billet (2006) spoke to the importance of understanding workplace curriculum as workplaces play a critical role in learning, in the initial phases of one's career but also throughout one's life. Given the amount of time that people spend in their respective workplaces, much of the learning a person will do will either transpire, be refined or further be developed in these spaces. In this research I also looked at workplaces in relation to the South African government and in connection with a national department for which no other research of this nature could be found – as such this research looked at learning within a workplace setting and within a department that has not transpired previously.

Lastly, the understanding of communities of practice were also expanded by applying the concept to the intern support group. Communities of practice can help describe how newcomers transition from legitimate peripheral participants to full participants in their respective communities of practice. However, in this context, what constituted a 'full participant' was less obvious. I took a 'full participant' to refer to those interns who managed to effectively navigate the internship system and attend training courses, who advised other interns, and who had the overall work allocation and internship experience that other interns aspired to have. As mentioned, the intern support group was one community of practice in a much larger ecosystem of interrelated communities of practices, and it did not operate as the principal community of practice for interns. In short, this research provided a new context in which to understand the experience of interns as legitimate peripheral participants, which may vary from other contexts.

6.2 Research limitations

Research limitations are potential weaknesses of a study that are beyond the control of the researcher, and are present in every study (Simon & Goes, 2013; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). These limitations flow from methodology and design, with each option in this regard having its own set of limitations (Simon & Goes, 2013). Some limitations could be considered 'imposed' restrictions as they arise from constraints such as funding and time (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). It is important to acknowledge these constraints as they may influence findings and conclusions (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). This research is not immune from limitations, with there being six limitations that will be touched on in this section.

The first limitation of this study was not being able to include an ethnographic component in the data generation process. In particular, I was unable to spend time observing the activities and interactions of interns at their place of work. This was owing to the restrictions for two years brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic which severely disrupted the data generation process, with the restrictions related to physical interactions and movement. In this regard, the department just had a cohort of interns who had completed their internship just before the pandemic outbreak which meant that at the time the research request was made there were already no interns within the department to observe and interact with. Moreover, owing to the pandemic the department was postponing the recruitment of graduate interns by at least a year. Arising from government mandated restrictions on physical interactions as a means of controlling the pandemic, government officials were also working remotely so the workplace itself could not be observed as a means of better understanding the department's culture, dynamics and officials within it.

The second limitation was that interns were interviewed after the completion of their internship as opposed to before, during and after. This meant that interviews were based on events that may have transpired 18-24 months prior to the interviews being conducted, such as their induction process, which opens the possibility of information being recalled inaccurately or influenced by other feelings such as being unemployed at the time of being interviewed.

Thirdly, only one national government department was the subject of this research. The choice was between depth and breadth, and the decision was made to only focus on one department to be able to achieve a greater depth of understanding. While national government departments

may have similarities, they do have differences which puts limits on the kind of generalisations that can be made regarding all national government departments.

The fourth limitation is that data was collected from one cohort as opposed to interns across multiple cohorts. It is plausible that intern experiences across cohorts may vary, owing to factors such as a difference in departmental leadership or programme duration. Concerning the latter point, the cohort in this study were the first to complete a two-year internship as opposed to the traditional one-year internship, and as such the experiences between them and their previous cohorts may vary because of it.

The fifth limitation is that the level of the enacted curriculum was not looked at in this research. Including this dimension would have required substantially more interviews with mentors and supervisors at an implementation level – similar to what was required for interns, to understand the enacted curriculum. Moreover, data generation and analysis would have been required to unpack and understand the alignment and misalignment between different levels, namely: The intended curriculum and the enacted curriculum; and the enacted and experienced curriculum. This would have broadened the scope of this research substantially, beyond what would have been possible during the data generation phase which transpired during COVID 19 – which as mentioned entailed severe restrictions on physical interaction.

The last limitation concerns employability and employment. While these form part of government's stated intentions, it was beyond the scope of this study to look at whether the internship enhanced the employability skills of interns as well as their employment prospects. For instance, a baseline and endline employability skills assessment could have been conducted which would have facilitated a greater understanding regarding intern learning on the programme. Questions regarding the employment status of interns were also not delved into during interviews - although information about the employment status of some interns did arise organically. In this regard, direct questions regarding employment status may have had a negative bias owing to the pandemic, seeing that it was a period that impacted job creation and prospects.

Some of the limitations outlined in this section relate to the generalisability of the research findings. The production of generalised and generalisable knowledge can often be the preoccupation of a social scientist, yet the social sciences does not lend itself to the kind of

generalisations that can be made in the natural sciences (Thomas, 2011). The social sciences is comprised of individual examples and case studies, as opposed to general 'truths', and as such is a different kind of inquiry compared to the natural sciences. Failure to make this distinction can lead one to the "absurd position that it is inappropriate to argue, gain insight or learn from particular examples, for fear that this might be thought anecdotal and, therefore, unscientific" (Thomas, 2011, p. 4). Moreover, unlike the natural sciences, the social sciences do not have the kind of processes and norms for accepting and rejecting generalisations (Thomas, 2011). Thus, even if generalisations were to be drawn in the social sciences, this does not mean that they would be of a comparable quality to those made in the natural sciences (Thomas, 2011). A key question to probe is whether the findings of this research would qualify as 'everyday generalisations' that a layperson could make in the absence of this research. In other words, is it akin to the "everyday guesses and assumptions, homily, proverbs and maxims?" that people make (Thomas, 2011, p. 6). The short answer to this is no. The point here is twofold. Firstly, owing to the findings in this paper being beyond what is considered ‘everyday generalisations’, its findings have theoretical value. Secondly, even though the findings may not be universally true and hold for all contexts, this does not mean that they cannot be generalised and hold for some contexts. In this regard, I will differentiate between curriculum fission and the factors which emerged. On the one hand, curriculum fission as a concept is likely to be applicable in other spaces because in short what it is conveying is that there are specific factors in a workplace that can serve to create a misalignment between the intended and experienced curriculum. On the other hand, what may be of less applicability to other contexts are the factors themselves. While the broader categories of institutional, individual and task related factors may have application and transferability to other contexts, the variability in the theory is likely to come in at the level of the sub-categories i.e., the components of each of these three categories.

With respect to some of the other limitations identified in this research, while I was unable to conduct ethnographic research, the department of focus is one that I worked frequently with before. As such, I have interacted with officials across various units and levels of seniority across multiple years which has given me insight into the functioning of the department. This previous experience has served to in some way overcome the shortcoming of not being able to be emersed in the department owing to the pandemic. Thus, as Crabtree et al. (2013) reminded us, “immersion and apprehension” is a means to an end as opposed to an end in itself (p.2). Thus, while “the more unfamiliar the work, the more time it takes to apprehend”, having

familiarity with one's research context assists in achieving this end whether it be because of one's membership in the particular community being studied or otherwise (Crabtree et al., 2013).

With respect to interviewing interns after completion, the interviewing of HR officials and mentors assisted in triangulating the data. Moreover, every effort was taken to interview interns as quickly as possible, which was highlighted when discussing externalities in Chapter Two. Moreover, with interviews being conducted during the pandemic which entailed restrictions on physical interactions and movement, many people tended to have more time on their hands which may have facilitated more detailed discussions with me as the interviewer.

While like with any other research, there were limitations, every effort was made within available resources to overcome these challenges, with some of these limitations also guiding areas for future research which will be outlined in the proceeding section.

6.3 Future research

Arising from this research, there are several possible areas for future research which will be outlined in this section. The first area relates to applying the notion of curricular fission including the factor categories and sub-categories to other national government departments and local government departments as well as to other sectors in relation to graduate interns. This will enable an understanding of how the different factors interact with each other as well as to what extent factors vary across different national departments as well as across spheres of government. It will also provide insight into the workings of different departments, how these departments differ and how one programme implemented across different settings can vary. Moreover, it can also be used in relation to other sectors such as the private sector which will also provide insight into different learning environments.

The second area for future research relates to research methods and applying an ethnographic component to this study. As highlighted previously, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, a grounded theory study which encompassed an ethnographic component was not possible. As such, future researchers could explore the extent to which adding this component deepens, broadens, confirms or disputes the findings of this research. Workplace learning is underexplored in the literature and as such, testing the findings of this research by adopting other methods is a fruitful exercise.

The third possible avenue relates to macro factors. As highlighted by Moore (2004) and Fuller and Unwin (2011), workplace learning is not divorced from the broader political economy such as government regulations, market pressures and broader cultures such as social class that can shape knowledge encounters as learning does not transpire in a vacuum. However, broader macro factors and how this can play a role in intern learning were not explicitly considered. For instance, in an election year, the ruling political party may put pressure on a department which in turn has a bearing on departmental culture which ultimately affects intern learning. Another example is that of natural disasters such as drought or floods, with the occurrence of these putting pressure on departmental budgets - whose mandate is related to these events - which could give rise to budget cuts for intern training. There are also other macro factors such as job security issues in which senior staff may be worried about their jobs which then affects how they run their respective units and engage with junior employees. Future studies could take a broader perspective when it comes to exploring the factors which affect intern learning by considering macropolitical, economic and social factors.

Through this research, a useful base is provided on which to build, with the potential for future research arising from it being of value from both a methodological and theoretical perspective.

6.4 Policy and praxis implications

Government developed the graduate internship programme to provide opportunities for young people to gain workplace experience and skills within a context of graduate unemployment; South Africa's history of unequal opportunity; and according to government, higher education not fulfilling its role in adequately preparing students for the workplace. With the machinery of the state and its resources being used towards this end and given that the South African government is likely the largest recruiter of graduate interns in the country, improving policy and praxis in relation to it can have individual and societal benefits. In this regard, the policy and praxis implications have been divided into three sections, to mirror the factor categories which emerged.

