

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Monitoring and Evaluation (*M&E*) is an important aspect of any development program/project (Oakley, 1988). Taking into cognizance that development programs and projects are meant to be basic instruments of intervention within the field of development, *M & E* plays a crucial role in providing an understanding of the results obtained from these interventions. In providing timely feedback on program/project progress and unearthing problems encountered during program implementation; *M & E* results can be used to resolve program hindrances, improve implementation and redesign development programs/projects. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation results can be instrumental in the formulation and the planning of new development programs, policies and strategies.

Notwithstanding, a corpus of literature (Blamey & Mackenzie,2007; Cooke-Davies,2002; Coperstake,2014; Davidson,2005; Kusek,2004; Ngacho & Das,2014 and Rogers,2008) suggests that *M & E* practice is often misperceived, misconstrued and at times applied poorly on development projects and programs. To buttress this stance, Oakley (1996) argues that while most International NGOs consider *M & E* as an imperative and invaluable activity, empirical evidence suggests that most civil society organizations fail to comply with *M & E*'s norms and standards when monitoring and evaluating development programs/projects.

In the same vein, Patton (1997) contends that most development agencies have a broad range of activities which are assumed to constitute monitoring and evaluation, whereas only a few of these agencies have an understanding of both these activities. Some INGOs, for instance, have policy documents in which 'monitoring' is used interchangeably with 'evaluation' (Preskill and Torres, 1999). This is an indication that while *M & E* may be assumed to be commonly 'understood', there are some misconceptions associated with the practice which are divergent in terms of application, specifically with development programs.

It is against this background that the South African government realized the importance of *M & E* for the social sector and developed an *M & E* policy (Monitoring and Evaluation Division, 2005). The core premise of this initiative is to enable a continuous improvement of government services through social learning and informed decision making which is envisaged to lead to economic and social progress in the country (Monitoring and Evaluation Division, 2005). The goal of this policy; the paper contends; is to equate the allocation of resources with the deliverance of outputs and outcomes.

Furthermore, whereas various social programs have been continually developed and implemented with the aim of addressing a variety of social challenges, the South African government has recognized that there has been lack of concrete evidence provided to demonstrate the positive impact felt by beneficiaries' post-program implementation (Monitoring and Evaluation Division, 2005). This observation emanates from some of the skills development training programs offered by government through various None-Profit Organizations (NPOs).

These programs were developed by the South African government on the realization that an investment on skills development must be made a priority by any developing country (National Development Plan, 2012). To endorse this view, Palmer (2007) maintains that skills development has been identified as a strategic objective by all the G20 countries, and some of which have embraced the suggestion. To cite one of them; in 2009 India pioneered an ambitious National Skills Development policy which was envisaged to radically change skills development and enhance the country's productivity (Galloway *et al*, 2017).

It is estimated that increasing training by one percent leads to a three percent improvement in productivity in European countries, and that economic growth attributed to overall productivity growth can be up to sixteen percent (CEDEFOP,2007). Indeed, skills development training contributes to the enhancement of the country's productivity, leading to the improvement of the country's economy. Skills play critical role in empowering a country's young citizens and ascertaining economic activeness of the youth.

However, *M & E* forms an integral part in ensuring that a Return on Investment (ROI) is obtained from the allocated resources and assets for skills development programs. It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate GDSD's *M & E* methodology on skills development programs offered to the unemployed youth.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study examined the Monitoring and Evaluation methodology currently utilized by Gauteng Department of Social Development (GDSD) on skills development programs, which was found to be fundamentally flawed and insufficient based on three factors:

First, data obtained from fieldwork demonstrates that GDSD largely performs monitoring on skills development programs, while evaluation is extensively ignored. The findings obtained from interviews suggest that GDSD officials solely focus on monitoring the successful implementation of these programs by requesting attendance registers from beneficiaries as an indication that training indeed took place.

Moreover, emphasis and attention is given to the compliance aspect of the program i.e. verifying whether the trained beneficiaries fall within the eighteen to thirty-five youth age cohorts, regular checks of beneficiary signatures on the attendance registers and whether the organization trains the exact number of people within the stipulated timeframe. In summary, this process of monitoring is aimed at verifying the extent at which program outputs are achieved from program implementation.

Second, the study illustrates that there are discrepancies between the objectives GDSD seeks to achieve from skills development programs and the methodology applied to assess/measure the outcomes of these programs. In one of its documents, GDSD emphatically states that it seeks to achieve poverty alleviation and social transformation through skills development programs by assisting young people to have technical knowledge and securing job opportunities post-training (Sustainable Livelihoods and Youth Development, 2016). However, data obtained from beneficiaries' interviews suggests the contrary. It appears that there is a concerning misalignment between GDSD's objectives of skills development programs and the NPOs' mandate as implementing agents of these programs.

Finally, Evidence from fieldwork also suggests that most program beneficiaries are still economically inactive regardless of receiving skills development training. This is an indication of GDSD's none-fulfilment in assisting young people to secure job placements, alleviate their poverty and achieve social transformation. This signifies that GDSD's evaluation methodology is null and void based on its inadequacy to effectively evaluate programme outcomes and social impact achieved through these programs (i.e. it does not measure what is claims).

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In echoing the study's thesis statement, Morehouse (1971:870) postulates that "evaluation work can thus apparently fail in two ways: it can; for methodological reasons; fail to identify and measure actual effects of programs, and it can fail to produce acceptable findings consistent with the policy makers' commitments to program success". Based on this postulation, this study is premised on the following research question:

How does the Gauteng Department of Social Development evaluate program outcomes of Life skills and Cashier training offered by Get Informed Youth Development Centre?

1.3To ensure the main research question is answered satisfactorily, the following sub-questions were formulated:

- What were the aimed program outcomes for Life skills and Cashier training prior to program implementation according to GDSD?
- How does GDSD evaluate program outcomes of Life skills and Cashier training?
- What are the perceptions of program beneficiaries regarding Life skills and Cashier training's program outcomes?
- Are there similarities/disparities between evaluations results of both programs from GDSD compared to the experiences of beneficiaries post-training?
- What measures are taken by GDSD to ensure that program objectives coincide with program outcomes post-training?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is instrumental in revealing whether there is a gap between claims made by GDSD about the social and economic impact that the skills development training programs have had on beneficiaries compared to empirical evidence from experiences of program beneficiaries. Moreover, the study will unveil congruence (or lack thereof) between program beneficiaries' experiences from the training and the postulations made on the Monitoring and Evaluation reports from GDSD in terms of the programs' effectiveness according to GDSD. More significantly, the study makes an invaluable contribution in improving GDSD's current evaluation methodology.

In doing so, this paper is not only essential for radically transforming the manner in which program outcomes are evaluated for skills development training, but the findings and recommendations made can assist Community Development Practitioners (CDPs) on evaluating development projects more effectively by using a qualitative approach and utilizing beneficiaries' experiences as an integral component for evaluating training programs.

A qualitative method was used for data gathering, which afforded program beneficiaries to have a voice and share their inputs on the evaluation of the program that they partook in. This is important for the funded None-Profit Organizations(NPOs) as implementing agents in terms of making improvements and amendments that have perhaps been overlooked in the past.

Furthermore, this study will not only assist GDSD but other government departments that work in partnership with civil society organizations, to adopt an effective evaluation method when evaluating development programs/project outcomes. More importantly, this study will also open a platform for more academic research on program evaluation of development programs/projects within the development spectrum. In terms of significantly contributing to the development discourse, this research is a rationality project; one in which the main mission was to mobilize a range of theoretical debates to save public policy from being plagued by the indignities and irrationalities of politics since government departments is a highly politicized space.

Moreover, this paper is important as it is envisaged to change the manner in which program evaluation is conducted by presenting more scientific, analytical and rational methods instead of the routinized and ineffective evaluation practices that are currently adopted by government. According to Colebatch (1995:156), “The prominence of program evaluation within government.... reflects appreciation of the sad truth that all forms of organizational management tend to become routinized into fixed practices, with the risk that fixation about administrative processes can overtake an organization’s interest in program results”. It is against this background that this research study will make an invaluable contribution to the manner in which program evaluation assists in defining a program as ‘developmental’ or not based on evaluation results.

1.5 RESEARCH AIMS

In seeking to sufficiently answer the research question, the paper aims to examine the processes applied to evaluate program outcomes from Cashier and Life skills training. Using empirical evidence obtained from the employment of a qualitative approach, the study will assess the disjuncture/similarities between the desired outcomes from both programs as outlined in the monitoring and evaluation reports published by GDSD and the actual outcomes according to programme beneficiaries. The study aims to identify strengths and weakness of the current evaluation method and recommend improvements where it is deemed necessary.

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To achieve the above aims, this study will answer the research question by ensuring that the following objectives are achieved:

- Program beneficiaries who have undergone training will be interviewed through semi-structured questions to explore their perceptions regarding Life skills and Cashier training. This will be necessary to investigate whether they have gained technical knowledge and have been placed in relevant jobs as it is envisaged by GDSD.
- The study will reveal a variety of effective evaluation methods for development projects by reviewing literature and discussing findings from

- other academic research studies which have interrogated method use to evaluate skills development programs.
- Recommendations generated from the findings of this study and other academic research will be discussed to gain insights on essential improvements to be made.

The following chapter discusses the study's theoretical framework, which prescribes a programme theory that can be employed to evaluate program outcomes. This is followed by a review of literature that begins with outlining definitions of monitoring and evaluation according to studies that have already been done by various scholars, followed by an outline of the different forms of evaluation methodologies and the circumstances under which each can be applied. The chapter then discusses the importance of evaluating development programs as well as commonly identified challenges that have been encountered by various development scholars and organizations.

1.7 SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

This research report paper consists of six chapters; chapter one has already provided an overview of the background information of Monitoring and evaluation for development projects and stated the problem statement, research question, study aims and objectives; and the significance of the study.

Chapter Two is divided into two. The first part focuses on the theoretical framework that the research deems necessary to be used by GDSD on skills development programs; followed by a review of the relevant literature on the meanings, importance and challenges of program evaluations within the development discourse.

Chapter Three is comprised of the research design. This chapter primarily focuses on the target population, study area where fieldwork was conducted; the research methodologies that were utilized to gather research data, the sampling techniques that were employed to select research participants and the ethical considerations which pertained to the study.

Chapter Four is pivoted on outlining the study's findings. The first section of this chapter is a description of GDSD's monitoring and evaluation method on skills development, followed by the research findings organized into the following themes: Reasons of enrolment; expectations from training; employment background; course content and knowledge acquisition and the beneficiaries' perceptions.

Chapter Five is a discussion of the following main research findings: Reasons for enrolment, expectations from training and employment background. **Chapter Six** is the last chapter wherein the conclusions and limitations of the study are delineated.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study examines GDSD's evaluation methodology and the extent at which it can sufficiently measure programme outcomes for skills development training. Premised on this focal point, the following section presents a theoretical framework that was deemed relevant for this research study. The fundamental objective of any evaluation is to understand a program's theory of change (also widely known as program theory), and this study sought to reveal GDSD's program theory and diagnose its plausibility.

