

Abstract

This report critically examines the views of human resource (HR) managers and training supervisors in selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and skills development practitioners in the Manufacturing, Engineering, and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority (MERSETA). The purpose of this report is to identify and examine the barriers to workplace training in the South African manufacturing SMEs. The study is qualitative in nature, comprising a set of interviews with HR managers, training supervisors and skills development practitioners through semi-structured interview schedules. The analysis of the transcribed data is referenced against the international and local (South African) literature on skills development, workplace training (particular apprenticeships), and perceptions by firms of the importance of workplace training to their operations. The findings of the report supported by the available literature indicate that barriers to workplace training in manufacturing SMEs relate to various factors. These factors are lack of funding, students' attitude, trainer and trainee relationships, and students' low mathematics and science grades. Overall, the report identifies two key barriers to workplace training in the manufacturing SMEs: the embedded gender and racial inequality in the apprenticeships system and the information and communication disconnection between SETAs and manufacturing SME employers. The analysis suggests that overcoming these barriers requires effective government policies that support the relationship between the SETAs, employers, and the learners; and address the history of the apprenticeship system and its implications for workplace training in the manufacturing SMEs.