6.4.1 Individual factors

As outlined in government documents, the mentors assigned to interns should receive training so that they can aid in the professional development of interns as they "underpin the transfer of relevant work knowledge and skills" (DPSA, 2015a, p. 10). While the department introduced mentor training, not everyone was trained with the first training transpiring in 2018. Only about

20 mentors from the department underwent this. The policy framework thus seems to be in place, although implementation is lagging.

However, antecedent to the issue of training, is the matter of mentor selection. In this regard, the kind of person who occupies the position of mentor/supervisor to interns has consequences for intern learning. As such, their attitude and personality need to be taken into consideration including their ability and willingness to guide interns allocated to them. This is in line with the findings of Swap et al. (2001) who found that being an 'expert' did not mean that they knew how to feed this 'expert' knowledge to others. Also, their time availability must be considered because they may not have the time to engage with interns even if their disposition lends itself to the role. This means that high-ranking officials may not necessarily make the best mentors/supervisors for interns. There does appear to be an issue with the current mentor selection process in the department. Only around half of mentors generally attended departmental meetings convened for them, with HR official 1 commenting that they realised they "can't leave the choosing of the mentor in the hands of the unit… They need to identify four or five people within the unit that can be a possible mentor. And then we need to see how best can we match them with the intern". Aligning policy and praxis concerning mentors can have a significant impact on intern learning and avoid a situation of curricular fission.

6.4.2 Institutional factors

As outlined in the guidelines for the operationalisation of government's internship programme across all departments, interns should be inducted within 60 days and it should be in line with the induction programme for the public service that was developed by Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA) (DPSA, 2015a, p.11). This induction programme aims to develop an understanding of the organisation of the state, legislation, policies as well as the regulatory environment. While interns attended the Breaking Barriers to Entry into Public Service (BB2E) course, this does not constitute an induction programme.

A structured induction programme held internally is important and should be frontloaded onto the internship in terms of sequencing. This intervention could cover amongst other things, expectation management, information sharing as well as how to operate in a government context. Regarding expectation management, the expectations of interns should be solicited and managed from the outset in terms of what their work activities and role entails as well as the volume of work to anticipate. Interns generally enter the workplace without any previous

work experience, and as such may have high and unreasonable expectations of what their internship experience will encompass. Effectively managing these expectations will help to ensure that interns do not get demotivated. In terms of operating in a work environment, this could cover the values and ethos of how to operate in the public service.

In terms of programme monitoring, as acknowledged in the Strategic Framework Vision 2015, workplace learning needs to be better managed including the strengthening of workplace learning systems (DPSA, 2015b). The department's internal policy on interns also speaks to the need for effective management, which should include "clearly defined performance indicators and assessment measures to evaluate protégés" (p. 7). At the level of the department, HR needs to strengthen the role they play. For instance, they should check the content of quarterly reports to monitor intern learning as opposed to only checking if they are submitted. This means focusing on development and learning compared to only accountability in relation to reports. If HR detects that the learning of interns is becoming monotonous, they should have a repertoire of approaches on hand to intervene. In the absence of greater HR engagement, a lack of learning on the part of interns may not be identified which can lead to them doing administrative tasks for the majority of their internship. With respect to DPSA, while their Directives were considered useful as before that, "The Department would just do as they please", they could do more to influence implementation and practice (HR official 1). For example, they could ask for more detailed information such as information on the number of courses interns have attended and ensure that mentors are adequately trained.

As surfaced through this research, management issues were also educational issues irrespective of whether the people managing the programme perceived it as such - interns did articulate these issues in some of their responses regarding what affected their learning. To avoid a situation in which there is a disjuncture between the intended and experienced curriculum, this dimension warrants attention.

6.4.3 Task related factors

The Departmental internship and learnership policy (2010) outlines that the experienced curriculum should encompass interns being exposed to meaningful real life work experiences that complement their university classroom experience, and which facilitate confidence development. The data however indicates a lack of thoughtfulness in terms of providing varied learning opportunities, which hinders the achievement of the intended curriculum.

With respect to how the opportunities and tasks allocated to them could be structured, the pacing of tasks such that they get more challenging over time will facilitate learning because it would enable interns to develop proficiency in tasks and learn more over time. This can be done using the modelling, coaching, scaffolding and fading approach (Billet, 1994). This ensures that interns have enough challenging tasks throughout their internship, without feeling demoralized and unstimulated. This, however, can only transpire if interns demonstrate that they can take on more tasks with time – not only in quantity but also in depth. As such, the expectations of interns need to be managed so that they know this sequencing will only transpire if they demonstrate ability. Moreover, even if they do have more responsibility with time, this does not necessarily mean that they will be managing core functions by themselves or leading entire projects – as this may be outside the scope of the internship. With this said, interns need to be made aware that the nature of the internship is such that it may entail mainly being allocated administrative work so that they manage their expectations. In other words, it could be that the internship itself is not able to deliver on the theory of change that policy makers had intended and is geared more towards 'warehousing', which as discussed takes on a socio-economic and political dimension in South Africa with government helping to carry this 'special burden' born out of the need for transformation and redress.

With that said, administrative work is not unimportant, and interns did not have an understanding regarding this, which led to them being demotivated. For instance, if a Chief Director was unable to travel owing to not having a flight booked for them timeously, then this may have impacted programme delivery. Another example is the organising of catering for workshops because in the absence of food community members in attendance would not be able to eat - which is especially important in poorer communities. When work is allocated to interns, they should know what the bigger deliverable is so that they can better understand how they are playing a contributing role.

Moreover, interns should be made aware of the ethos and values associated with delivering public services and that this too is integral in the delivery of services and what it means to be a public servant.

6.5 Reflections

While ultimately finding the grounded theory approach was epitomised by a sense of relief, using the approach proved time consuming and analytical challenging. It requires painstaking

data coding, sorting through codes as well as navigating through hundreds of codes. As a researcher adopting this approach, the words of the grounded theory founders regarding how grounded theory is about the generation of theory from data remains at the forefront of one's mind throughout the research process. Making the analytical 'jump' requires reflection and going over the data several times. Despite this, using the approach proved worthwhile as it, I believe, helped to generate research that is a contribution to the field – in both methodological and theoretical terms. In short, I think the findings of this study would not have been generated if any other qualitative approach was adopted.

We cannot have a situation in which fissional becomes synonymous with who we are and what we produce as a country – whether that be in terms of the intern curriculum or otherwise.

REFERENCES

Anand, R., Kothari, S., & Kumar, N. (2016). South Africa: Labor Market Dynamics and Inequality. *International Monetary Fund Working Paper*.

Annells, M. (1996). Grounded theory method: Philosophical perspective, paradigm of inquiry, and postmodernism. *Qualitative Health Research*, *6*(3), 379–393. https://doi.org/10.1177/104973239600600306

Austin, K., Orcutt, S., & Rosso, J. (2001). How people learn: Introduction to learning theories. *The Learning Classroom: Theory Into Practice–A Telecourse for Teacher Education and Professional Development*, 1–22.

Avis, J., Orr, K., & Warmington, P. (2017). Race and vocational education and training in England. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, *69*(3), 292–310. https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2017.1289551

Baldry, K. (2016). Graduate unemployment in South Africa: Social inequality reproduced. *Journal of Education and Work*, *29*(7), 788–812. https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2015.1066928

Barker, A., Kinsella, E. A., & Bossers, A. (2010). Learning in international practice placement education: A grounded theory study. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *73*(1), 29–37. https://doi.org/10.4276/030802210X12629548272709

Benner, P. (1982). A collection of readings related to competency-based training. *American Journal of Nursing*, 402–407.

Bhorat, H., & Mayet, N. (2011). Labour Demand Trends and the Determinants of Unemployment in South Africa. *Background Paper for the Forthcoming Report on Closing the Skills and Technology Gaps in South Africa*.

Bilginsoy, C. (2003). The Hazards of Training: Attrition and Retention in Construction Industry Apprenticeship Programs. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, *57*(1), 54. https://doi.org/10.2307/3590981

Billett, S. (1994). Situating learning in the workplace: Having another look at Apprenticeships. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, *26*(11), 9–16. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/00197859410073745

Billett, S. (2006). Constituting the workplace curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *38*(1), 31–48. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/00220270500153781

Billett, S. (2011). Subjectivity, Self and Personal Agency in Learning Through and for Work. In M. Malloch, L. Cairns, K. Evans, & B. N. O'Connor (Eds.), *Sage Handbook of Workplace Learning* (pp. 52–62). Sage.

Billet, S (1996). Developing workplaces as learning environments: Towards a learning curriculum. *19th National Conference Australian Council for Adult Literacy*, 33–54.

Birks, M., & Mills, J. (2015). *Grounded theory: A practical guide*. Sage.

Bola, S., Trollip, E., & Parkinson, F. (2015). The state of South African internships: A national survey against HPCSA guidelines. *South African Medical Journal*, *105*(7), 535–539. https://doi.org/10.7196/SAMJnew.7923

Boud, D., & Rooney, D. (2014). What can higher education learn from the workplace? In A. Dailey-Hebert (Ed.), *Transformative Perspectives and Processes in Higher Education* (pp. 195–209). Dordrecht: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-09247-8_11

Boud, D., Rooney, D., & Solomon, N. (2009). Talking up learning at work: Cautionary tales in co-opting everyday learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *28*(3), 323–334. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370902799077

Boud, D., & Walker, D. (1991). *Experience and Learning: Reflection at Work.* Deakin University. https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066x.31.9.638

Browning, L., Beyer, J., & Shetler, J. (1995). Building cooperation in a competitive industry : Sematech and the semiconductor industry. *Academy of Management Journal*, *38*(1), 113–151. https://doi.org/10.2307/256730

Buckley, C. A., & Waring, M. J. (2013). Using diagrams to support the research process: Examples from grounded theory. *Qualitative Research*, *13*(2), 148–172. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112472280

Burford, S., Cooper, L., & Miller, F. (2020). Stolen knowledge: Student knowing in workplace practice. *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, *21*(2), 163–176.