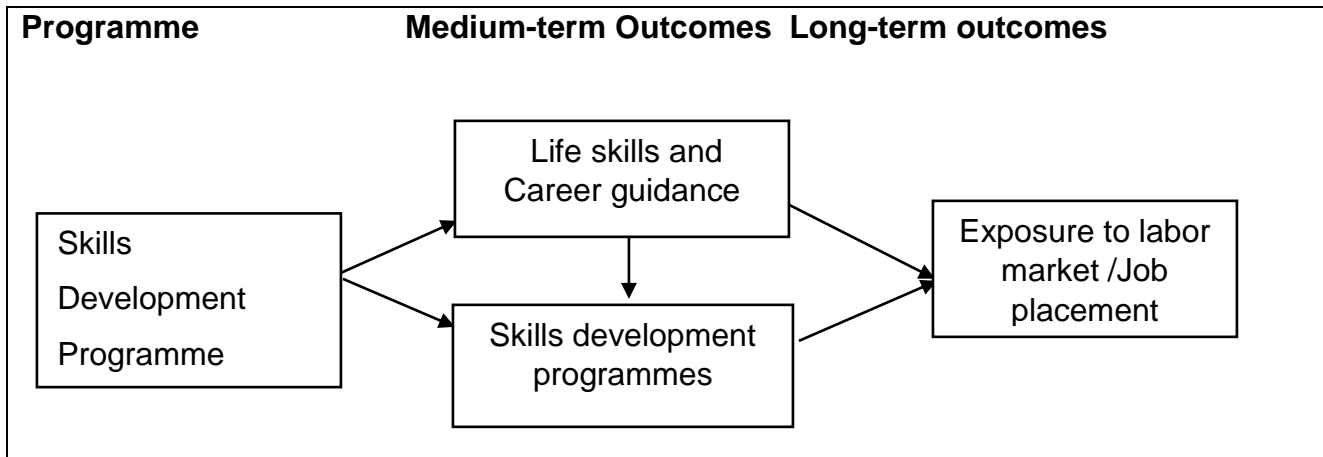
As argued by Bickman (1987:5), program theory can be defined as "the construction of a plausible and sensible model of how a program is supposed to work". In the same vein, Donaldson (2001:22) describes program theory as "the process through which program components are presumed to affect outcomes and the conditions under which these processes are believed to operate.

In relation to these two definitions, a program's theory is significant for describing the relationship between services offered by a program and how they will bring about change in the target participants' lives. It is worth noting that GDSD was unable to provide a clearly structured and systematic program theory for its skills development programs. However, there is a brochure that serves as a guideline (see Appendix D) which details the intricacies of the implementation process of achieving the desired outcomes; while there is no program theory/model.

Numerous attempts were made to obtain data regarding the theory of change for skills development programs. However, GDSD officials admitted they have no knowledge of such and that they are mandated to monitor program implementation. Thus, the diagram presented below was constructed based on the information received from GDSD's information brochures regarding the program's theory of change. Thus, the diagram below was constructed based on the data obtained from the information brochure combined with the researcher's discretion.

FIGURE 1

CURRENT PROGRAMME THEORY FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES



This theory purports that if the targeted group (young people between the ages of 18 to 35) are exposed to programme activities offered in all GDSD’s funded NPOs, the youth will be exposed to life skills and some form of career guidance; which is aimed at leading them to opportunities within the labor market (internships/learnships, and scholarships). Furthermore, those who show interest in the offered skills development training can enroll after undergoing life skills. Thereafter they will be capacitated and trained for job placement in career opportunities aligned with the skills training programme they would have undergone.

2.1.1 Plausibility of the programme theory

When the plausibility of a programme’s theory is tested, it is useful to review literature on evaluations that have been previously conducted on youth development programs. Although they are mainly borrowed from North America, the evaluations discussed below provide substantial information on programme activities and their effectiveness. According to Forneris *et al* (2007), Life skills training plays a vital role shaping the youth’s decision-making in career choices when they have transitioned from school to entering the cooperate world.

Thurston (2002) cites a youth programme called Survival Skills for Youth (SSY) which is aimed for at-risk youth aged between 14 and 21 years. At-risk youth refers to young people who are not at school or are perceived to be at risk of dropping out or failure (Thurston, 2002). The programme has ten sessions and its key activities are the following:

- Goal setting
- Developing a personal life plan
- Employment (Finding a job, interview training, developing a job life line, networking and keeping a job.
- Life skills development (communication skills, survival skills and group support).

To test its plausibility and outcomes, this programme was evaluated using a pre-and post-test measures for each programme activity and it was found that all youth who formed part of the programme showed immense improvement in their life skills (Thurston,2002). In terms of GDSD's skills development programme, the first weakness observed is that current evaluation methodology does not include a pre- and post-test to measure the impact of Life skills on beneficiaries, which indicates that it may be insufficient and inadequate for measuring program outcomes and impact.

Another programme activity that was evaluated to test its plausibility is 'Going for the Goal' (GOAL). This is a life-skills programme which is aimed at capacitating and developing adolescents to have a sense of personal control that can assist them to have a positive perspective and outlook for their future (Forneris *et al*,2007). GOAL is rolled out in schools by peer educators as an intervention for school-going adolescents.

The programme mainly focuses on developing three skills, namely; problem solving, goal setting and the ability to seek social support. At the end of the program, it was found that children who formed part of the GOAL programme were able to identify and apply problem-solving strategies, set attainable goals and knew the relevant avenues to explore in seeking social support (Forneris *et al*, 2007).

Part of the life skills programme offered by GDSD's funded NPOs is goal-setting, time management, CV writing, interviews and good decision-making. However, none of the reports from evaluation results contain tests of the extent at which life skills has changed and impacted programme beneficiaries in obtaining these skills and applying them in their lives. Furthermore, there are no systematic evaluation tests conducted to indicate how the programme has improved youths post-training as opposed to the state they were in prior to receiving training; which is another crucial shortcoming of GDSD's theory of change. It suffices to state that GDSD's evaluation methodology is flawed and inefficient in assisting the department on measuring programme outcomes and impact.

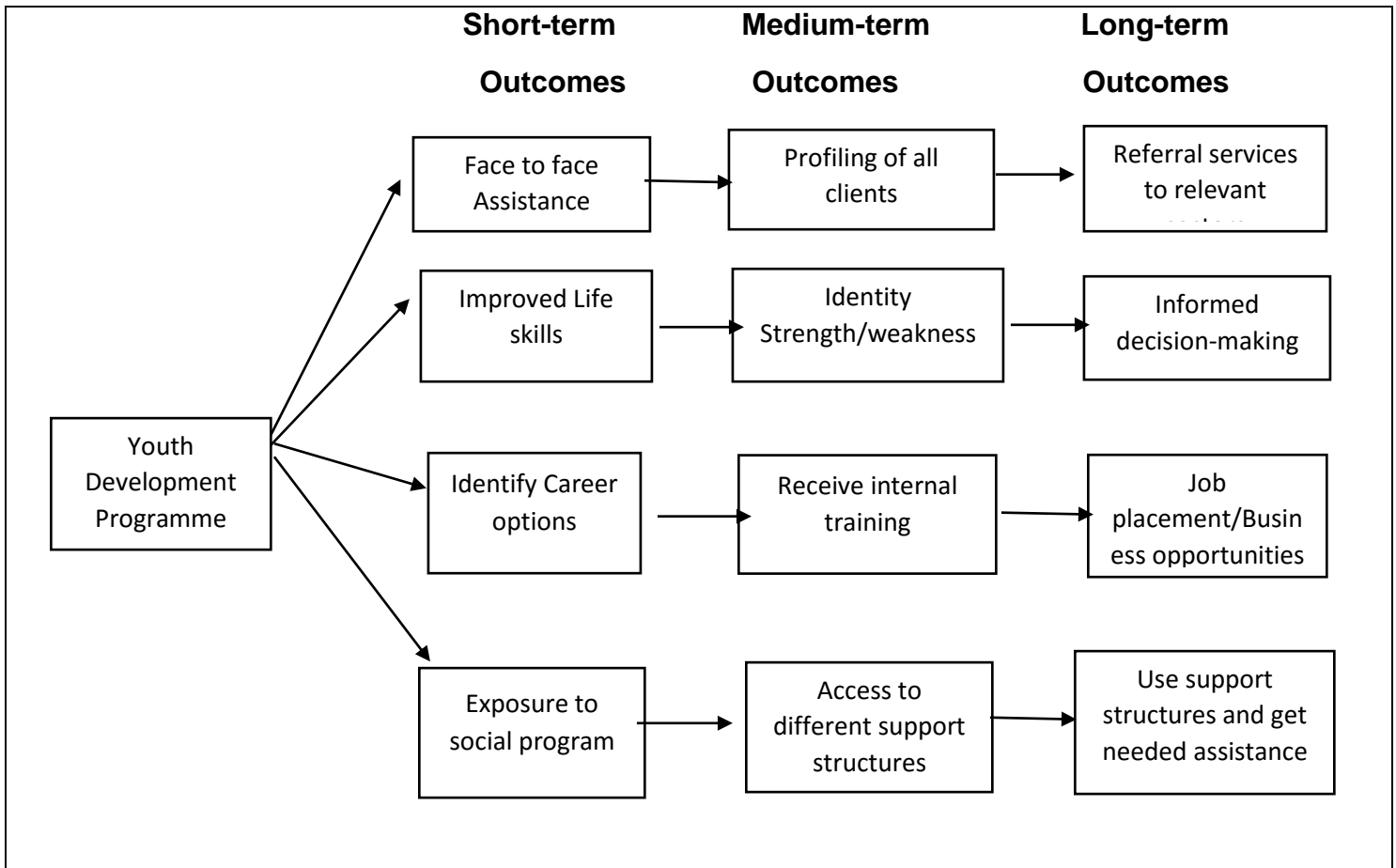
Another example of a life skills programme is Future Cents, which primarily focuses on assisting at-risk youth to find employment (Matsuba *et al*, 2007). In this programme participants are urged take up paid part-time jobs that are aimed to transition them from unemployment to paid full-time jobs. The premise of this programme is to enable at risk-youths to utilize any existing part-time employment opportunities and use them as a stepping stone for full-time employment.

Matsuba *et al* (2007) conducted an evaluation using pre-and post-tests to measure life satisfaction, participants' self-esteem and job placement. The tests indicated significant improvements of the participants' psychological wellbeing. Moreover, the evaluation indicated that because of this intervention, 88% of those who went through this programme found full-time paid employment (Matsuba *et al*, 2007). In the context of GDSD's evaluation, there are no pre-and-post tests conducted to measure whether programme beneficiaries could find employment as a result of undergoing skills development training programs.

The current evaluation methodology does not have tests to measure the impact of these programs as an intervention of employment and career opportunities. It is sufficient to admit GDSD's programme theory may look plausible on paper; while the results are not forthcoming in practical terms. Based on the gaps and weaknesses identified on GDSD's programme theory, the figure presented below is a revised programme theory that can strengthen and improve GDSD's programme theory.

FIGURE 2

REVISED PROGRAMME THEORY



This evaluation focused on whether the skills development programs (Life skills and cashier training) prepared beneficiaries for life and vocational skills that would assist them in finding employment after the programs. Rossi *et al* (2004) all content that any social programme’s goal is to bring about the desired change in the lives of programme beneficiaries if it is effective. This change is defined as an outcome of the programme and can be assessed through an outcome evaluation (Weiss,1998; Rossi *et al.*,2004; Chen,2005).

Contrary to process evaluation which primarily focuses on how the programme works, outcome evaluation measures whether the programme works and to what extent (Rossi *et al*,2004). The different types of evaluations and their purposes are discussed in detail

on the literature review section. Substantial information regarding programme outcomes can be obtained from using specific evaluation questions about the short-, medium- and long term outcomes.

2.1.2 Evaluation questions for Skills development programs

Thus, a series of short-, medium and long term evaluation questions were developed to provide a framework for this revised evaluation:

- While receiving assistance at Get Informed Youth Development Centre, did beneficiaries who formed part of the programs in 2017 and 2018 acquire:
 - Improved Life skills
 - Skills in career identification
 - Social skills?
- In the first two months (a period chosen for the sake of evaluating the medium outcomes) at the during the course programme, were the beneficiaries:
 - profiled to be referred to relevant sectors for services
 - Able to identify individual strengths and weaknesses
 - Given relevant in-house training based on their profiles
 - Gained access to information on different support structures based on what each what to pursue apart from skills training (funding for business, bursaries, scholarships, learnerships etc.).
- At the end of the training programme in 2018, were these programme beneficiaries:
 - Referred to relevant sectors for employment opportunities
 - Able to make good decisions about their lives and career paths, manage time effectively and gained self-esteem
 - Placed on jobs (whether temporary or permanent), given exposure to other opportunities of choice, whether starting own business or career
 - Using support structures and receiving assistance as projected on the short-term outcome?