Business Tech. (2019). *How much money you can expect to earn in your first job in South Africa*.

Cameron, R. (2015). Performance management in the South African Department of Labour Smoke and Mirrors? *African Journal of Public Affairs*, *8*(1), 1–18.

Cameron, R., & Harrison, J. L. (2012). The interrelatedness of formal, non-formal and informal learning: Evidence from labour market program participants. In *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* (Vol. 52, Issue 2).

Casey, B. (1986). The Dual Apprenticeship System and the Recruitment and Retention of Young Persons in West Germany. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, *24*(1), 63–81. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8543.1986.tb00671.x

Charmaz, K. (1996). The search for meanings - Grounded Theory. In J. Smit, R. Harre, & L. Van Langenhove (Eds.), *Rethinking methods in Psychology* (pp. 27–49). Sage.

Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 509–535). Sage.

Charmaz, K. (2005). Grounded Theory in the 21st Century: Applications for Advancing Social Justice Studies. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 507–535). Sage.

Chelechele, T. I. (2009). Skills development in the South African public service: Problems and solutions. *Journal of Public Administration*, *44*(1), 44–57.

Chilisa, B., & Kawulich, B. (2012). Selecting a research approach: Paradigm, methodology and methods. In C. Wagner, B. Kawulich, & M. Garner (Eds.), *Doing social research: A global context* (pp. 51–61). McGraw Hill.

Clark, A. (1998). The qualitative-quantitative debate: moving from positivism and confrontation to post-positivism and reconciliation. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *27*(6), 1242–1249.

Clarke, M. (2017). Building employability through graduate development programmes: A case study in an Australian public sector organisation. *Personnel Review*, *46*(4), 792–808. https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-12-2015-0321

Coetzer, A., & Perry, M. (2016). Factors Influencing Employee Learning In Small Firms. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar*, *6*. https://doi.org/10.1108/00400910810917037

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. C. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed). Routledge.

Coker, D. (2020). Reflections in the Educational Leadership Internship: Bridging Theory and Practice. *Journal of Education, Society and Behavioural Science*, *October*, 72–88. https://doi.org/10.9734/jesbs/2020/v33i930261

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded Theory Research : Procedures , Canons , and Evaluative Criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, *13*(1), 3–21.

Cornish, C. (2018). 'Keep them students busy': 'warehoused' or taught skills to achieve? *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, *23*(1), 100–117. https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2018.1420733

Crabtree, A., Tolmie, P., & Rouncefield, M. (2013). "How Many Bloody Examples Do You Want?" Fieldwork and Generalisation. *ECSCW 2013: Proceedings of the 13th European Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work, 21-25 September 2013, Paphos, Cyprus*, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4471-5346-7_1

Cupps, S., & Olmosk, K. E. (2008). Developing effective internships within public sector organizations. *Public Personnel Management*, *37*(3), 303–311. https://doi.org/10.1177/009102600803700303

D'Abate, C., Youndt, M., & Wenzel, K. (2009). Making the most of an internship: An empirical study of internship satisfaction. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, *8*(4), 527–539. https://doi.org/10.5465/AMLE.2009.47785471

Daniels, R. C. (2007). Skills Shortages in South Africa : A Literature Review. *Development Policy Research Unit (DPRU) Working Paper*, *07*(121).

De Jong, T., & Ferguson-Hessler, M. G. M. (1996). Types and qualities of knowledge. *Educational Psychologist*, *31*(2), 105–113. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep3102_2

Department of Public Service and Administration. (2006a). *Determination on conditions of service of interns and learners in the public service*.

Department of Public Service and Administration. (2006b). *The public service internship programme: step by step guide*.

Department of Public Service and Administration. (2009a). *Determination on Interns in the Public Service*.

Department of Public Service and Administration. (2009b). Fast tracking implementation of quality internship programme across the public service. *The 2nd Annual Internship Programme Strategy Workshop*.

Department of Public Service and Administration. (2015a). *Guidelines on implementing a determination on interns in the public service*.

Department of Public Service and Administration. (2015b). *Strategic Framework Vision 2015*.

Department of Public Service and Administration. (2018a). *Annual Performance Plan 2018/19*.

Department of Public Service and Administration. (2018b). *Directive on the employment of persons to developmental programmes in the public service: Internships, learnership, apprenticeship, graduates recruitment schemes and related programmes* (pp. 1–23).

Derrick, J. (2019). "Tacit pedagogy" and "entanglement": practice-based informal learning and innovation. *Journal of Workplace Learning*. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/JWL-07-2019-0094

Digby, A. (2005). Early black doctors in South Africa. *Journal of African History*, *46*(2005), 427–454. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853705000836

Dornan, T. (2012). Workplace learning. *Perspect Med Education*, *March*(1), 15–23. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-012-0005-4

Dunne, C. (2011). The place of the literature review in grounded theory research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *14*(2), 111–124. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2010.494930

Ellström, P. E. (2011). Informal learning at work: Conditions, processes and logics. In M. Malloch, L. Cairns, K. Evans, & B. N. O'Connor (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of workplace learning* (pp. 105–119).

Erasmus, N. (2012). Slaves of the state – medical internship and community service in South Africa. *South African Medical Journal*, *102*(8), 655–658. https://doi.org/10.7196/SAMJ.5987

Eraut, M. (2000). Non-formal learning and tacit knowledge in professional work. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *70*(1), 113–136.

Eraut, M. (2004a). Informal learning in the workplace. *Studies in Continuing Education*, *26*(2), 247–273. https://doi.org/10.1080/158037042000225245

Eraut, M. (2004b). Transfer of knowledge between education and workplace settings. *Workplace Learning in Context*, *April*, 201–221. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203571644

Eraut, M. (2012). Developing a broader approach to professional learning. In A. M. Kee & M. Eraut (Eds.), *Learning trajectories, innovation and identity for professional development* (pp. 21–45). Springer, Dordrecht.

Fuller, A., Hodkinson, H., Hodkinson, P., & Unwin, L. (2005). Learning as peripheral participation in communities of practice: a reassessment of key concepts in workplace learning. *British Educational Research Journal*, *31*(1), 49–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/0141192052000310029

Fuller, A., & Unwin, L. (2011). Workplace learning and the organization. In M. Malloch, L. Cairns, K. Evans, & B. N. O'Connor (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Workplace Learning* (pp. 46–59). Sage.

Fuller, A., Unwin, L., Felstead, A., Jewson, N., & Kakavelakis, K. (2012). Creating and using knowledge: An analysis of the differentiated nature of workplace learning environments. In *The Knowledge Economy and Lifelong Learning: A Critical Reader* (pp. 191–206). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-915-2

Galindo, A. (n.d.). What is Nuclear Energy? The Science of Nuclear Power. In *International Atomic Energy*.

Gholampour, M., Ahmadi, G., & Emamjomeh, M. (2022). Developing a theoretical model for Farhangian University current internship curriculum Based on Grounded Theory analysis. *Quarterly Journal of Research and Planning in Higher Education*, *1401*(1), 187–219. https://doi.org/10.52547/irphe.1401.1.187

Gibbs, G. (2015). *A Discussion with Prof Kathy Charmaz on Grounded Theory* [Video recording].

Gioia, D., Corley, K., & Hamilton, A. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, *16*(1), 15–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428112452151

Glaser, B. G. (2002). Constructivist grounded theory? *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *3*(3). https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/40981071

Glaser, B. G., & Holton, J. (2004). Remodeling Grounded Theory. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *5*(2). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-5.2.607

Gray, D. E. (2014). *Doing research in the real world* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications Limited.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105–117). Sage publications.

Gül, U., Altuntaş, D., & Efe, E. (2022). A year and a half later: Clinical experiences of intern nursing students in the COVID-19 Pandemic: A constructivist grounded theory. *Nurse Education in Practice*, *63*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2022.103381

Hager, P., & Hodkinson, P. (2009). Moving beyond the metaphor of transfer of learning. *British Educational Research Journal*, *35*(4), 619–638. https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920802642371

Hall, H., Griffiths, D., & McKenna, L. (2013). From Darwin to constructivism: The evolution of grounded theory. *Nurse Researcher*, *20*(3), 17–21. https://doi.org/10.7748/nr2013.01.20.3.17.c9492

Harris, I. B. (2011). Conceptual Perspectives and the Formal Curriculum. In J. P. Hafle (Ed.), *Extraordinary Learning in the Workplace* (pp. 3–16). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0271-4

Helmenstine, A. M. (2019). *What Is nuclear fission?* ThoughtCo. https://www.thoughtco.com/nuclear-fission-definition-and-examples-4065372

Hemmings, B., & Weaven, E. (2005). The reality of undertaking an inclusive education internship. *Making Meaning: Creating Connections That Value Diversity, 30th Annual Conference of the Australian Association of Special Education*.

Hodkinson, P., Colley, P., & Malcolm, J. (2003). The interrelationships between informal and formal learning. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, *15*, 313–318. https://doi.org/10.1108/13665620310504783

Hordern, J. (2018). *Recontextualisation and the education-work relation*. 1–20.

Hoyle, J., & Goffnett, S. (2013). Directing effective marketing internships. *Journal for Advancement of Marketing Education*, *21*(1), 1–15.

Hughes, C. (2004). The supervisor's influence on workplace learning. *Studies in Continuing Education*, *26*(2), 275–287. https://doi.org/10.1080/158037042000225254

Human Sciences Research Council. (n.d.). *Tracing graduates into the labour market*.

Illeris, K. (2009). *Contemporary theories of learning: learning theorists... in their own words*. Routledge.

Iputo, J. E. (2008). Faculty of Health Sciences, Walter Sisulu University: Training Doctors from and for Rural South African Communities. *Medicc Review*, *10*(4), 25–29.

Isabella, L. A. (1990). Evolving Interpretations as a Change Unfolds: How Managers Construe Key Organizational Events. *The Academy of Management Journal*, *33*(1), 7–41. https://doi.org/10.2307/256350

Jacob, S., & Furgerson, S. (2012). The qualitative report writing interview protocols and conducting interviews: Tips for students new to the field of qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, *17*(42), 1–10. https://doi.org/Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR17/jacob.pdf

Jacobs, R. L., & Park, Y. (2009). A proposed conceptual framework of workplace learning: Implications for theory development and research in human resource development. *Human Resource Development Review*, *8*(2), 133–150. https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484309334269

Johnson, M., & Majewska, D. (2022). *Formal, non-formal, and informal learning: What are they, and how can we research them?* https://www.cambridge.org/

Joseph, M. K. (2017). *Employability Of Graduates On The Public Service Internship Programme: The Case Of The Limpopo Department Of Economic Development, Environment & Tourism (Ledet), South Africa [Master's thesis, University of Limpopo]*.

Kaiser, K. (2009). Protecting Respondent Confidentiality in Qualitative Research. *Qual Health Res*, *19*(11), 1632–1641. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732309350879.Protecting

Koma, N. (2010). *An Implementation Analysis Of The Graduate Internship Programme Of The South African Department Of Public Service And Administration (Master's thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal]*.

Kooken, J., Ley, T., & De Hoog, R. (2007). How do people learn at the workplace? Investigating four workplace learning assumptions. *In European Conference on Technology Enhanced Learning*, 158–171. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-540-75195-3_12

Kouh, B. N. (2013). *An evaluation of the environmental internship programme (2005- 2013) and it's prospects for improved graduate employability: The case of interns in the City of Cape Town [Master's thesis, University of the Western Cape]*. University of the Western Cape.

Kraak, A. (2010). The collapse of the graduate labour market in South Africa: evidence from recent studies. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, *15*(1), 81–102. https://doi.org/10.1080/13596740903565384

Kraiger, K., Passmore, J., Santos, N. R. dos, & Malvezzi, S. (2015). The psychology of training, development, and performance improvement. In *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of the Psychology of Training, Development, and Performance Improvement, 1*. (pp. 1–9). Wiley Blackwell.

Kruss, G. (2004). Employment and employability: expectations of higher education responsiveness in South Africa. *Journal of Education Policy*, *19*(6), 673–689. https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093042000300454

Kurz, A., Elliott, S. N., Wehby, J. H., & Smithson, J. L. (2010). Alignment of the intended, planned, and enacted curriculum in general and special education and its relation to student achievement. *Journal of Special Education*, *44*(3), 131–145. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022466909341196

Kyndt, E., Dochy, F., & Nijs, H. (2009). Learning conditions for non-formal and informal workplace learning. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, *21*(5), 369–383. https://doi.org/10.1108/13665620910966785

Lave, J. (1996). Teaching, as Learning, in Practice. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, *3*(3), 149–164. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327884mca0303_2

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated Learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.

Lee, T., Fuller, A., Ashton, D., Butler, P., Felstead, A., Unwin, L., & Walters, S. (2004). Learning as Work: Teaching and Learning Processes in the Contemporary Work Organisation. In *Learning as Work: Teaching and Learning Processes in the Contemporary Work Organisation* (Issue 2, pp. 1–34). The Centre for Labour Market Studies, University of Leicester.

Letseka, M., Cosser, M., Breier, M., & Visser, M. (2010). *Student retention & graduate destination: Higher education & labour market access & success*. HSRC Press.

M. Eraut, S. Steadman, J.Furner, F. Maillardet, C. Miller, A. Ali, C. B. (2004). Learning in the Professional Workplace: Relationships between Learning Factors and Contextual Factors. *AERA 2004 Conference, San Diego, 12th April 2004*.

Macginty, H. (2024). *Graduate Unemployment in South Africa*. www.dhet.gov.za

Maharasoa, M., & Hay, D. (2001). South Africa Higher Education and Graduate Employment in South Africa. *Quality in Higher Education*, *7*(2), 139–147. https://doi.org/10.1080/1353832012006003

Manuti, A., Pastore, S., Scardigno, A. F., Giancaspro, M. L., & Morciano, D. (2015). Formal and informal learning in the workplace: a research review. *International Journal of Training and Development*, *19*(1), 1–17.

Marock, C. (2008). *Grappling with youth employability in South Africa*. Human Sciences Research Council.

Marsick, V., & Watkins, K. (2001). Informal and incidental learning. In *New directions for adult and continuing education* (Issue 89, pp. 25–34).

Marsick, V., Watkins, K., Callahan, M., & Volpe, M. (2006). Reviewing theory and research on informal and incidental learning. *Academy of Human Resource Development International Conference*, 794–800.

Marume, S. B. M. (2016). Meaning of Public Administration. *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, *4*(6), 15–20.

Mayer, J. D. (2004). What is Emotional Intelligence? *University of New Hampshire (UNH) Personality Lab*, *8*, 1–10.

McGhee, G., Marland, G. R., & Atkinson, J. (2007). Grounded theory: Literature reviewing and reflexvity. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *60*, 334–342. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04436.x

Mchiza, E. F. (2015). *Interns' Perceptions Of The South African Public Service Internship Programme In Tshwane [Master's thesis, Tshwane University of Technology]*.

Mchunu, N., & Mutereko, S. (2020). Internship as a tool to enhance employability in the public sector: A case study of government communication and information system in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa. *African Journal of Gender, Society and Development*, *9*(2), 59–77. https://doi.org/10.31920/2634-3622/2020/9n2a3

Merlini, C., Savarese, M., Pierboni, L., Mazzocchi, B., Benedetti, T., La Sala, R., Boggian, A., Rinieri, M. T., Sarli, L., & Artioli, G. (2021). "Growing through relationship" - the Engagement of the Health Professional Students in the Internship Experience: a Grounded Theory Research. *Acta Biomedica*, *92*(6). https://doi.org/10.23750/abm.v92iS2.11938

Miller, C., Cook, J., Mary Evelyn Gibson, J., Leigh Watkins, C., & P Jones, S. (2020). Clinical academic research internships for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals: a qualitative evaluation. *Nurse Researcher*, *28*(3), 16–23. https://doi.org/10.7748/nr.2020.e1724

Miller, K. (2000). Common ground from the post-positivist perspective. In S. Corman & M. Poole (Eds.), *Perspectives on organizational communication: finding common ground* (pp. 46–67). The Guilford Press.

Mills, J., Bonner, A., & Francis, K. (2006a). Adopting a constructivist approach to grounded theory: Implications for research design. *International Journal of Nursing Practice*, *12*, 8–13. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1440-172X.2006.00543.x

Mills, J., Bonner, A., & Francis, K. (2006b). The Development of Constructivist Grounded Theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *5*(1), 25–35. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500103

Mkhize, M. E. (2019). *The Internship Policy Gap: A Case Study of uMgungundlovu District Municipality*. University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Moercke, A. M., & Eika, B. (2002). What are the clinical skills levels of newly graduated physicians? Self-assessment study of an intended curriculum identified by a Delphi process. *Medical Education*, *36*(5), 472–478. https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2923.2002.01208.x

Moleke, P. (2005). *Finding work: Employment experiences of South African graduates*. HSRC Press.

Moore, D. T. (2004). Curriculum at work: An educational perspective on the workplace as a learning environment. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, *16*(6), 325–340. https://doi.org/10.1108/13665620410550303

Nosrati, A. S., Mohammadzadeh, A., Abdollahnejad, H., & Gharebagh, R. S. (2021). Analysis of internship courses in technical and engineering fields using grounded theory. *Iranian Journal of Engineering Education*, *23*(89). https://doi.org/10.22047/ijee.2021.251111.1782

Phaeton, M. J., & Stears, M. (2017). Exploring the alignment of the intended and implemented curriculum through teachers' interpretation: A case study of A-level Biology practical work. *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, *13*(3), 723–740. https://doi.org/10.12973/eurasia.2017.00640a

Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *24*, 1–24.

Price, M., & Weiner, R. (2005). Where have all the doctors gone? Career choices of Wits medical graduates. *South African Medical Journal*, *95*(6), 414–419.

Qu, S. Q., & Dumay, J. (2011). The qualitative research interview. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, *8*(3), 238–264. https://doi.org/10.1108/11766091111162070

Raliphada, N., Coetzee, J., & Ukpere, W. I. (2014). Organisational factors affecting learning transfer in the South African public service. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, *5*(2), 743–754. https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n2p743

Ramalho, R., Adams, P., Huggard, P., & Hoare, K. (2015). Literature Review and Constructivist Grounded Theory Methodology. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *16*(3). http://www.qualitative-research.net/

Reid, S. (1999). Compulsory community service for doctors in South Africa - an evaluation of the first year. *South African Medical Journal*, *91*(4), 329–335.

Reid, S. (2002). Community Service for Health Professionals. *South African Health Review*, *1*, 135–160.

Rogers, A. (2014). *The base of the iceberg: Informal learning and its impact on formal and non-formal learning*. Barbara Budrich.

Saunders, B., Kitzinger, J., & Kitzinger, C. (2015). Anonymising interview data: challenges and compromise in practice. *Qualitative Research*, *15*(5), 616–632. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794114550439

Schugurensky, D. (2000). The forms of informal learning: Towards a conceptualization of the field. In *WALL Working Paper* (19; Issue 19).

Simon, M. K., & Goes, J. (2013). Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations, and Scope of the Study. *Doctoral Dissertation, Dissertation and Scholarly Research: Recipes for Success*.