All the questions stated above will be answered in-depth on chapter four during a description of findings. It is important to emphasize that the diagram shown above is merely a proposed revision of GDSD's programme theory and how GDSD can begin to make improvements by identifying practical outcomes program outcomes through the above proposed theory of change diagram. Moreover, it is the researcher's view that if the revised programme theory can be adopted as part of an evaluation tool that can be used for evaluating GDSD's skills development programs, then an accurate measure of the program's outcomes and their social impact can be realized. Having discussed the study's theoretical framework, let us find out other scholars' views on *M & E*, its application on development programs, its importance and challenges that have emanated from evaluating development programs.

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Monitoring and Evaluation

The main focus of this research study is to interrogate and examine GDSD's evaluation methodology employed on its skills development programmes and the extent at which the end results/program outcomes are evaluated. Notwithstanding, this section's fundamental objective is to obtain insight(s) from various scholars on the definitions of evaluation and the relations between monitoring and evaluation within the development field. Numerous studies (Patton, 1997; Alkin & Taut, 2002; Amo & Cousins, 2007; Cousins, 2007; and King, 2007) have indicated the imperative relationship and contingency between monitoring and evaluation.

Furthermore, the fundamental purpose of this chapter is to compare GDSD's evaluation methodology with the dominant views of how evaluations should be conducted, and reveal its validity based on other experts and scholar's views. The literature review will also indicate that GDSD's challenges on evaluating skills development programme is not a new phenomenon, as other scholars have highlighted that they've experienced similar challenges in evaluating development programmes. Taking this into account, the beginning of this section will discuss the definition of 'monitoring' and 'evaluation', then proceed to discussing the essential relation of the two when applied in practice. The

section begins with defining monitoring in the context of projects and programs as the main focus of this paper is on interrogating the application of monitoring and evaluation in terms of the skills programs offered by GDSD for the youth.

2.2.1 The meaning of Programme Monitoring

According to Casley and Kumar (1987), project monitoring can be defined as a process in which a continuous assessment of the alignment of project activities according to implementation modules is applied, and the frequent checks of whether project inputs are in line with the design expectations. In the same vein, Valadez & Bamberger (2004) define monitoring as a rigorous program activity where program management takes place in the form of ensuring a program/project is implemented as planned. From both definitions, it is evident that the underlying purpose of program/project monitoring is to ensure the successful implementation of a project based on its planned objectives.

Furthermore, Kunwar & Nyandemo (2004) define project monitoring as routinely measuring program inputs and outputs, implementation and delivery, resources and ensure adherence so as to successfully implement the project according to the required procedures. Another recurring factor within these definitions is the emphasis on the continuous element of this process, which implies that monitoring should be performed continuously if the project and program objectives are to be achieved.

Resonating with this view is the World Bank's (2011) definition in outlining monitoring as the collection of data from a project/program on a continuous basis to determine its level and extent of progress. This is achieved through collecting quantitative data as a determination of financial capital and time spent on the project; and the collection of qualitative data to measure the project's progress based on program participants' satisfaction/dissatisfaction.

In highlighting the importance of collecting qualitative and quantitative data, this definition advocates for a holistic approach when monitoring is conducted. In addition, program participants are regarded as an integral part for monitoring project implementation. In GDSD's case; as thoroughly discussed in chapter four; there is

insufficient evidence to suggest that its monitoring approach involves a collection of both quantitative and qualitative data.

However, the data gathered during fieldwork indicates the former is predominantly applied when skills development projects are monitored by GDSD's officials, as financial compliance and time spent are prioritized during the monitoring process. Having explored the various definitions of monitoring, it is prudent to discuss the meaning of evaluation, and the extent at which the two are contingent to one another.

2.2.2 The meaning of Program Evaluation

According to Stem *et al* (2005), most scholars find it difficult to succinctly distinguish between monitoring and evaluation due to erroneously using both terms interchangeably in some instances. The misconception of the two terms emanates from the traditional practice of monitoring and evaluation being conducted by the same evaluation officer and juxtaposing the two as similar during program/project monitoring.

The absence of clarity in GDSD's methodology on the peculiar processes applied during monitoring and those of evaluation demands a further emphasis of the two in practice. Based on this misconception, it is vital to distinguish between the two to obtain a nuanced understanding of the different elements within each and the different stages in which both are applied during projects/programs.

Dinnito and Due (1987) maintain that program evaluation can be defined as the process in which the effectiveness of a project is assessed in terms of the extent at which project/program objectives are achieved. Consonantly, Rossi *et al* (1999) define program evaluation as the process in which social research procedures are applied to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social programs that are meant to be interventions to improve the community's social conditions. "Evaluation can therefore be conceptualized as a review of the whole project in order to assess its overall value and effects" (Kariuki, 2014:143).

In attempting to provide a holistic definition, Patton (1981:15) defines the practice of evaluation as a process which "involves the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics and outcomes of programs, personnel and products for use

by specific people to reduce uncertainties, improve effectiveness, and make decisions with regard to what those programs, personnel, or products are doing and affecting”.

This definition resonates with the birth and inception of this research paper as this study seeks to examine the extent at which GDSD’s evaluation methodology is effective enough in synthesizing program outcomes and the degree to which program participants play a role in evaluating GDSD’s skills development programs. Furthermore, Patton’s definition highlights that the practice of evaluation involves obtaining information about program’s activities and assessing the effects that the project/program has had on the participants it is meant to affect. A discussion on whether GDSD’s evaluation methodology adheres to this description in practice will be discussed in depth in chapter four.

Fellin (1973:29) defines evaluation as “the utilization of facts for providing information about the achievement of programme requisites and goals relative to efforts, effectiveness and efficiency”. Patton and Fellin’s definition demonstrates the vital role of collecting information in determining the magnitude at which program outcomes are achieved, which leads to a discussion of the different approaches that encompass the evaluation process.

According to Clarke (1999), there are two types of approaches which can be employed when conducting program evaluation and the application of each is dependent on the results the evaluator sought to obtain. The two evaluation approaches are the ‘summative’ and ‘formative’ and both can be distinguished according to the aims and objectives of that the evaluator seeks to achieve. Summative evaluations are premised on determining the project/program’s overall impact and effect, while Formative evaluations are conducted to merely provide feedback to evaluators who seek to improve a service or intervention based on the obtained feedback (Clarke, 1999).

Nevertheless, Chelimsky (1997) argues that the distinction between summative and formative evaluations has been blurred and often the confusion is perpetuated by the tendency to confuse summative evaluations with ‘process’ evaluations and formative evaluation with ‘outcome’ evaluations respectively. It should be emphasized that

process evaluation is concerned with evaluating what takes place during the intervention or programme, while outcome evaluations are focused on assessing programme impact at the end of the project/programme.

Notwithstanding, while formative evaluations are centred on assessing the program/project's implementation process, it is not their only primary focus. In contrast, while summative evaluations are mainly concerned with assessing the nature of programme outcomes, they also do embrace the assessment of the process in which a project/programme is implemented (Clarke, 1999).

In terms of the skills development programmes offered by GDSD, it is crucial to investigate the extent at which formative/summative evaluations; if at all; are applied during and at the completion of program evaluation respectively. However, the collection of data collected during fieldwork indicates that GDSD's evaluation methodology may be ineffective and insufficient for these programmes. Having explored the different meanings associated with evaluation, the next section discusses different evaluations and the various types of projects under which each is applicable. This will provide an opportunity to explore the type of evaluation that can be applied to GDSD's skills development programmes.

2.2.3 Types of Programme Evaluations

According to Theodoulou and Kofinis (2004), there are four types of evaluation typologies commonly used to evaluate programs, projects and programs. These are:

- Process evaluation
- Outcome evaluation
- Impact evaluation
- Cost-benefit evaluation

Process Evaluation

As suggested by the name, process evaluation is concerned with evaluating the process involved by analysing how well a policy, project or program is being implemented. Process evaluation forms part of formative evaluations, as discussed by

Clark (1999) on the previous section. This type of evaluation is generally used by programme/project managers to determine the improvements of a programme during implementation in order to ensure good service delivery is achieved from a programme/project (Theodoulou and Kofinis, 2004).

Process evaluation can be conducted effectively by adhering to the following stages:

- Making a diagnosis of why and how did a programme/project get to its current level.
- Determine the challenge (s) faced in the implementation process.
- Develop mitigation plans or solutions to the challenges identified.
- Enhance project performance by providing suggestions on how the solutions should be carried out and evaluated once implemented (UNDP,2002).

Process evaluation can play a significant role in assisting GDSD to identify and mitigate any hindering factors that may impede on the effective implementation of skills development programmes. This can be achieved by infusing process evaluation with the monitoring process during programme implementation, which will subsequently lead to effective outcomes at the completion of the programme. Moreover, impediments and unforeseen bottlenecks during implementation can enable GDSD to assess the extent at which programme implementation consistent with the skills development program objectives.

Through process evaluation, GDSD can make informed decisions on the necessary changes that can be made in order to ensure that the envisaged program objectives are achieved. In instances where the program coordinator is not effective in conducting training based on the beneficiaries' discretion, the department can source out another coordinator that fits the purpose. However, these hindrances and mitigation actions can only be obtained through effective process evaluations.

Outcome Evaluation

Following its name, outcome evaluation is mainly centred on evaluating programme outputs (Theodoulou and Kofinis, 2004). To cite an example, if the objective of a project is to lessen the number of people receiving welfare, outcome evaluation can be applied post project implementation to determine whether welfare beneficiaries have lessened or not as a result of the project. Furthermore, outcome evaluation is described as the type of evaluation that is primarily concerned with tangible results obtained at the end of a project/programme (Rossi *et al*, 1999).

In the context of evaluating GDSD's skills development programmes, outcome evaluation can be applied on assessing the extent at which programme beneficiaries were assisted in acquiring the skills offered. In addition, a post-programme assessment can be employed to supplement outcome evaluation in terms of assessing the extent at which programme beneficiaries were impacted by the programme (i.e. whether or not the program has been able to impart skills post-training and assessing the degree at which participants were empowered).

Impact Evaluation

Holvoet and Renard (2007) maintain that the fundamental objective of impact evaluation is to determine the degree at which the intended impact of the project is achieved. In contrast to outcome evaluation, Liverani and Lungren (2007) argue that impact evaluation entails assessing the extent at which the target population was affected because of an introduction and implementation of a certain project/programme.

Furthermore, impact evaluation involves assessing the impact of the program on the original problem that it was meant to address. Citing the same example as above on welfare beneficiaries, while outcome evaluation would be primarily concerned with assessing the number of beneficiaries that formed part of the programme, impact evaluation would focus on assessing what happened to programme beneficiaries after implementation.

In relation to GDSD's skills development programmes, impact evaluation can be applied in assessing the impact that the training has on beneficiaries. Since one of the envisaged outcomes from these programmes is job placements, impact evaluation can be applied to assess whether programme beneficiaries obtained employment as a result of attending the training. Moreover, impact evaluation can also be applied to assess the degree at which the training certificate assisted programme beneficiaries to gain access to employment.

Cost-benefit Evaluation

A cost benefit evaluation; known as cost-benefit analysis; is defined as "the comparison of the costs associated with a project to the benefits generated by the project" (Kariuki,2014:146). Simply stated, cost-benefit evaluation is concerned with evaluating the project's costs against the benefits that emanated from the project. In the context of GDSD's skills development programmes, the Department can employ this evaluation to compare the amount funds which were injected to these programmes; to the outcomes/impact of programmes that were achieved post-training.

Cost-benefit evaluation entails assessing the worthiness of the programme/project by looking at the investment cost and the achieved outcomes. Hulme (1997) argues that cost-benefit evaluation should be used as one of the methods of determining the effectiveness of a programme/project. If the programme/project's costs outweigh the gains at the end of implementation, then the programme/project was ineffective.