Smith, B., Sparkes, A., Phoenix, C., & Kirkby, J. (2012). Qualitative research in physical therapy: a critical discussion on mixed-method research. *Physical Therapy Reviews*, *17*(6), 374–381. https://doi.org/10.1179/1743288X12Y.0000000030

Smith, E., Walker, A., & Kemmis, R. B. (2011). *Understanding the psychological contract in apprenticeships and traineeships to improve retention. NCVER.*

Smith, P. (2003). Workplace learning and flexible delivery. *Review of Educational Research*, *73*(1), 53–88.

South African Graduates Development Association. (2013). *Final report on the internship baseline*.

South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). (n.d.). *National Qualifications Framework ABET Levels and the National Senior Certificate*.

Statistics South Africa. (2019). *Quarterly Labour Force Survey (Quarter 1: 2019)* (Issue P0211).

Statistics South Africa. (2022). *South Africa's youth continues to bear the burden of unemployment*. Quarterly Labour Force Survey. https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=15407

Suddaby, R. (2006). From the Editors: What Grounded Theory is not. *Academy of Management Journal.*, *49*(4), 633–642.

Swap, W., Leonard, D., Shields, M., & Abrams, L. (2001). Using Mentoring and Storytelling to Transfer Knowledge in the Workplace. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, *18*(1), 95–114. https://doi.org/10.1142/9789814295505

The Oxford dictionary of current english (2nd ed.). (1993). Oxford University Press.

Theofanidis, D., & Fountouki, A. (2018). Limitations and delimitations in the research process. *Perioperative Nursing*, *7*(3), 155–162. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2552022

Thomas, G. (2011). The case: Generalisation, theory and phronesis in case study. *Oxford Review of Education*, *37*(1), 21–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2010.521622

Thornberg, R. (2012). Informed grounded theory. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *56*(3), 243–259.

Tolich, M. (2004). Internal Confidentiality: When Confidentiality Assurances Fail Relational Informants. *Qualitative Sociology*, *27*(1), 101–107.

Tynjälä, P. (2008). Perspectives into learning at the workplace. *Educational Research Review*, *3*(2), 130–154. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2007.12.001

Tynjälä, P. (2013). Toward a 3-P Model of Workplace Learning: A Literature Review. *Vocations and Learning*, *6*(1), 11–36. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12186-012-9091-z

Urquhart, C. (2001). An Encounter with Grounded Theory : Tackling the Practical and Philosophical Issues. *Qualitative Research in Information Systems: Issues and Trends*, *1991*, 104–140. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-930708-06-8

Van Broekhuizen, H. (2016). Graduate unemployment and Higher Education Institutions in South Africa. In *Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers* (08).

van den Akker, J. (2007). Curriculum Design Research. In Tjeerd Plomp & Nienke Nieveen (Ed.), *An Introduction to Educational Design Research* (pp. 37–50).

van den Akker, J., Fasoglio, D., & Mulder, H. (2010). A curriculum perspective on plurilingual education. In *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education* (pp. 1–17). Council of Europe.

Van Der Berg, S., & Van Broekhuizen, H. (2012). Graduate unemployment in South Africa: A much exaggerated problem. *Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers*, *22*(12), 1–53.

Van Wyk, S., & Naidoo, A. (2006). Broadening mental health services to disadvantaged communities in South Africa: Reflections on establishing a community based internship. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, *16*(2), 273–281. https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2006.10820131

Vaughan, K. (2008). *Workplace learning: a literature review* (pp. 1–32). Competenz.

Vrasidas, C. (2000). Constructivism Versus Objectivism: Implications for Interaction, Course Design, and Evaluation in Distance Education. *International Journal of Educational Telecommunications*, *6*(4), 339–362. https://doi.org/10.1080/0031383890330103

Walsh, I., Holton, J. A., Bailyn, L., Fernandez, W., Levina, N., & Glaser, B. (2015). *What Grounded Theory Is . . . A Critically Reflective Conversation Among Scholars*. *18*(4), 581–599. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428114565028

Wenger, E. (1998). Communities of Practice: Learning as a Social System. *Systems Thinker*, *9*(5), 1–10.

Wenger, E. (2000). Communities of Practice and Social Learning Systems. *Organization*, *7*(2), 225–246. https://doi.org/10.1177/135050840072002

Wenger, E. (2011). *Communities of practice a brief introduction*.

Wenger, E., & Trayner, B. (2015). *Introduction to communities of practice: A brief overview of the concept and its uses*. http://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/

Wiles, R., Crow, G., Heath, S., & Charles, V. (2008). The Management of Confidentiality and Anonymity in Social Research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *11*(5), 417–428. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570701622231

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview schedule for individual intern interviews

1. **Demographic information and previous experience**

    - Tell me about yourself. If not covered, enquire about age, province of birth and academic background
    - What did you study and where?

2. **Motivation for internship**

    - How did you find out about the internship programme and what made you apply?
    - How long were you on the programme?
    - Before commencing the internship, what were your expectations of the internship?
        i. To what extent were those expectations met?
        ii. Unpack the ways in which your expectations were met and not met

3. **Unpacking their role in the workplace**

    - Tell me about your role in the department
        - What did it entail?
        - What were your responsibilities?
    - What do you feel were your biggest learnings from being on the internship programme?
        - How did you learn these things?
    - Describe:
        i. Describe what a typical <u>day</u> would be like at the department? Get them to be as detailed as possible
        ii. Describe what a typical <u>week</u> would be like at the department? Get them to be as detailed as possible

- What were the knowledge and skills needed to carry out each task?
- How was the knowledge and skills (that were needed for each task) acquired ie. how did you know how to do these tasks?

- How was work delegated – Who told you about what you needed to do?

2. Unpacking their learning in the workplace

- Are there things you wished you had learnt on the internship programme?
  i. Was there an opportunity for you to learn these things?
  ii. Was there someone who could have helped you learn these things?
- Learning and practice - Do you feel like you had enough opportunities to learn and develop?
- Do you get any educational material, guidelines or have you been on courses as part of the internship programme?
  - If so, probe duration, what the process was like, their opinion of the experience and what they learnt from it

3. Unpacking workplace culture

- What the environment and culture like in the department?
- What would you say is the culture and attitude towards learning within the department?
- **Access to knowledge and learning**
  - Did all interns have equal access to learning while on the programme?
  - Did you find that people were willing to share their knowledge?
- What kind of public servant do you feel government was trying to shape and mould you into through the internship programme?

- What are some of things you feel the department could do to improve the internship programme? And what benefit do you think this would have?

Additional

I am trying to understand how and what graduates on South African government internship programmes learn, is there any other information that you want to share with me that you think is relevant to understanding this?

Appendix 2: Interview schedule for HR officials

a) Tell me about your role at the department

b) What is your involvement and responsibility in relation to the internship programme in the department?

c) How long have you been involved with the internship programme and how did you get involved?

d) How many interns are there in the department? What is the recruitment process like?

e) What guides the implementation of the internship programme?

f) What do you feel is the purpose of this internship programme? And to what extent to do you feel this purpose is being achieved? If purpose not achieved in certain ways, what is limiting this?

g) Once an intern joins the department, how does the internship programme operate? Is there an induction programme?

h) What has your experience been like running this internship and working with interns?

i) In terms of learning outcomes, tell me about what you want interns to learn while on the programme? And why?

j) In terms of these learning outcomes, how should interns go about learning these things?

k) Share some of the things interns feel they have learnt on the programme – are these the things they are wanting the intern to learn?

l) How do you feel interns go about learning in the workplace? How do you think they learn? What do you feel they learn?

m) What kind of public servant do you feel they are being moulded into while on the programme?

n) Is there any retention strategy upon completion of the internship?

o) Take them through the emerging typology and get their views regarding the model

Appendix 3: Interview schedule for mentors of interns

a) Tell me about your role at the department

b) What is your involvement and responsibility in relation to the internship programme?

c) How long have you been involved with the internship programme and how did you get involved?

d) What has it been like being a mentor *(or whatever other role they play)*?

e) What is your understanding of the role of a mentor?

f) What are some of the challenges that you have experienced with interns, if any?

g) What are some of the successes that you have experienced with interns, if any?

h) To what extend does the Department give guidance on how to be a mentor?

i) In your opinion, what are the factors which result in some interns having a good learning experience on the internship compared to other interns that don't have a good learning experience?



Appendix 4: Participant information sheet (past interns)

DATE

Dear _____

My name is Sumaya Hendricks and I am a PhD student in the Department of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my PhD, I am undertaking a research project aimed at investigating how and what graduates on South African government internship programmes learn.

As part of my PhD research, I would like to invite you to take part in an interview. This will involve me asking you questions about my aforementioned topic and it will take around 60 minutes. With your permission, I would also like to record the interview as this will make data generation easier for me and it will also enrich my research. Please note that these recordings will only be listened to by myself and a transcriber.

There are no direct benefits from participating in this research, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question/s that make you feel uncomfortable in any way. The interview will be confidential and anonymous, and I will not be using your name or any identifying information in my final research report – unless you have stated that you would like me to not hide your identity. I will also be mindful to ensure that I do not disclose any information that would identify you to other participants I am interviewing, so as to ensure that your confidentiality is not compromised. The information you give to me will also be held securely.

If you have any questions during or after this interview, feel free to contact me (details below) or my supervisor (Dr Lynn Hewlett: Lynn.Hewlett@wits.ac.za | 011 717 3199). If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Sumaya Hendricks

Email: XXX | Cell: XXX



Appendix 5: Participant information sheet (mentors/supervisors of interns & HR staff)

DATE

Dear _____

My name is Sumaya Hendricks and I am a PhD student in the Department of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my PhD, I am undertaking a research project aimed at investigating how and what graduates on South African government internship programmes learn.