Summative and formative evaluations

According to Clarke (1999), there are two types of approaches that can be employed when conducting program evaluation, and the appropriateness of each is dependent on the results that the evaluator seeks obtain. The two evaluation approaches are the 'summative' and 'formative' and both of them can be distinguished according to the aims and objectives of the evaluation. Summative evaluation are premised on determining the project/program's overall impact and effect, while Formative evaluations are conducted to provide feedback to evaluators who seek to improve a service or intervention based on the obtained feedback (Clarke,1999).

Nevertheless, Chelimsky (1997) argues that the distinction between summative and formative evaluations has been blurred and often the confusion is perpetuated by the tendency to compare formative and summative evaluation with 'process' evaluations and 'outcome' evaluations. It should be emphasized that process evaluation are concerned with evaluating what is taking place during the intervention or programme, while outcome evaluations are focused on assessing programme impact at the end of the project/programme.

Notwithstanding, while formative evaluations are centred on assessing the program/project's implementation process, it is not their only primary focus. In contrast, summative evaluations are mainly concerned with considering the nature of programme outcomes, they also do embrace the assessment of the process in which a project/programme is implemented (Clarke,1999).

In terms of the skills development programmes offered by GDSD, it is crucial to investigate the extent at which formative/summative evaluations; if at all; are applied during and at the completion of program evaluation. The following section is comprised of various perspectives in exploring the importance of program/project evaluations, particularly within the community development discourse.

2.2.4 The Importance of Evaluating Development Programmes

The importance of project evaluations is closely linked with the purpose they are meant to fulfil. This section explores the significance of project evaluations in the context of development. This is informed by the need to highlight the vitality of evaluating development projects/programmes to realize the extent at which they have succeeded or failed in bringing about the envisaged changes. As this paper sought to examine the GDSD's evaluation methodology on skills development programmes, it is prudent that the importance of evaluations is discussed in order to emphasize the significance of conducting them correctly and effectively, particularly within the development field.

Taking into account that planned evaluations form an integral part of the project management information system under normal circumstances; their nature, timing and budgets are also outlined in the project plan documentation in order to run a

development project successfully (Virginia *et al*, 1993). It is against this background that project evaluations are considered as a significant component of development that provides project progress and timely feedback, which can be crucial in mitigating problems that may arise during project implementation.

In the same vein, Van den Berg (2005) asserts that evaluation results are substantial for a variety of reasons such as improving project activities during implementation; eliminating project impediments and bottlenecks; and improving projects/ programs in order to achieve the aimed project objectives. Fetterman *et al* (1996) and Gregory (2000) echo the same view in maintaining that evaluations play a significant role in assessing the relative success/failure of programmes in meeting envisaged objectives; and the identification of improvements that can be made on the program/project plans for future purposes.

In GDSD's skills development programmes, evaluations are crucial in identifying hindrances which may lead to poor implementation such as having an uninformed project coordinator who may not be able to sufficiently provide answers in aspects where beneficiaries may seek clarity. In this instance, process evaluation may prove substantial in resolving such impediments during training.

In other respects, beyond directing decision-making during project implementation, evaluations are valuable as a premise for making crucial decisions such as whether or not to extend and continue with the project, or to replicate and expand the same project in other areas (Schnoes *et al*, 2000). Correspondingly, Stek (2003) contends that evaluation results are important since they can be solicited as inputs in the creation of new development projects/programs, policies and strategies. Moreover, project evaluations results are essential for planners, immediate and high level managers, decision-makers as well as those tasked with developing overall development policies and thrusts (World Bank,2002).

Taking into cognizance that the basis of program/project evaluation is to assess the degree at which program outcomes have been achieved, evaluations are fundamental in achieving the project's expected normative standards. As espoused by GDSD, skills

development programs are designed to achieve a number of objectives, one of which is to capacitate the youth for formal employment, and ensure that the qualifications received post-training affords program beneficiaries a chance to be considered for employment; which will lead to a reduction in youth unemployment.

Against this premise, any evaluation methodology employed to assess these programs must be effective in measuring the extent at which these outcomes are achieved. However, the current evaluation methodology has not proven to be efficient and reliant enough to demonstrate these outcomes as extensively discussed in chapter four. Kariuki (2014) emphatically argues that evaluation is the only process which affords project managers an opportunity to interrogate whether a development program/project was implemented as planned through conducting a rigorous interrogation of outcomes produced from the intervention that would not have been realized in the absence of the program/project.

Evaluations play a crucial role in the development discourse as they expose the intended/unintended consequences of a development program (Marra, 2000). According to Lithman (2006), evaluations are instrumental in assisting policy makers to realize unforeseen consequences during project implementation. Evaluation assessments provide comprehensive data about the project; which may lead policy makers to unanticipated insights (Kakade, 2006).

According to Kariuki (2014:144), evaluation is substantial because it “helps the stakeholders in the decision-making. Results of the evaluation are used to make informed decisions on how to improve the program to serve the people more effectively especially during the next project cycle.” In the context of GDSD’s skills development programs, evaluation results can be essential in assisting the GDSD to make decisions on the improvements of its training programs. Notwithstanding, akin to any effective process to improve a programme/project, evaluations are not exempt from challenges and problems, particularly when applied to development programmes as elaborated on the next section.

2.2.5 Challenges in Development Evaluation

This research study's focus is to interrogate GDSD's evaluation methodology applied on its skills development projects and the extent to which it effectively measures program outcomes. Taking this into cognisance, this section discusses some of these challenges and possible strategies that can be employed to mitigate bottlenecks and hindrances of the successful application of evaluations on GDSD's skills development programmes. Furthermore, the following discussions will be based on the traditional challenges that have been identified by various evaluators and scholars who are engaged in evaluating development project. It is essential to obtain a nuanced view(s) on development evaluation challenges for further insight mitigating them and strive to implement successful development programs/projects.

It is pertinent to discuss both the old and new challenges confronting evaluators considering that the development field has undergone rapid changes over the past twenty years. Undeniably, Conlin and Stirrat (2008) assert that the development discourse has undergone a series of major shifts in the past fifteen years in practice and thinking; and these changes have presented challenges for those involved in evaluating development assistance.

In the same vein, Roche (1999) asserts that while the conventional roles of development evaluation (i.e. lesson learning and accountability) remain fundamentally important, these have become challenging to conduct in the new development world, owing to the changes that have taken place in the arena of development assistance, particularly in donor-aid recipient countries. Consequently, evaluators are confronted with great difficulties as they receive demands that present more challenges, particularly in evaluating the outcomes and impact of the development work pertaining to donor assistance (Narayan,1999).

In outlining these challenges, Riddell (1999) argues that before the 1990s, Aid was generally delivered through projects; which was followed by tightly bound activities that were expected to be completed within a period of three years. The main emphasis on these projects was placed on ensuring that the organization entrusted with Aid was

expected to produce project 'deliverables'. In this context, the role of evaluation was to focus on whether such 'deliverables' were achieved and less attention was given to 'impact assessment' as these activities were regarded to be time-consuming (Schaumberg-Muller,2005).

Regardless of the compelling evidence that development aid has been ineffective in bolstering development; "Donors, development agencies and policymakers have, by and large, chosen to ignore the blatant alarm signals, and have continued to pursue the aid-based model even when it has become apparent that aid, under whatever guise, is not working." (Moyo, 2009:28). However, the central focus of this paper is not merely on Aid and its ineffectiveness; but this section is used as an indication of how development Aid has played a key role on turning 'development' assistance into projects and further instigated the narrative of 'projectisation' and the need for project/programme evaluations within the development field.

Nevertheless, from the early 1990s; evaluations have increasingly shifted focus from 'deliverables' and projects outputs, and more emphasis has been placed on the effect of development assistance and its impact on recipient countries (DAC Development Partnership Forum Report,2002; Van den Berg,2005). This shift has been informed by the drastic changes of focusing on project-based logical frameworks into a 'results-framework, a newly used approach to assess the impact of development interventions (World Bank,2007).

In the context of the skills development programmes offered by GDSD, this shift has not been forthcoming, as the evaluation methodology employed by GDSD is quantitative in nature, which solely places emphasis on project 'deliverables' instead of a results-based approach. Based on the views from the scholars outlined above, it remains a challenge to assess the effect and impact of a project when a quantitative methodology/ approach is employed and the qualitative aspect of the assessment is rendered insignificant.

Consequently, it remains problematic to assess the validity of the evaluation results obtained from GDSD's evaluation methodology and the extent at which these skills development programs serve are effective as an intervention to bring about the

envisaged development impact. It is against this backdrop that this paper deems it necessary to examine GDSD's evaluation methodology and its effectiveness in fulfilling its purpose.

Employing a quantitative evaluation methodology raises a series of challenges, one of which is the difficulty of demonstrating that changes in the beneficiaries' lives have occurred because of the development programme/project (OECD, 2002); which is skills development programs offered by GDSD in this instance. Furthermore, Kelly *et al* (2004) all contend that it remains difficult to measure 'development impact' based on the absence of definitions of clarifying what 'impact' is and the lack of methods on measuring it.

Several studies (AusAID NGO Effectiveness Review,1996;ODI,1996; and the Danish NGO Impact Study in Oakley,1999); qualify this view in arguing that the NGO sector tends to overemphasize the impact of its projects in communities as a result of seeking increased donor support. This is evidently indicated by the consistent failure of NGOs in demonstrating and proving to sceptics the relevance and substance of their work in a manner devoid of denunciation (Kelly *et al*, 2004).

Notwithstanding, an admission needs to be made that the studies cited above do not suggest absence of evidence regarding the impact from work done by NGOs; rather that the framework and evidence of demonstrating such impact has not been forthcoming (Kelly *et al*,2004). From the NGOs' perspective, this can be due to a number of reasons; one of which is the increased enthusiasm to serve people on the ground and the full engagement in delivering services; which inadvertently leads NGOs to neglect the prospect of measuring the social impact derived from the work they do (Roche,1999).

Another compelling factor that leads to poor evidence gathering is the lack of *M & E* expertise and experience which often characterizes most of the staff working in NGO sector. Taking into cognisance the inception and birth of NGOs, few of these organizations are formed by people that have any *M & E* knowledge or experience, which often poses a great challenge when impact reports must be written.

In GDSD's context; however; conducting evaluations and producing impact reports from work done by its funded NGOs should not be problematic considering that the department has a specialised *M & E* directorate which is entrusted with the task of conducting all *M& E* related activities and report writing. However, evidence gathered for this study suggest the contrary.

Furthermore, another pertinent challenge relating to evaluating the 'impact' derived development projects lies in the ambiguity of whose perspective should be taken as the most 'reliable when measuring or assessing programme/project impact. In attempting to deal with this quandary, Roche (1999) coined two broad approaches namely; the project approach and context approach. The former begins with identifying the aim or objective of the project/programme, and then solicits ways of measuring outcomes of the aim/objective (s) from various perspectives.

The 'context' approach, however, measures impact in relation to changes that have happened in people's lives (programme participants/beneficiaries), and the factors of the programme which may have led to these changes (Roche, 1999). The context approach is concerned with measuring the extent at which the intervention of the programme/project has had any significant role in the changes experienced by participants at the end of the project/programme. The challenge from both approaches lies on the fact that both are perspective-dependent and very resource intensive, which is often problematic for NGOs in terms of affordability as they are generally ran and sustained by donor funding.

This chapter began with proposing a theoretical framework which permits skills development programmes to be effectively evaluated by using long-; medium; and short term periods to measure programme outcomes. Reasons supporting Programme theory and its plausibility were also shown. Literature was also reviewed in exploring various definitions of Monitoring and Evaluation individually; which was followed by different types of programme evaluations and under which circumstances can each be applied.

Furthermore, the chapter provided some arguments from various scholars on the importance of conducting evaluations for development programmes, as well as the

challenges that some scholars have experienced when conducting programme evaluations, especially for development programmes and projects. This chapter revealed that the challenges of evaluating development programmes are not unique to those encountered by GDSD. Now that the study's theoretical framework has been outlined and literature has sufficiently reviewed to indicate the prevalence of this study; the next chapter elaborates on the study's research design and demonstrates the merits under which this study's fieldwork was conducted.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter discusses the methodology employed to satisfy the aims and objectives of this study. Research methodology forms one of the most significant aspects of the research study since it serves as a roadmap of the methods that the researcher has used in choosing the study units, data collection method (s) and the type of approach adopted to analyze data (Wall, 2008).

It is worth emphasizing that the methodology components utilized in this study was deemed necessary to examine GDSD's evaluation methodology and the extent at which it adequately measures programme outcomes for Life skills and cashier training. Providing a nuanced explanation of the methodology that was employed for this study, the following components will be elaborated on: The study's target population; the study area chosen to conduct fieldwork; an elaborative description of the study's methods; the sampling techniques which were chosen as well as ethical considerations to ensure that they study adheres to the prescribed academic research procedures.

3.1 Target Population

This study's target population consisted of young individuals aged between eighteen and thirty-five who have undergone training in the Life skills and Cashier training program and completed the two successfully. The eighteen to thirty-five age specification was informed by the consideration that one of the requirements to qualify for any training program offered at Get Informed Youth Development Centre is that one must fall within this age cohort.

This is largely because Get Informed is a youth organization has been mandated by the Gauteng Department of Social Development (GDSD) to render skills development programs that are tailor-made to empower young people. The programs are targeting youths who have completed metric and intend to enter the labor market and those who dropped out from basic education but are aiming to gain skills to enhance their employment chances. Based on a realization that most beneficiaries from the funded NPOs are largely comprised of people between the eighteen to thirty-five age cohorts,

GDSD has named these organizations as 'youth development' centers and has mandated all funded NPOs to render services specifically to the youth (Department of Social Development, 2015).

The decision to select beneficiaries from Life skills and Cashier training as the relevant participants for this research was informed by two reasons. Firstly, according to Get Informed Youth Development Centre, all beneficiaries are required to undergo Life skills training as a prerequisite prior to enrolling on any skill development program that the organization offers. This emanates from the consideration that apart from other personal skills learned from the Life skills training, it serves as a job-preparedness program that enhances an individual's ability to prepare for interviews, time management and writing a Curriculum Vitae. Basically, the Life skills training program is considered as a job readiness program (Get Informed Development Centre, 2017).

Secondly, Get informed also offers other youth development empowerment programs such as Entrepreneurship Development, Forklift and Call Centre training programs. However Computerized Cashier training beneficiaries were chosen based on the observation that this the only program that the organization has managed to form partnership with other stakeholders for job placement opportunities when beneficiaries successfully complete the training program.

One of this study's aims was to discover the extent at which the two programs have assisted beneficiaries in improving their capability and ability to find employment within the relevant sector (s). Part of outcome evaluation is to ensure that program outcomes are congruent to the impact expected to be achieved from the program (Bawden & Skidmore, 1989). Furthermore, selection of beneficiaries specifically from both these programs instead of others was driven by the need to investigate ways in which job readiness (a component of Life skills training) has proved to be substantial in terms of job interviews if the beneficiary has received and honored a job interview invite.

Since Get Informed maintains that beneficiaries are placed in various job opportunities post-training, choosing these beneficiaries was based on finding out if individuals have indeed been placed in the relevant sector because of the training received from the organization. There was no specific gender considered in terms of selecting

beneficiaries as all participants were composed of males and females. Since Get Informed is located in Tembisa Township, all beneficiaries were Africans.

Since the study population was chosen from Get Informed which is an organization that I am mandated to monitor, it was difficult for the working staff within the organization to perceive me as a student and not an official sent by GDSD. Furthermore, in an attempt to conducting interviews, some beneficiaries would commit to meeting up with me telephonically but end fail to honor the commitment on the day of interview. Such hurdles affected and prolonged the timeline I had dedicated to conducting my fieldwork. Some beneficiaries perceived me as an auditor or an investigator from the department regardless of giving them consent forms and letter of declaration; which influenced their response to my interview questions.

3.2 Study area

Get Informed Youth Development Centre (one of the funded youth NPOs by the Gauteng Department of Social Development) was chosen as the most appropriate study area for answering this study's research question and objectives. This NPO was chosen based on three compelling reasons: Firstly, Get Informed has been and still is considered as one of the organizations that reaches and at times over achieves the required targets in terms of the number of young people GDSD allocates to all funded-NPOs for skills training programs.

Second, considering the 'evidence' (i.e. attendance registers, quarterly reports, placement lists and success stories) the organization has been submitting the expected documentation on time to GDSD for monitoring and evaluation purposes. Get Informed is performing well compared to its counterparts according to the quality of reports and attendance registers that are submitted on a quarterly basis as part of M & E evidence.

Lastly, Get Informed is in good standing with the department as it is considered the most compliant compared to other funded-NPOs in terms of submitting its annual financial statements. Thus, this raised the need to select Get Informed as a study area instead of other organizations. Permission to gain access to Get Informed and its

beneficiaries was given by GDSD based on a letter of authorization. The organization's Centre manager and programme Coordinator was informed about the study, its objectives as well as the research questionnaire that was used to gather data from program beneficiaries. Permission was granted by the Centre manager to commence with interviewing the beneficiaries as participants of this study.

Some of the obstacles I experienced with conducting my interviews at Get Informed premises was that some beneficiaries felt obligated to provide positive feedback about the training program as a result of fearing to implicate Get Informed staff; especially computer facilitators; with wrong-doing. As a result, there were a couple of biases from their responses which the researcher negated by further probing participants with alternative questions.

Another challenge was that most of the beneficiaries live around the Get Informed Centre and preferred to have the interviews within the Get Informed premises for the sake of transport convenience. However, the premises are locked at 17:00 Monday to Friday and no one is allowed to be within after the closing time. It was challenging for me since I knock off at 16:00 and have to drive from work to Tembisa for 30 minutes. At times I would get to the premises early enough but the security would request us to go out before we finished the interview.

3.3 Research Methodology

A research methodology consists of two methods; the qualitative and quantitative technique. Qualitative research focuses on studies that extensively investigate why people act the way they do in the social world (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Conversely, quantitative research is based on studying human behavior and attitudes using statistical analysis (Fekede, 2010). Moreover, qualitative studies enable participants/respondents to express in-depth their perspective about a phenomenon. However, a quantitative approach consists of adopting a large-scale survey research by conducting interviews and utilizing research questionnaires as instruments of data collection (Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

The combination of both methods is known as triangulation, which is usually the preferred approach as it enables the researcher to counteract the disadvantage of both (Dawson, 2006). This research study utilized a qualitative approach to collect the required data to achieve the envisaged aims and objectives as outlined above.

Babbie and Mouton (2001) maintain that the underlying goal of studies that employ a qualitative approach is based on the need to describe and understand human behavior, as opposed to providing explanations of human behavior by using statistical methods. Since the study sought to examine the extent at which Life skills and Cashier training outcomes are evaluated by GDSD, the central focus was on obtaining knowledge and perspectives of beneficiaries who underwent both training programs.

A qualitative approach was imperative to obtaining the relevant data since this study sought to investigate the beneficiaries' perceptions and views of program outcomes and the impact that the training has had in their lives in terms of acquiring labor market skills and employment prospects. Moreover, interviewing beneficiaries afforded the researcher to track if they were economically active post-training as espoused by GDSD.

The study sought to use a qualitative approach in evaluating program outcomes by using program beneficiaries as participants. Considering that GDSD is currently using a quantitative method to evaluate program outcomes which is flawed and insufficient to measure or identify impact in terms of investigating whether program objectives were achieved, this study investigated program outcomes through exploring the beneficiaries' experiences during training and whether they experienced any transformation in their lives because of the training programs.

In this regard, the study was comprehensive in terms of understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the currently adopted evaluation method by GDSD. Fakede (2010) endorses the need to conduct qualitative research by maintaining that there are distinguishing factors between qualitative and quantitative research, one of which is that the former focuses on the process rather than the outcome and emphasizes the actor's perspective while the latter largely considers the results achieved instead of the process that led to achieving the ends.

Notwithstanding, qualitative research has its own shortcomings, one of which is the bias that the researcher may interpret the information provided by the respondent/informant in his/her own perspective to satisfy his standpoint on the questions of the interview. Another disadvantage is the respondent may be intimidated and as a result, not provide an honest answer to some of the questions posed by the researcher; whereas it would be a different case if the respondent was only required to fill in a questionnaire.

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches have their own limitations. While acknowledging these challenges, the researcher used the qualitative approach as it enabled the study to gain a much-detailed insight about the beneficiaries' experiences pertaining to both programs. Moreover, the qualitative approach led the researcher to obtain a nuanced perspective of the underlying issues and challenges of the two programs. To achieve this, the researcher had to be vigilant of the sampling method utilized considering that the type of sampling technique selected was supposed to assist with the selection of relevant participants for this study.

3.4 Sampling Technique

Latham (2007) admits that it is a tedious process to study the whole population when a researcher aims to answer certain questions about a particular phenomenon; through stating that "collecting data from the entire population is almost impossible because of the amount of people, places, or things within the population. To collect data on a smaller scale, researchers gather data from a portion or sample of the population" (Latham, 2007:1). A number of sampling techniques can be applied for research, depending on the envisaged results and what the researcher aims to achieve.

Several sampling techniques are used in Social research, such as purposeful sampling, Snowball sampling, Quota sampling, Random sampling (Bobbie and Mouton, 2001). Purposeful sampling was used as a selection method for choosing the relevant participants for this research. According to Ally (2016), purposeful sampling can be defined as the process in which participants are deliberately identified as exemplary cases, participants that specifically exemplify an issue or problem. In light of this definition, deciding to interview beneficiaries from Life skills and Cashier training from

an organization (i.e. Get Informed Youth Development Centre) serves as a purposeful intent to obtaining the required data for this study.

Purposeful sampling was also considered the most appropriate sampling technique because there are only a limited number of people that are trained on the two programs, based on the preferences of the beneficiaries that come to the organization for skills development training. Another reason behind this specific selection was because of the intention to avoid interviewing people who did not undergo training and would subsequently fail to provide sufficient information as a result of not knowing the required details.

Whilst purposeful selection of participants satisfies the achievement of answering this study's research question(s); it does not qualify the researcher to undermine its limitations. Mugera (2013: 7) postulates that "Purposive samples, irrespective of the type of purposive sampling used, can be highly prone to researcher bias". To avoid this shortcoming, the researcher avoided being bias based on the information that the participants shared for the sake of maintaining validity of the study's findings.

Since there was a challenge of getting hold of all the participants from the database provided by Get Informed, contacts and addresses of the beneficiaries that were difficult to trace was obtained by using a snowball sampling technique. Some of the contact numbers from the database were not visible enough due to photocopying and different handwriting from people. Thus, contacts and addresses of those that could not be traced were obtained from beneficiaries that were already interviewed. This provided immediate assistance in terms of getting hold of more participants. Fortunate enough, those who were interviewed knew some of the beneficiaries that could not be reached; others live closer to each other terms of address proximity.

Babbie and Mouton (2011) support the researcher's decision to using snowball sampling as they state "Snowball sampling is appropriately used to find a sample of homeless individuals, migrant workers and undocumented immigrants. This procedure is implemented by collecting data on the few members of the target population you can locate, and then asking those individuals to provide information needed to locate other

members of that population whom they happen to know” (Babbie and Mouton, 2011:167).

Furthermore, Mugeru (2013) contends that snowball sampling often makes it difficult to detect a possible sampling error since the selected units from this technique are not based on a random selection from the entire population. As such, there is no validity in arguing that snowball samples are representative of the studied population.

In-depth interviews were used to obtain data from participants. Taking into cognizance the depth of the research question, it was the researcher’s considered view that in-depth interviews would be substantial in this regard. Boyce and Neale (2006) defines in-depth interviewing as one of the qualitative techniques which entails conducting interviews with a small group where the researcher explores people’s views about a certain situation, idea or program.

Since this research study aims to explore the process, operations and outcomes of Life skills and Cashier training, in-depth interviews led to the achievement of fulfilling the aims and objectives of the study. A questionnaire containing both close-ended and open-ended questions was used as an instrument to obtain data from participants.