As part of my PhD research, I would like to invite you to take part in an interview. This will involve me asking you questions about my aforementioned topic and it will take around 30 minutes. With your permission, I would also like to record the interview as this will make data generation easier for me and it will also enrich my research. Please note that these recordings will only be listened to by myself and a transcriber.

There are no direct benefits from participating in this research, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question/s that make you feel uncomfortable in any way. The interview will be confidential and anonymous, and I will not be using your name or any identifying information in my final research report – unless you have stated that you would like me to not hide your identity. I will also be mindful to ensure that I do not disclose any information that would identify you to other participants I am

interviewing, so as to ensure that your confidentiality is not compromised. The information you give to me will also be held securely.

If you have any questions during or after this interview, feel free to contact me (details below) or my supervisor (Dr Lynn Hewlett: Lynn.Hewlett@wits.ac.za | 011 717 3199). If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Sumaya Hendricks

Email: XXX | Cell: XXX

Appendix 6: Consent form (past interns)

Title of project: A grounded theory study: Factors affecting the workplace learning of graduates on South African government internship programmes

Name of researcher: Sumaya Hendricks

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve.

Please circle the relevant options below:

I understand that my participation will remain anonymous. That is, my real name and identifying information will not be used	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use quotes from me in her research, but the quotes need to be anonymous i.e., My real name must not be associated with these quotes	YES	NO
I agree that the interview can be audio recorded, so as to make data collection easier for the researcher	YES	NO
I am open to doing additional interviews, as per the request of the researcher and by mutual arrangement. Also, this will happen at a time that is convenient for me	YES	NO
I am aware that if I have any concerns about my confidentiality after my interview is conducted, that I am able to have a discussion with the researcher about these concerns	YES	NO

…… (Signature)

…… (Full name of participant)

…… (Date)

Appendix 7: Consent form (mentors/supervisors of interns & HR staff)

Title of project: A grounded theory study: Factors affecting the workplace learning of graduates on South African government internship programmes

Name of researcher: Sumaya Hendricks

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve.

Please circle the relevant options below:

I understand that my participation will remain anonymous. That is, my real name and identifying information will not be used	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use quotes from me in her research, but the quotes need to be anonymous i.e., My real name must not be associated with these quotes	YES	NO
I agree that the interview can be audio recorded, so as to make data collection easier for the researcher	YES	NO
I am open to doing additional interviews, as per the request of the researcher and by mutual arrangement. Also, this will happen at a time that is convenient for me	YES	NO
I am aware that if I have any concerns about my confidentiality after my interview is conducted, that I am able to have a discussion with the researcher about these concerns	YES	NO

…… (Signature)

…… (Full name of participant)

…… (Date)

Appendix 8: Quotes related to management of interns

A) Quotes relations to the system which oversaw the learning of interns, including work plans, quarterly reports and job descriptions

Intern 2 (Personal communication, 7 August, 2020):

- "Sometimes you find that people have key responsibilities written on their work plans but they finish the term maybe with only two thing learned out of six, and the rest they have just never done. So that is something else."
- "Secondly, I could actually HR to make sure that within the units there is what we call a job description, as to what interns have to do. They have to monitor that. They have to see to a point that interns have activities to do, other than just going there to do admin work. They need to do more of what they came there for."

Intern 3 (Personal communication, 18 August, 2020)

- "We never had meetings. The only thing that I did was quarterly reports. I could actually write quarterly reports every quarter and I could submit it to her and she could mark it, and I could take it to HR."

Intern 6 (Personal communication, 27 August, 2020)

- "So there was no system in place that says, "Okay this is what the internship is about. Who are supposed to be the mentors and what is the system to look out if the internship is working for these people or that the mentors that have been chosen this year are doing a good job." So there's no feedback. Let me put it that way."
- "So I felt most of the time the Department does not have a plan in terms of what to do with the internship, what to do with the interns."
- "I felt at times there was no guideline as to why is the Department having an internship program – like what is it that you want to see at the end?"

Intern 7 (Personal communication, 7 December, 2020)

- "Mh-hm, and also the work plan. If maybe it's not just from the unit, but also can HR have a look at it as well just to, like maybe it needs to go through like maybe, I don't know how to put it but then follow some certain procedure or something. Don't just, not just you mentor to just write down what you need to do but then can it just be a work plan that you know that, "Okay this is what this person has to do." And as HR we know that for this intern to learn we must do this and this, or that and know that this is what we have to do. And then the unit would just come and, you know I think if the unit and HR work together in drafting the work plan"
- "The work plan, yes because if the work plan is rightfully constructed then you'd know what to do on your quarterly report"

Intern 8 (Personal communication, 8 December, 2020)

- "Ja, so they can look at those reports and from those reports they can have meetings with the supervisor and also an intern. Maybe for example, after three months after they see ago, "Ah no man this person has been doing an admin for the whole three months." So they can have a meeting with the supervisor or a Mentor with an Intern and check, and understand if is it because there is nothing that they are doing in the unit for now, or is it because they are just given as an intern an admin work. Is it because this intern is enjoying the admin work only? Then that's when we'd be able to understand if the problem is with the intern or it's wit the supervisor na?"
- "What I think the Department should do, I think is to, um, during quarterly, like monthly in fact we used to submit a report to HR. So when we submit that report, on that report we mention everything that we have been doing the whole month. So what the Department can do instead of going and asking each and every person what they are doing, is to revisit those reports 'cause we write everything in those reports – visit those reports and check what is it that we are doing in each unit. 'Cause what I'm sure is that when a person has been doing the admin work until, from the beginning of the internship until the end, that's where the HR could see that, "Okay this person came with, um, for example with an honours in X*… but

then now she's been doing an admin for the whole two years. So which means this person didn't get the experience for what she studied for as well."

- "And at the, remember when we get there a supervisor is also, must also have like, what do I call it? I mean something to show that this person, when they leave for this internship, she must be knowing this and this, and this, and this and this. You understand?"

Intern 9 (Personal communication, 11 March, 2021)

- Interviewee: But there is quarterly reports right?

Intern: There is?

Interviewee: Quarterly Reports. Did you do a quarterly report with your supervisor or with your mentor?

Intern: No I did not.

Interviewee: So with the other interns, they had to submit like a quarterly report where they like listed all the things they had to do and so you didn't do anything like that?

Intern: No I did not do it.

Interviewee: Oh okay cool, so maybe it wasn't with all the interns.

Intern: No, maybe it was not.

Intern 10 (Personal communication, 14 March, 2021):

- "No one is saying that. If it gets signed after all those months which you sent an email for them to be signed, when you even submit it to HR they would just file it. And even when the supervisors sign it at their own time, whenever they wanted, they wouldn't even tell you that you are supposed to know this; you are not supposed to know that. They wouldn't even tell you that, "Okay I'm surprised. Why is it that your current work planning and the one that you are out to be learning is the same always?" Like, nobody would even tell you that."
- "I just wish that maybe we were given something sort of like a checklist besides the quarterly reports just to know that, "Okay I've learned this; I haven't learned that. I've learned this; I never learned that."

- “I think the reason would, I wouldn’t really blame it on the supervisors but I actually think that lack of proper planning – I think that’s one of the reasons. I mean that section knows that they will be expecting an intern but there is no proper planning in place which shows that the intern will be placed where.”
- “I would recommend that they should have a proper planning in place and when I say a proper planning in place, I meant that the intern should know. Let’s say maybe the intern is rotating, the intern should know who are their mentors; and how long are they going to be in that certain section; what is it that they are required, or rather being required to know after that section. Yes and I think also that in that certain section interns should be given something like, what can I call it? Not really duties but a selection of things. Or rather ja, duties to which they should know when the duration of them being in a certain section is being done. They should actually know, “Okay I’m ticking. This is what I know now. This I was taught; that I was taught; that I wasn’t taught.” So that when they are done rotating, if there is still time they can actually go back to a certain section that they didn’t get all the experience that they need. They can actually go back to that section and ask where, maybe just ask anyone there to just teach them on whatever they didn’t tick on that checklist of what they’re supposed to know”.

Intern 12 (Personal communication, 22 March, 2021):

- “No I’m not sure about that but most interns were like tired because of we had to do every month; and you have to submit; and sometimes some I think they copy and paste the same thing; even the supervisors or the managers they’re just getting tired of signing that thing every month because of the report is speaking about you – your work performance. So it should be something of saying, “Oh I see a progress.”
- “Ja for me it was profitable because I will engage you fair you know about it before. I will engage you fair and before we submit it to HR, so for me it was very much important and to know my work you know – the work that I’m doing and to know what they are saying*. They write whatever that needs to be written and they signed the report so for me it was beautiful to know what they are saying

about me and my work is valuable, my work has weight, my work has a weight in this Department. So for me it was something that would motivate me to work hard, to do more, you know to give more, yes*."

Mentor 1 (Personal communication, 2 March, 2021):

- "Because I also think that's where we are also lacking. We never go back to that meeting that we have with them the first time that we sit with them. I don't even think that everyone sits with them like that. I sit with them like that normally to say, "What are you expecting? And these are my expectations also from you. I'm not expecting these from you as someone who has employed, but because I have best interest in you coming out of this having learned something.""

Mentor 2 (Personal communication, 3 March, 2021):

- "It would be to make sure that… we don't deviate that much that they don't even know anything about their area of what they studied. That is the main thing because that kills someone's career and I always say it that if I were to have a child, I don't think I would get them to go and work for government because in my mind we are the killers of people's careers because if you start there as an intern, you end up only knowing just admin – "Copy this; print this; drop this; fetch this." So I would make sure that we are confident and comfortable in them to make sure that we give them tasks that will make them to be able to go to Corporate if they wanted to apply for Corporate jobs… In my mind that should be a stepping stone. It counts."