However, any research technique has its own limitations and in-depth interviews are no exception. Apart from the fact that such interviews are time-consuming, in-depth interviews are prone to bias. Boyce and Neale (2006) both lament this view well as they argue that community members might feel compelled to provide the researcher with positive feedback, as a result of avoiding expulsion from the program in question. Regardless of this shortcoming, “every effort should be made to design a data collection effort, create instruments, and conduct interviews to allow for minimal bias” (Boyce and Neale, 2006:3). Below is a table summarizing data providers and the methods of data collection that was employed during fieldwork.

TABLE 1
DATA PROVIDERS AND METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Designation	Sample	Method of data collection
Programme staff.....	1x Centre Manager.....	Unstructured interviews
2015 programme beneficiaries...	5x Beneficiaries.....	Questionnaire
2016 Programme beneficiaries....	7x Beneficiaries.....	Questionnaire
2017 Programme beneficiaries....	3x Beneficiaries.....	Questionnaire

A voice recorder was used to collect data through interviews, which was later transcribed for the discussion section and data analysis. While acknowledging every limitation from the research methods and techniques that were utilized for the purpose of this study, it is the researchers considered view that the outlined methodology best satisfied the aims and objectives of this study. The next section discusses ethical considerations and the implications these had on the study.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

One of the significant ways of ensuring that the standards of good ethics are followed is by receiving informed consent from participants either verbally or in making participants/respondents sign a consent form prior to taking part in a research study. Informed consent comprises of the following elements: “provision of information, comprehension of information and voluntariness regarding participation” (Hardon, 1994:158).

As a necessary precondition for research ethics, researcher was given ethical clearance by the University of Witwatersrand to conduct this study, and the ethics clearance number given was **DEV16/06/11**. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that the respondents understood the research topic, the objectives and what the study sought to achieve. A participation Information Sheet was handed to each participant and time was given to the participant to read through the sheet prior to the interview. The participant

signed the sheet as a form of agreement that they fully understand what the study entails as well as the researcher's expectations from the interview. Informed consent was also required by the researcher before the interview commenced.

The researcher explained verbally to each participant prior to the interview that anonymity is fully guaranteed. Where deemed necessary, confidentiality was ensured through using pseudonyms to represent participants in quoting directly or articulating data provided during interviews. In terms of ensuring that there was no harm caused as a result of partaking in this study, a request form was submitted to the ethics committee with the research proposal and approval to proceed with the study was granted by the ethics committee from the University of Witwatersrand. The image and safety of those who partook in this study remains a priority.

While the researcher was fully aware of the possibility that interviewing participants would raise expectations from them and their surrounding community; the researcher explained clearly that partaking in this study will not be incentivized in any way. Thus, the Participation Information Sheet was drafted to give a detailed description of the research aims and objectives and the intended aims of the data that was collected through interviews.

Nevertheless, there were a couple of challenges that I experienced when I chose the study population. First, there was an ethical query made by the ethical committee regarding my research and the study population. Since I work as an official as the Department of Social Development, conflict of interested served as a threat to pursuing this research topic as the study was perceived to be done on behave of Social Development as my employer. This was resolved by requesting for a letter from GDSD stating that this research was authentically my own work and submitting it to the research ethics committee. Since this chapter has extensively outlined the type of methodology which was employed to successfully conduct this study's fieldwork, the next chapter provides a description of the data collected during fieldwork and places emphasis on the main research findings which answer the study's research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part describes the Monitoring and Evaluation methodology employed by the Gauteng Department of Social Development (GDSD) on skills development programmes offered through their funded None-Profit Organizations (NPOs). This is intended to give an outline of the process that GDSD considers to be part of its comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Systems for community development projects. The second part of this chapter discusses the research findings collected through semi-structured interviews from program beneficiaries, which are organized under themes.

4.1 GDSD's Monitoring and evaluation methods

Skills development programs are implemented under the Sustainable Livelihoods directorate, a directorate within GDSD which solely focuses on poverty alleviation and community development projects (Gauteng Department of Social development: Sustainable livelihoods; n.d). As part of its poverty alleviation initiative, this directorate offers skills development programmes through funding civil society organizations as implementing agents, particularly NPOs, to provide training for the unemployed youth to assist the economically inactive youth that need to be capacitated in terms of the skills required by the labour market (Sustainable Livelihoods and Youth Development, n.d).

One of the Sustainable Livelihoods' core mandate is to offer youth development projects/programmes in an effort to combat youth unemployment in the Gauteng province (Gauteng Department of Social Development: Sustainable Livehoods,n.d). The skills development programmes form an integral part of youth development as well as GDSD's aim of alleviating youth unemployment. In light of skills development, the following are key project objectives:

- To facilitate the acquisition of employment skills which are required to enter the labour market.

- To encourage partnerships with relevant stakeholders in the delivery of youth development.
- to increase knowledge, skills and change attitudes of young people.
- To respond to educational, socioeconomic, recreational, emotional and psychological needs of young people using an integrated approach.
- To encourage young people to have greater ownership of development through meaningful and valuable engagement.

To ensure that the above objectives(s) are achieved, skills development programmes are monitored and evaluated by officials working under the Sustainable Livelihoods directorate. Each NPO is appointed one official who is solely responsible to ensure that programme implementation takes place as stipulated in the Service Level Agreement (SLA) signed by the Department and the NPO. The official's responsibilities include the following:

- On-site visits to the organization and conduct head counts to ensure that the number of beneficiaries trained correlate with those stipulated in the SLA.
- Ensure that the programme is implemented accordingly i.e., a qualified skills development facilitator is appointed to train beneficiaries.
- Investigate whether the organization has not underspent/offer-spent the allocated funds for programmes. This involves checking if the organization has invoices to prove funds spent against funds allocated.
- Request attendance registers of beneficiaries as proof that training is indeed taking place.
- Check if each register has names, surnames, identity number/date of birth, physical address and signatures of all beneficiaries for each programme. This serves as tangible evidence that the organization is training beneficiaries between the eighteen to thirty-five age cohorts.

These responsibilities are considered as an integral part of the monitoring process employed by GDSD for skills development programmes. Nevertheless, the validity and substance of this type of monitoring should be compared definitions and monitoring frameworks from other scholars and M & E experts. Valadez and Bamberger (2004) contend that monitoring is the collection of information for a project and the regular analysis to check progress.

This can be achieved by collecting quantitative data referring to the amount of time and money spent, coupled with the collection of qualitative data to check whether the project is making progress and investigating the level of satisfaction from participants (Valadez & Bamberger,2004). From this submission, the monitoring methodology utilized by GDSD appears to be flawed as it does not have a qualitative aspect in which programme beneficiaries form part of the monitoring process to measure progress made and identify shortcomings.

Programme beneficiaries should be at the epicentre of the monitoring process as they can be a substantial source in regulating whether training is implemented in line with the set objectives or whether there have been deviations. Qualitative data is as important as quantitative data when community development projects are monitored (Casley& Kumar,1987).

Moreover, the quantitative analysis of monitoring skills development programmes does not include the measurement of time spent on the programme, which serves as another shortcoming on GDSD's monitoring methodology. This could negatively affect the entire M & E process as monitoring plays a significant role as it has an important contribution on the evaluation process, which necessitates an interrogation of GDSD's evaluation method.

According to the Gauteng Department of Social Development (N.D), evaluation takes place when attendance registers are scrutinized to check whether they have the contents mentioned above (names, surnames, Identity number/date of birth, physical address, disability and signature) with the name of the training program and logo of the NPO appearing on top of the first page. In this instance, the Technical Indicator

Description Schedule (TIDS) document is used concurrently with the SLA to evaluate these youth skills development programmes. It is worth noting that attendance registers, the SLA and the TIDS are all considered to be tools used for evaluating skills development programs.

It is incumbent upon the responsible official to check whether the targeted beneficiaries expected to be trained for the quarter (three months) do coincide with the number of beneficiaries reflected on the registers submitted by the NPO on a quarterly basis. In this regard, financial compliance and programme implementation is monitored, which is concurrently considered as an evaluation process.

This lack of a nuanced and coordinated *M & E* methodology emanates from the reliance given to civil society organizations by GDSD as these organizations are considered to have vast knowledge and expertise of the community development initiatives needed by the societies they serve (Kelly et al,2004). To support this view, several scholars (Evans,1969; Oakley, 1999; Roche,1999; Kunwar *et al*,2004) argue that the impact made by NPOs and NGOs has often been exaggerated in the modern development discourse due to the assumption often made that the projects delivered by civil organizations have direct and obvious effects on the poorest of the poor.

Moreover, several studies (ODI,1996; Oakley,1999 and AusAID Effectiveness Review;1996; Birati and Tziner,1999) highlight that there is lucrative evidence from which the social impact of development projects rendered by civil society organizations can be measured. Some attribute the exaggerated impact delivered by NGOs as a concerted effort to attract and increase donor support and external funding (Kraiger *et al*, 1993; Knapp,1999; Kenall,1999). Since evaluation challenges have been identified, it is imperative to explore recommended evaluation methodologies that can be employed by civil society organizations in measuring programme/project outcomes and impact.

The starting point to do this is to begin by obtaining a holistic understanding of the meaning of evaluation by exploring the various definitions of the term. As stated by the OECD (2010:13), evaluation can be defined as “the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy, its design,

implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.”

In the same vein, Theodoulou and Kofinis (2004) maintain that evaluation is the process in which social research procedures are employed to systematically investigate the effectiveness, quality and impact of social intervention programs to improve the social conditions of a certain group of people within a society/community. Furthermore, Spicker (2008) posits that evaluation can be defined as a process in which the project/programme’s effectiveness is investigated by scrutinizing available evidence to make sufficient judgments about it.

While GDSD regards the process of verifying the programme’s financial compliance and beneficiary attendance as an evaluation, the definitions cited above suggest that that GDSD’s evaluation methodology is grossly misleading, if not deeply flawed considering that all the cited definitions maintain that evaluation entails investigating program effectiveness in terms of achieving program objectives. To elucidate further, the International Labor Organization (ILO) one should take note of the following concepts when conducting an evaluation of any project/programme:

- The moment in time when evaluation is conducted;
- The questions an evaluation is anticipated/expected to answer;
- The dimensions and criteria orientating the evaluation process;

According to the ILO (2014), the phases in which evaluation can be conducted is divided into three types:

Ex-ante evaluation: happens during the planning stage and involves evaluating the quality and relevance of the project/programme in relation to the demand and supply criterion.

Mid-term evaluation: Takes place during implementation to make changes and improvements that will lead to programme/project objectives being achieved.

Ex-post evaluation: carried out post-project implementation. Its core function is to verify if the suggested objectives were fulfilled.

None of these evaluation stages form part of GDSD's evaluation methodology, which indicates that there are irregularities and misconceptions regarding their understanding of that which entail the evaluation process. This implies that there is no emphasis on the outcomes and impact achieved from these skills development programmes.

in sharing insights, the ILO (2014) provides a few questions that can be raised when measuring the impact of skills development programmes on the society:

- To what extent has the quality of skills development programmes in which public funds are injected improved?
- Have the intended populations whom are vulnerable to unemployment (youth, people with disabilities, women et cetera) been exposed to more opportunities to access training?
- To what extent has skills development enabled access to decent job for the marginalized?
- Are there any economic returns realized from the training budget?

Institutions, organizations and training facilities that have been tasked to implement skills development programmes should ensure that these questions are considered from the moment the programmes are designed, to their implementation as this will lead to an effective impact evaluation. From GDSD's perspective and the approach taken in conducting monitoring and evaluation, it is evident that their current methodology is flawed, particularly on impact evaluation.

Much concern is centred on financial compliance, since the SLA and quarterly expenditure are pivotal to monitoring, while evaluation involves the verification of attendance registers against the set targets per the signed SLA. Essential factors such whether these skills development programmes have had any economic or social impact are neglected and downplayed.

It is also evident that GDSD's evaluation methodology is quantitative in nature as it is mainly focused on numbers, which obliterates and undermines the qualitative aspect of the training. The role played by beneficiaries should not be taken for granted, as they are the relevant people who can provide information regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the programme. Moreover, the fundamental purpose of these programmes is to have an impact of some sort on the lives of those who partake on them, which makes the beneficiaries' inputs important in terms of the aspects of the programmes that have no value or little substance for them.

In summary, it can be deduced that GDSDs current evaluation methodology is deficient based on three rudimentary elements:

- Lack of an effective *M & E* model for skills development programmes. Indicators for evaluating impact are not clearly defined in any of GDSD's.
- No standardized *M & E* tools are in place at an institutional level. Instead, indicators for reporting on programme implementation are juxtaposed with monitoring, while attendance registers serve as a tool for evaluation.
- Strong emphasis is placed on performance indicators. Thus, support provided by GDSD on NPOs is biased to programme administration and financial compliance instead of striving to achieve economic and social impact.

From the description provided above, it is clear that GDSD's *M & E* methods have discrepancies that contribute to GDSD's failure to sufficiently evaluate program outcomes and derive impact from these skill development training programmes. To investigate whether these discrepancies indeed exist, it is imperative to find out from programme beneficiaries themselves, which leads to the second section of this chapter.

The next section discusses the research findings collected from twelve programme beneficiaries from Get Informed development Centre. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews which were recorded for a duration of forty-five minutes to an hour each. The first part consists of description on the reasons for enrolment, the paper proceeds by describing the beneficiaries' expectations from the programme, which will subsequently be followed by views expressed on the course content and knowledge

gained. In exploring their thoughts regarding both programmes, the two themes are comprised of a description of the beneficiaries' perceptions of the training, followed by a theme on describing the beneficiaries' employment backgrounds.

4.2 REASONS OF ENROLEMENT

Centre manager mentioned that Life skills is a compulsory and pre-requisite course. That means beneficiaries are expected to complete it before they can be considered for other programmes. It is through life skills that the organization can screen beneficiaries and assess personal needs in terms of capacity building and personal development. Hence, all beneficiaries who formed part of the interviews were enrolled in the life skills training.

For most beneficiaries, attending this training served as a beacon of hope for enhancing their chances of employment. To amplify this view, Billorou *et al* (2011) contend that skills development, education and lifelong learning remain as pivotal pillars for the employment of workers in the labour market.

In concurring with this view, Sindiswa articulated it clearly by saying "I enrolled for training at Get informed because I was told that the organization places people in various companies for jobs after training". Gugu share the same sentiment in saying "I chose to enrol for training to get a job quicker than my other counterparts since the person who referred me said Get Informed does job placements for those who successfully complete training". Employment served as an underlying reason for most of those who enrolled for training at Get Informed.

However, a significant number of beneficiaries interviewed admitted that they were already employed but had enrolled for training to enhance their skills for the positions they are currently employed in. This was particularly interesting to note considering that GDSD had envisaged that these skills development programmes are aimed at empowering unemployed youth (Gauteng Department of Social Development, n.d).

Some alluded to the fact that they enrolled for training to enhance their skills and boost their Curriculum Vitae with the aim of being appealing to retail employers compared to their counterparts. The general view for this portion of beneficiaries was that enrolling for training will assist in supplementing their high school qualifications and that they would stand a better chance of obtaining employment once they have augmented their qualifications with the training certificate to be received at the end of the course.

Moreover, there was a proportion of beneficiaries who conceded that they enrolled for these training sessions simply because it was offered for free. Moreover, it was also discovered that some has a lot of spare time since most of the beneficiaries are unemployed and not enrolled in tertiary institutions. One beneficiary expressed herself by saying “A friend of mine referred me to go to Get Informed and said they offer training courses to the youth for free. I decided to enrol for their computer training as I was unemployed and had ample time”.

Reasons for enrolment are key to investigating the beneficiaries’ motives regarding training as that informs the intended results they are hoping to achieve once they have completed the program. Moreover, Reasons of enrolment are linked with the expectations that one has about training, which leads to the following section.

4.3 EXPECTATIONS FROM TRAINING (Life Skills)

Most of the efforts and actions that are channelled on a particularly task is informed by the expectation to achieve/attain the intended end-result (Krizan & Sweeny,2013). This section will discuss the identified expectations from both training courses. It is crucial to discuss these findings to investigate whether the intended objectives and outcomes of these training sessions were congruent with the beneficiaries’ expectations.

Most beneficiaries interviewed highlighted that they were expecting Life skills training to be a course that is about personal development. This expectation was informed by the fact that most of them perceived Life skills to be a training course on self-awareness, public speaking, being an effective employee etc.). Furthermore, this expectation was birthed from being told about Life skills by friends who had attended training previously.

Thus, because of what they heard from former beneficiaries regarding this course, some expectations were developed from word of mouth.

One beneficiary highlighted the extent at which his expectation was informed by what he was told, “My cousin, who attended life skills training before me said the course is mainly about knowing yourself, setting goals and gaining self-esteem”. Another beneficiary expressed her expectation from life skills in the following statement “I expected to be taught and trained on how to conduct and improve myself to become the best in the workplace and a better individual in life”.

The second major group of beneficiaries were never told nor knew anything about Life skills training conceded that they assumed life skills was the same as Life Orientation (LO), a subject offered in high schools. This supposition emanated from the name ‘Life Skills’, which is assumed to have the same connotation as Life Orientation. The general observation gathered from this notion was that since Life Orientation is generally not taken seriously by high school students, these beneficiaries did not believe that life skills would have an important impact in their lives post-training.

Beneficiaries were probed further and asked if their expectations were met post-training and most of them said yes, particularly those who were expecting training to encapsulate personal development sessions. This is because part of the life skills training includes Job preparedness; an aspect wherein one is trained on articulating themselves, professional dress-code and the general conduct expected during an interview. For those who expected life skills to be no different to Life Orientation, they conceded that their experience superseded their expectation as they learnt more than they expected. Having discussed expectations associated with Life skills, let us explore those linked to computerized cashier training.

4.4 EXPECTATIONS FROM TRAINING (Computerized Cashier)

Computerized cashier training is composed of two sections; the first being basic computer training which ultimately leads to cashier training. Upon interviewing beneficiaries, it was discovered that basic computer training is considered as an entry point for cashier training as its fundamentals are intertwined with basic computer skills.

Therefore, it is imperative that a beneficiary should be trained in basic computer skills prior to being considered for cashier training as most of the cashier training content is IT (Information Technology) orientated.

However, through an interview with the centre manager and the training coordinator, it was discovered that some beneficiaries are only interested in computer training. Thus, both groups (computer and cashier trainees) are combined for the sake of time and resource utilization since Get Informed has limited computers to conduct separate trainings for both groups. It is against this background that some of the beneficiaries that were interviewed attended computer training while others enrolled for both computer and cashier training.

When asked about their expectation prior to training, majority of beneficiaries, particularly those who were solely interested in computer, said they expected to learn about basic computer skills. These were beneficiaries who highlighted that they did not have any basic knowledge of operating a computer as they have never been offered the opportunity to be exposed to one. Nomsa articulated her expectation from computer training and said “I expected to learn and gain basic skills of operating a computer (how to switch it on/off), how to write emails since this is the mode of communication used in the cooperate world”.

Some beneficiaries that were enrolled for cashier training were employed and working full-time in certain companies but stated that they enrolled for computer skills to enhance and improve their IT skills since basic computer skills such as Microsoft excel and power-point are challenging for them. Themba works for one of the big retail companies as a warehouse manager and part of his daily duties is to compile a spreadsheet for the goods received or delivered to clients.

When asked about his expectations from computer training, Lwazi expressed himself by saying “we were not taught about Microsoft office back in my high school days and it became a challenge when I was given the management position as a store manager. Since I use Microsoft excel daily, my expectation was to know all the Microsoft office programs as much as I could”.

A significant number of beneficiaries interviewed came to Get Informed for cashier training, although they had to first begin with computer training. It is against this reason that a great deal of beneficiaries expressed that they expected to be taught and learn extensively about how to operate a teller machine and the paying speed point machine, as those are the two modes of payments predominantly used as payment methods in retail stores. Wandile articulated his expectation by stating “I was expecting to be taught about how to operate a teller machine and a speed-point. I also expected to get some knowledge around managing finances since cashiers are expected to efficiently manage petty cash”.

Another dominant expectation that emerged during interviews was the drive to learn about customer service and professional conduct from the cashier training course. Some beneficiaries cited customer service as an important skill for cashiers, which emanated from some of the personal experiences in their interaction with cashiers at paying points.

Since they aspired to be trained as cashiers, some of the beneficiaries expected part of the course to contain customer service lessons. During an interview, Belinda expressed that customer service formed an integral part of being a good cashier/teller as she stated that “Cashiers work with people daily, which makes it important know how to interact with customers. It is therefore important that the cashier training course contains a section in which people are taught about customer service”.

Considering the heterogeneous nature of expectations outlined, it was essential to investigate whether these expectations were met post-training. A great part beneficiaries said their expectations were met. In fact, some alluded that training offered content beyond what they had expected. This gave an indication that beneficiaries were generally satisfied with the course, regardless of some of the misgivings about the course content to be discussed in the following theme.

4.5 EMPLOYMENT BACKGROUND

Following the revelations obtained from the previous theme; where the dominating expectation of beneficiaries was that Get Informed will assist them in finding job

opportunities after training. It was imperative to describe the beneficiaries' employment status as they had already undergone training, to find out whether their expectation was fulfilled. Of the fifteen beneficiaries interviewed, only three managed to find employment. However, it should be noted that these individuals were not placed by Get Informed; but they got jobs in their own individual capacity. Out of the three, one was hired as a security guard and the other two applied for learnerships in the private sector and were successful.

However, Londiwe and Gift were already employed when they came for computer training at Get Informed. During interviews, they both stated that they felt the need to improve their computer skills and saw found out from friends that Get Informed offers basic computer training. Londiwe expressed her need to augment her computer skills for work purposes in saying: "I work as a call centre agent and one of the required skills in my field of work is knowing computer basics like being able to use Microsoft word, Excel for spreadsheet, and PowerPoint for presentations.

I discovered when I started working that I had to sharpen by computer skills, which led me to enrol for a basic computer training course at Get informed". When the centre manager was interviewed, he stated that although their skills development training is meant for unemployed youth, they felt the need to also offer training to individuals who are already employed but see the need to improve their computer skills. This decision was driven by the influx of people who came to the centre and offered to pay a fee to improve the skills as they see the need based on their line of work. Thus, Get Informed's Centre manager decided to offer training to employed individuals and charge them a commitment fee during weekends.

Regrettably, the rest of the nine beneficiaries stated that they are still unemployed, although they were promised to be placed on job opportunities after training. Some stated that after completing training, they were promised to be contacted for job opportunities. All nine beneficiaries confirmed that they have not been contacted by Get informed over a year, and they still are unemployed. Regardless of this unfavourable outcome, let us move to finding out whether knowledge gained from both trainings was valuable.

4.6 COURSE CONTENT AND KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION

As suggested by the heading; this section discusses findings obtained from interviews regarding the beneficiaries' views on the course content and knowledge acquired from Life skills and computerized cashier training. The first part of this section discusses views derived from life skills training, which is subsequently followed by a similar discussion on computerized cashier training.

4.6.1 Life Skills

It should be noted that all the beneficiaries interviewed found the course content and knowledge gained from this training highly substantial and informative. Thus, a variety of reasons that informed this view were collected during interviews. In terms of knowledge acquisition; most beneficiaries highlighted that they were led to self-awareness because of life skills. One beneficiary explained herself and said: "I did not know my own strengths and weaknesses before attending the life skills program. However, I feel I now know and understand myself better".

The above assertion emanates from one of the sections in life skills where beneficiaries are tasked to answer questions derived from a self-introspection mini test as a part of the course. Sibongile expressed it well in saying "self-introspection, knowing your strengths and weaknesses as well as taking stock of your life were some of the insights I found useful about life skills training". Some stated that they gained self-esteem and confidence in themselves because of life skills.