B) Quotes related to the induction process

Intern 1 (Personal communication, 2 August, 2020)

- Interviewer: OK, and then when you started the program, was there an orientation program that they put you through [*sic*]?

  Intern 1: No

  Interviewer: So did you just arrive there and just start basically?

Intern 1: Oh, no. They did after months, Breaking barriers with National School of Government. They taught us how the government worked, that was the only orientation, which they took us through… Yeah, it was like six months down the line.

Intern 3 (Personal communication, 18 August, 2020)

- Interviewer: And then this orientation, do you remember what it was like?

  Intern 3: It was just her taking me around the place just to introduce me to the people in the unit… That was the first day.

  Interviewer: And then other than that did … any other assistance was given in terms of orientation?

  Intern 3: Not that I remember.

  Interviewer: Okay. So was it that you had your first day, someone took you around and then where you just assigned tasks? Well not assigned but told, "You can now do this, do that"?

  Intern 3: I just sat there. Literally sat there the whole day doing nothing.

  Interviewer: Okay, alright. So there wasn't a structured program that I'm sure you would have thought would have happened?

  Intern 3: I never expected much, but then I got less.

Intern 5 (Personal communication, 26 August, 2020)

- "No there was no such orientation. I can't just say yes because the orientation was basically on the colleagues that, "here is who. He is responsible for this. This is a personal assistant, he's responsible for …" The orientation was just on meeting the colleagues and they introduce you, "Who is this and what is he responsible for." I think that was only that, but through the other … I can't just remember."

Intern 6 (Personal communication, 27 August, 2020)

- "Immediately when I found out I'm an employee within X* I was intrigued"
- "So when I was placed in the unit … because when we got there we were taken into the boardroom. So they briefed as to what has to happen and we were taken to our mentors as the day progressed."

- "I think that's maybe where the problem started to say we were never briefed. We were just taken to the unit and there the mentor takes over."

Intern 7 (Personal communication, 7 December, 2020)

- "Well um, we got, the first thing we did – we got to the boardroom and they explained the contract to us; what's happening; the different units in the Department; who's in charge of what; and they explained more to us the different Directorates that we'd be in; and ja that was more if I remember well."
- "You are actually taken to your mentor. The first, on your induction process they would take us to our mentors. Like the different interns would go to their mentors in the unit."
- "Ja, that's basically what we did and they took us to our Directorates and when we got there, that's where I found my mentor and they just introduced me to everyone* . A little bit walking from office-to-office."

Intern 12 (Personal communication, 22 March, 2021):

- "Ja no, there was orientation but it was from HR. For me at my Directorate it was never orientation. It was just HR, they were talking about work ethics; how we should behave; how is our contract you know. But they never got into the details of what I'm really going to do. So I think there is a lot of training that needs to be done there in terms how should interns do their work actually. I think you get my point."

C) Quotes related to the mentorship and supervisory system

Intern 9 (Personal communication, 11 March, 2021).

- "If like you give a person a mentor like an intern, they need to be trained or like briefed like, "This is what is going to happen. I give you X* for two years. So this is what need to be done for her or him and then this is what is expected for you to make sure that this person feels free or each and every

work that he does, it goes accordingly." So if they can do like that, I think it can be better for other people who have the responsibility to do it."

- "Ja you know ne, one thing that I've learned most the mentors they are not trained to be mentors. That is one thing that most departments they must make sure like, if they give a mentor an Intern, they should be trained to be a mentor. Like how to deal with interns; like how to mentor someone; how to teach the person the work that needs to be done. They should be mentored before they can mentor someone. Train the Trainer if you can understand me? Train the Trainer can be to train the interns or to mentor the interns in a good way because like most of the people they are not trained to be mentors and they lack the ability to train people or they lack the ability to teach people."
- "No, but for your summary the basic thing that affects interns is the communication between the interns and the mentor because mentor are not mentored before they mentor the interns. So if the mentor are being briefed before they can give, because like for me it was like in the morning, "Okay this is X*. She's going to work here." And then they give you an office and say, "This is your computer. This is what you're going to use. This is your telephone." And then that's it."

Intern 10 (Personal communication, 14 March, 2021):

- "Okay let me just say this ne? Okay, when I arrived there I didn't really know who is supposed to mentor me and who's not supposed to mentor me. Sometimes I would have more than two mentors in a section at a time as if they are in a competition; as if somebody's thinking, "No I can do a better job than you." And it shouldn't be like that."
- "So I think maybe the supervisors you know, they should have a proper planning in place just to say, "Okay an intern is coming. This intern will be rotating in this section. During this duration of time, this intern will be in this section and will be mentored by this person." I think it should be like that you know, because when I arrived there it's like, me I'm a person who talks. So when I arrived there my first week, the first thing I asked is that, "Who am I going to be mentored by because I can't be mentored by everyone you know? That's just impossible." Yes so I think the supervisors should

actually have a proper planning in place and alert whoever will be mentoring that intern because you know, with these things we have a duration of time."

- "I remember there was even another lady you know. She didn't know which section she was going to be placed in, and when they placed her in a certain section, the supervisors that side told them that they didn't know that they will be having an intern. So when the supervisor says that, that means they don't even know where they were placing the interns in terms of maybe a desk, a computer you know, in terms of like how are they going to accommodate the intern if they didn't know that they will be expecting an intern. So lack of planning."

Intern 11 (Personal communication, 20 March, 2021)

- "I think I would love for the supervisors, I would like them to have more meetings to discuss how other supervisors deal with the interns so they will have ways to handle them in a good manner. Yes, because I see the challenges because our supervisors doesn't have knowledge of how to work with interns. I think they just pick someone to work with the particular intern, not having that knowledge to supervise or to mentor somebody. So I think maybe they need to work on their supervision. Maybe they go to workshops and stuff so that they would have an understanding working with interns. And then they tell you, you have to go through maybe in the internet maybe learn more of things. Maybe they give you a document of five hundred pages. They say go through the document and then you will see what we do in this section. So sometimes if they can like give a little brief, like "This is what is expected. This is how we're going to do it. This section is doing this, and this, and this, and this." Like each and every month like interaction between the mentor and the intern"

Intern 12 (Personal communication, 22 March, 2021):

- "It's like they force them to take interns and to supervise them. And so I think it should be something that anyone that is willing to mentor an Intern or to be the supervisor must come forward. Not for them to be pushed in. At the end of the day they don't take care of the interns because of it kill the morale of the Employee and takes away the motivation when you know that your boss doesn't like

you even when you do beautiful things, she or he will not be impressed at all just simply because of she does not like you."

- "And of course another thing, to bring people that are young and fresh and energetic. That would give you life you know. Not people that are, I don't know how to – I want to put a proper language, but they should bring people that you can relate, you can speak anything you want and you can be free because if it's a person that is older than you even in years and near to retirement? I meant that is difficult you know, because of you will have so much thoughts whether should you approach him or her. It's kind of difficult sometimes."
- "Ja I would say to them, if for example you are a Social Worker manager, you can't effectively and efficiently supervise someone that is an Admin because of Social Worker can supervise Social Worker. So I mean they don't so much about admin. I mean I went to school. I know so much about basic admin but they don't know. How can you supervise me about something that you have never done or something that you have never studied? I mean it doesn't make sense so most of us we just have to see how it works because we are under social workers but here we are Admin. But maybe they should bring someone that will be an umbrella, that will be a Top Administrator so that we can be trained; we can be well treated in everything of admin. So you get me?"

Appendix 9: Quotes related to learning culture

Intern 1 (Personal communication, 2 August, 2020)

- But it is just sometimes I felt these people (the laughs). Some didn't show interest, some like they do not care and when you want to involve yourself, some would say probably no this is too advanced for you. But yoh I am here to learn so there is not that is too advanced for me. Allow me to learn, allow me to see the advanced that you are talking about. But most were like ah no

Intern 2 (Personal communication, 7 August, 2020)

- Yes, I really think that the learning culture, for me personally because I was actually part of the interns Support Group. So you know sometimes people would talk different things – experiences and all that, but personally from my side I think the learning culture was great because people were always available.
- I don't want to say I was always on time with everything that I've done but sometimes you're working with people and you feel like we are running out of … you know it's just small things. I think time management is just another issue but sometimes I wish we could achieve more or we could do things more faster and more effectively if we have enough time and worked according to the plans. Sometimes you know we'd plan to do something and when it's time to start with the planning and all that, people would be busy with other things and after some time that's when we start rushing and trying to cover everything at once so it's just one of those things I that I felt we could do better if we used the planned timeframes and actually do the work according to our timeframes. It's just those kinds of things that I think they actually delayed us in most cases or messed up our plans but anyways a lot of things were a success at the end.
- A lot of things were successful but you know sometimes when you're working and you're doing things like that, even the impact is not satisfactory because maybe you were rushing… but if you want to rush everything in three days and maybe you would have done it in three weeks, sometimes I felt

like it actually reduced the possibility of achieving more. It's just one of those things that is something else. I don't want to dwell much into it.

- Yes, but then I was just fortunate that it's not something that is happening internally in our unit* but sometimes they would send you somewhere or they would tell you to communicate with a certain person and once they realise that you're an intern they sort of switch off because, I don't know, maybe they're thinking you don't know what you're talking about or you don't understand what you're talking about, or they think you can't even advise let's if maybe you're in a position to share what this person needs to understand.

Intern 4 (Personal communication, 18 August, 2020)

- So I was more focused on not exactly the elderly people who were not so much in tune with technology and having that sense of urgency into getting a task done.
- Information got to them a bit later and exposure to such information needed one to be proactive like I said before, then personally when I look at a person and just when you start to analyse and read someone, you get to see that information was not kept from them because they didn't deserve to know.
- In the private there's a lot of being proactive… In government it was more of reacting to a social ill, reacting to … there was not really – "Let's just start something that will be a new hope or a new way of doing things" for the Department or for the people. It was pretty much, "Let's wait for the next problem."
- I don't know if it's possible… it's quite a difficult thing for them to… say, "Okay this is the direction we're taking now. We will do things differently, we'll be more efficient in this and that, or we will be proactive than reactive."
- It's just meeting, after meeting, after meeting so they never really have time for you as an intern or as a junior if you had just arrived.
- Ja, I think with that it was more of a monotony. Everyday it was the same thing and I'm not saying that is a bad thing in terms of what the Department does and what it is tasked to do, however, when

you get to a space and there's people that have been there for like ten years plus, it gets a bit difficult because now you get to realise that some people are okay with where they are and I guess that's good for them because now they're at a point where they have secured their future or secured the futures of their loved ones with the of course the benefits that come with being in the public sector.

- What I've learned first and foremost was that not all government people are lazy. We had that perception that government people oh gosh, you go to Home Affairs, when you go to Home Affairs you have this lady that is going to give you all the drama or the problems, or you're not going to get your ID and people have that but when you get into it you get to realise that there's actually people who are there to work and make that difference, and that there's a certain part, unfortunately it is the part where that is mostly in the dark or maybe behind the camera. That is not seen.
- For me, approaching the last lap of my internship I saw a few things that I had in me that when I arrived at the Department I thought, "Okay I want to see this happening", however it's not something that would necessarily change or stay as a culture once you leave because if no one else is interested taking this thing forward
- Okay so in the private sector the culture there is basically… the more work you put in, the more it will work.
- Ja, there was not much that I would say, "You know what? I actually changed that. I changed that." Today I can't sit and say, "Okay fine, this? I did that. I suggested this" but it is not being carried out that way because there's not much room to be free in government in applying yourself… I guess also because I was a bit biased if you will, because I am young.
- The problem is that when you start something new it's only you. No one else is interested in being part of it because everyone else is focused or just comfortable and happy with what they have been doing.

Intern 6 (Personal communication, 27 August, 2020)

- You know I'll be honest with you that there was a lot of (my personal observation), there was a lot of maybe disrespect among the colleagues.

- Ja, there was a lot of… you know, you could always feel tension among the senior colleagues, not the interns… There was another time where if I'm complaining about my mentor there is a sit-down between myself and my mentor and the mediator to say, "Okay what is the problem? How do we solve it?" So it's always like, "Who are you to tell me how to do my job?" or, "You are here as an intern to learn" and stuff like that. So I felt that they were not pulling in the same direction.
- I don't even remember one days feeling like I was disrespected or was made to feel little because I was an intern.
- It was a very conducive environment.
- If I were to make a guess I would say about 20, because that would be half of the internship problems with going to courses. We would always be told there's no money because with the courses there's a lot of process that happens…The supply chain process goes back and forth between the University and the mentors. I think maybe a lot of the time mentors did not want to use that time in helping the intern to go through the processes so ja, there was a lot of complaint about that to say we are being told that there's no money.

Intern 8 (Personal communication, 8 December, 2020)

- Because whenever they were going, they would go with me and when we get outside, they don't even introduce me as an intern. They would be, "This is one of our colleagues." I don't know, like they were introducing me like that. I would be the one saying I'm an intern.

Intern 9 (Personal communication, 11 March, 2021):

- And then you see oh those things do happen. And then for me it was like I was in good place like in a good position because I never experienced a lot of things. I never experienced discrimination, I never experienced bullying you see? I was at home.
- So if you can see in culture ne? In different units it's difficult because mostly if you are an intern and especially if you are a lady, you've become a target. That is one thing that I've seen in the corridors, So you've become a target where they check you: Are you religious or you are just an intern. And

they also check with the dress code and then like, “Okay this is how she dresses.” And then you become a target of the other males who are permanently there. So they see you as a target like, “Oh I can get this one and then I can date him or her.” So there was this instance like it was happening in another section where there was this girl. She was being bullied by the mentor so I’m not sure if it’s like a real, real reality because it was not me. She was talking to me in confidence like saying, “Oh intern 9* be aware because this is what’s happening in other sections. Because it nearly happened to me like if I get to the office the mentor says, ‘Oh how did you dress? Is this how you dress to come to work?’” And then if you can tell she was only wearing a dress and then with a jacket on top. And then the other males they say, “Oh this is a target. Maybe I can get her.” You see? It was difficult in other section, especially if the mentor get jealous of you and then they say you have to dress like this, you don’t have to dress like this. So that’s why I believe it’s like a cultural thing. You cannot tell me because I’ll tell you my culture says I must wear long skirt, and then the other one says his culture says he must wear short skirts. So it was like that. So for me I was in a good space like other people, if you come across like talking to other colleagues like, they say, “Oh no be aware of this and this, and this.”

Intern 10 (Personal communication, 14 March, 2021):

- Oh okay, yes like it was that thing of, I don’t know. I remember one lady was like at me, “Do you know that you are the same age as my daughter?” So for me that was very questioning because we all came to work regardless of our ages… I just wished that they actually understood that I’m their colleague.
- I think especially the one that says you find that certain people in some sections they are willing to teach the intern about everything that they know and some just don’t want to.
- So you find that others just don’t want to associate themselves with interns and others are just willing to teach them just everything that they know
- That means that I always worked with other people in a team and that was okay because some people wanted to work in a team but some just didn’t, but it was okay listening.

- I think, I wouldn't say in a bad way but then sometimes I feel like it's in a bad way honestly. Okay sometimes it actually depends on the people you're working with. Some are good and some are just bad.
- Like, you know sometimes I would be called names. For what? I don't know because we were working with people who thought that that Department it's theirs, like they own it. So that wasn't pretty much a problem for me because I could handle that.
- And that actually killed our spirit you know when somebody says to you, "You can't be knowing this. This is for seniors." I came there to learn, whether it's from an entry level colleague or it's from a senior. What I came there to do it's just to learn.
- Definitely. For me it felt like that because if you want something, go for it. You shouldn't be threatened by, I think that's one of the reasons I was actually told, "Do you know that you are my daughter's age?" Yes personally I feel like those were one of the reasons. They felt threatened because some of the people that I personally worked with, they were still in their 2nd, 3rd year of doing their courses.

Intern 11 (Personal communication, 20 March, 2021)

- I think that's the most factor like with the people you are working with when they don't take you serious, they discourage you by saying you're just an intern – there's nothing much you can contribute to the unit and stuff. So I think that's the most discouraging factor, yes.

Intern 12 (Personal communication, 22 March, 2021):

- No it was happening to me and I saw it, and because of you know when someone treats you bad or good, you definitely know it. But because of you want to keep a humble attitude and you want to maybe learn or maybe you just say, "Maybe no because of I'm still learning. I'm still doing my first job." You don't want to find yourself fighting with your managers or being in a bad way. Even though they said you must speak up, you must bring the issues, you must do this. But at the end of the day you are not protected. You know that you are not protected.

- So what I'm saying to you is that all of us as the interns were crying you know. We were crying but some they said they said, "No let's take it as something positive." Although we take as something positive to work under pressure, to work under those circumstances so that we are principled, so that we have work ethics. But it's not really good you know someone to be ill-treated or to be taken advantage of, yes.
- Eish I don't know how to answer this one and like I said to you, Directories are different. So the treatment will not be the same. It's amazing, it's one Department but we are in many Directorates so we have different experiences I can tell you. So we have different experiences. Some are treated like this; some are given more opportunities; some are given less opportunities. So it's never the same because of you must understand that that is at National level.
- You know as the interns, I mean the word 'interns', in that Department it's like you're small; it's like you're insignificant. I mean why else do you have qualification? I mean other interns that I knew they have Masters, the have PhD, the can do excellent work. They can go far beyond their managers; they can excel more than that but just because you are an intern, you are treated even lesser than an intern. I don't know if you're trying to get my point.
- It's at national level so some interns I will not see them for a month because of some they are in Cape Town because of that Department is travelling, it's working and they have to oversee all those provinces. So the treatment will not be the same, the experience will not be the same. So it's totally different because of some they work at X*… They were complaining that, "You guys you fly; you sleep at beautiful hotels." I never flied you know… They're at the office all the time; there's nothing for them pleasurable… So it was pity for them.
- Seeing the Department and it's under pressure. They don't have so much employees because so many employees they have left – I don't know for what reason but they have left and there's so much more that is needed at that Department.
-

Mentor 1 (Personal communication, 2 March, 2021)

- Yes… Not just in our unit, but in general I do because they get all the crappy work that you don't want to do. I've heard many times, "Argh no man give it to an intern." That type of discard – "Just give it to the intern. She will quickly do it." So I think in a way they do get treated differently… Mostly admin, ja.

Mentor 2 (Personal communication, 3 March, 2021):

- Okay now that I'm working for a national department, I think the relationship you wouldn't even be able to tell that this is an intern. That is how they are treated, or even anyone in the Department. There is no rank conscious. So you would be sitting in a meeting with all of us… you wouldn't know that this is actually our intern because we wouldn't be sending them around to 'pour me water; go find me coffee; go do this' and you know…

Appendix 10: Breakdown of interviews and dates

Breakdown of interviews and dates

Interviewee	Date of interview
Intern 1	2 August, 2020
Intern 2	7 August, 2020
Intern 3	18 August, 2020
Intern 4	18 August, 2020
Intern 5	2 August, 2020
intern 6	27 August, 2020
Intern 7	7 December, 2020
Intern 8	8 December, 2020
Intern 9:	11 March, 2021
Intern 10	14 March, 2021
Intern 11	20 March, 2021
Intern 12	22 March, 2021
Mentor 1	2 March, 2021
Mentor 2	3 March, 2021
HR Official 1	17 January, 2022
HR Official 2	26 January, 2022