In terms of the course content, numerous skills gained from Life skills were important. This includes Curriculum Vitae (CV) writing, job preparedness, time management goal-setting and personal hygiene. Majority of the beneficiaries found these sections of the course content pertinent and substantial for their personal development. Considering that most of these beneficiaries did not have basic knowledge of operating a computer, typing a CV was one of their primary challenges.

Mxolisi expressed why he found being trained on CV writing as an important by saying “I have always struggled to type my own CV and have been relying on going to the internet Café to pay someone to type it for me. I am now able to type it myself and save it on my USB, which is a skill that I would have never learnt had I not attended Life skills training at Get Informed”. Mxolisi formed part of the group that enrolled for basic computer training.

It was discovered during interviews that the aspect of interview preparedness was also found meaningful by some of the beneficiaries. Preparing for interviews was highlighted as a critical challenge since some had not been employed because of failing interviews. Some of the challenges mentioned included interview dress-code, body language, eye contact, controlling anxiety and being able to eloquently express one’s self when asked questions by an interview panel.

Yvonne was forthcoming and honest about her weaknesses during interviews as she said “I would be nervous and anxious during interviews, and that would lead to having a low self-esteem towards answering questions asked by the interview panel. Attending life skills has changed my perception about interviews and I have learnt a lot in terms of body language, dress-code, expressing yourself fluently and techniques that one can apply to deal with nervousness and anxiety”. Knowing how to manage anxiety during interviews is a challenge that should not be viewed lightly as most people often fail to obtain employment because of lacking this important attribute.

Time management was also brought to the fore as the most important skill learnt from life skills. Majority of the beneficiaries conceded that they did not recognize the importance of time management. Through life skills, we learnt that time management could be the difference between a good employee and a bad one, a good student and a bad student. Moreover, we were also taught that one of the key things of being an effective individual largely depends on managing your time well “, said Jonathan. After sufficiently discussing life skills, we can proceed to discussing views expressed on the course content and knowledge gained from computerized cashier training.

4.6.2 Computerized cashier training

This training's course content was found useful by all beneficiaries as it was deemed useful and informative. Among reasons cited, professional conduct and financial literacy were mentioned as one of the most useful skills gained. Other useful tasks taught during training included operating a speed point and a teller machine. Some alluded to being trained on customer service and professionalism.

Sello admitted that he had never worked as a cashier before, and lacked practical experience on some of the duties of a cashier. He contends having learnt a lot from training by stating "I always thought and assumed that being a cashier only took one to know how to assist customers at the pay point, but after attending cashier training I began to realize that there is a lot more to know, such as how to speak to customers, the importance of concentration and focus, learning to avoid destructions et cetera".

However, beneficiaries were asked if they found anything useless about the training and one fundamental reason which was cited by most beneficiaries, particularly those who went through cashier training. Many argued that cashier training is theoretical and less practical since Get Informed does not have teller machines or prototype machines for teaching cashier training.

Thus, it is therefore difficult for beneficiaries to discern whether they know how to apply what they are taught in practical terms. Moreover, another shortcoming highlighted was related to the manual used for training. Some beneficiaries felt that cashier training offered at Get Informed may not be practically applicable to that used in South African retail stores as the manual used for training is from the UK (United Kingdom). Taking note of these shortcomings led to probing beneficiaries further on how they generally perceived both trainings in their own subjective views.

4.6 BENEFICIARIES' PERCEPTIONS

This section discusses the beneficiaries' general perceptions on Life skills and computerized cashier training. The section highlights the beneficiaries' thoughts in terms of program outcomes and investigate the extent at which beneficiaries thought these were achieved. It is important to investigate the nature of these findings as it will provide a sense of that which has been achieved from the program beyond output level since training is considered as an intervention for the unemployed youth as espoused by GDSD. In this section, beneficiaries were asked to express their experiences from the course, whether they would recommend it to someone else and their general perceptions of both courses.

4.6.1 Life skills training

Positive feedback was received about Life skills training as all beneficiaries found it useful course as it was expressed by many that they can recommend it to friends and relatives. Four positive perceptions were outlined regarding this training. Majority of the beneficiaries cited that they would recommend life skills because it provides good guidance in terms of job readiness. Since most of them had never been exposed to the cooperate space, life skills gave them a perspective in terms of the way one is expected to behave

The second positive perception gathered from most beneficiaries was that life skills is good for those who have dropped out from high school or those enable to pursue studies at tertiary level. This is because life skills provide good career guidance for those who are uncertain about their career prospects. Tebogo expressed his perceptions by stating that "life skills assisted me to have a clear vision and direction of what I want to do. I was confused about my career after completing matric, hence I took a gap year and sat home. Thanks to life skills, I now know exactly what my personal traits are and have chosen to pursue a career that is aligned to my strengths and interests".

Interestingly, most beneficiaries were experiencing a common challenge as Tebogo in terms of lack of self-awareness. Majority pointed out that they were uncertain about their career prospects because they were afraid of choosing a career that would not be coherent with their personal interests. Through life skills, most were assisted to interrogate themselves, their interests, their weaknesses, strengths, what they enjoyed doing et cetera. It is only after attending life skills training that they self-evaluated and discovered themselves.

Consequently, some cited that they had low self-esteem and did not believe in their abilities prior to attending life skills. However, after being trained on doing the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, goal-setting, positive thinking and other aspects of life skills, they began to gain self-confidence and develop a positive outlook about themselves.

Some cited that they did not believe in themselves because they dropped out before reaching matric level, and the negative remarks they received from friends and close relatives was a contributing factor to this. Notwithstanding, life skills training programme resuscitated their self-esteem and boosted confidence. Similar questions were asked for computerized cashier training, which is described in the next theme.

4.6.2 Computerized cashier training

There were different perspectives between perceptions associated with life skills compared to those of computerized cashier training, one of which was that the latter was perceived as a precursor for employment while the former was largely associated with personal development. Beneficiaries overtly expressed that they perceived cashier training as an opportunity that would give them comparative advantage when applying for employment. This view was ignited by receiving an accredited certificate when one has successfully completed the training.

“Having a cashier training certificate will increase our chances of being considered for jobs because most people that apply for cashier jobs do not have certificates”, said Floyd who attended and completed cashier training. It is also important to acknowledge that a significant number of beneficiaries interviewed highlighted that they perceived

cashier training as an opportunity to close the gap of dropping out before matric. “Cashier training is an opportunity for those of us who are unemployed and dropped out of high school to do something better with our lives”, a statement that was made by Lesego during an interview.

There were beneficiaries who conceded they that they perceived cashier training an activity that would keep them busy because they had ample time since some were unemployed and not studying. When they were told that training is for free, they were adamant to grab the opportunity with both hands.

Some of those who attended and completed training told their friends and relatives that training was offered for free and that they were promised job placements after the course, which generated great interest on people to enrol for cashier training. Moreover, computer training was perceived as an essential course for basic computer skills, particularly for those who had never been exposed to computer before. Having described the research findings, the next chapter discusses the main findings using some of the themes outlined above and soliciting arguments from the literature review section.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH DISCUSSION

The previous chapter was mainly focused on providing an overarching perspective of this study's findings. This section will focus on discussing the factors which emerged from the themes outlined in the previous chapter. As this study sought to examine GDSD's evaluation methodology on skills development programs offered to unemployed youth; it aimed to investigate the degree to which GDSD's evaluation methodology can sufficiently and effectively measure program outcomes as espoused in GDSD's annual reports.

To achieve this, this research project employed a qualitative approach and interviews were conducted with programme beneficiaries to compare GDSD's claims on the successes of the training programs with the beneficiaries' views about their experiences during and after the programs. Furthermore, the study sought to investigate and examine the social and economic impact of the programme, which is one of the objectives that GDSD seeks to achieve through these training programs.

To this end, this chapter provides a discussion of the main findings and uses literature from previous studies to obtain meaning and subsequently answer the research questions outlined in chapter one. In achieving this, the chapter is divided into two. The first aspect discusses GDSD's monitoring and evaluation methodology; while interrogating its validity based on arguments purported by scholars from the literature review discussed in chapter two. The second part of this chapter is comprised of an analysis and discussion from an extrapolation of the pertinent findings from the themes discussed in chapter four; which subsequently answers the study's research question (s).

5.1 GDSD's Monitoring Methods for Skills training

According to the first section of the research findings in the previous chapter, GDSD's monitoring process is conducted by officials working under the Sustainable Livelihood Directorate (Sustainable Livelihoods and Youth Development, n.d). All funded NPOs are

appointed an official who is entrusted to monitor the programme implementation process by following the four main steps:

- Conduct onsite-visits to the NPO and ensure that the number of beneficiaries attending training correlates with the number stipulated on the SLA; which is achieved through head-counts.
- Ensure that the programme is implemented based on GDSD's requirements (i.e. training is conducted in a conducive place with enough training resources, an accredited skills development facilitator is appointed to train).
- Request attendance registers of all the beneficiaries as proof that training indeed took place.
- Investigate whether the allocated funds are spent accordingly (i.e. checking whether invoices are available for the funds allocated on that quarter and whether the expenditure was related to the programme).

Monitoring officials are expected to perform all of the above four activities once in three months; what is termed as a quarter according to GDSD's requirements. According to Casley and Kumar (1987), project monitoring is defined as a continuous assessment of the alignment of project activities so as to ensure that a project is successfully implemented. One of the important aspects within this definition is the emphasis on stating that monitoring must take place on a continuous basis; which does not form part of GDSD's monitoring assessment as it is only conducted on a quarterly basis.

In the literature review chapter, the World Bank (2011) defines programme monitoring as a collection of data from a program/project on a continuous basis to determine its level and extent of progress. From these definitions, it can be deduced that programme monitoring can only be deemed efficient and effective if and when it is conducted on a continuous basis. Furthermore, the World bank's (2011) definition from the literature review state that Monitoring also includes the collection of quantitative data the amount of time and financial capital spent on a project; and a collection of qualitative data to measure the project's progress based on feedback received from programme/project participants.

In highlighting the importance of collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, this definition advocates for a holistic approach to be applied on monitoring projects for the monitoring process to be effective. The qualitative aspect of including programme participants is also highlighted, which is not practiced by GDSD's officials during the monitoring process. Data gathered from Get Informed's Centre manager during interviews suggests that GDSD's monitoring methodology does not involve programme participants' inputs as advocated by the World Bank's holistic approach.

This indicates that GDSD's monitoring methodology is inefficient as it only considers the quantitative aspect (registers and financial compliance) of the skills training programme. Having discussed GDSD's monitoring methodology; the next section is a discussion of GDSD's evaluation methodology and whether it is effective and efficient according to program evaluation definitions that were explored in the literature review chapter.

5.2 GDSD's Evaluation Methodology on Skills training

This section is important for answering this study's main research question as the study seeks to examine GDSD's evaluation methodology on Life skills and computerized cashier training. In essence, the study seeks to examine GDSD's evaluation methodology and the extent at which it can effectively and efficiently evaluate programme outcomes of Life skills and Cashier training. As outlined in chapter four, GDSD's evaluation methodology the following three activities which are conducted by appointed officials:

- Check whether each register has names, surnames, identity number/date of birth, physical address and signatures of all beneficiaries for each programme. This serves as tangible evidence that the organization is training beneficiaries between the eighteen to thirty-five age cohorts as mandated by GDSD.
- Investigate whether the organization has under/offer-spent the allocated funds for programs. This involves checking if the organization has invoices to prove funds spent against funds allocated on a quarterly basis (Gauteng Department of Social Development, n.d).

Both of these functions are considered as part of the monitoring process but also form an integral part of program evaluation; an indication that GDSD is confusing monitoring with evaluation. In the literature review chapter, Stem *et al* (2005) argue that some organizations find it difficult to succinctly distinguish between 'monitoring' and the 'evaluation' process. The misconception of both these terms; they contend; emanates from the traditional practice of both monitoring and evaluation being conducted by the same officer (s) and juxtaposing the two to be similar. The same difficulty is experienced by GDSD officials, which indicates the lack of expertise in terms of how programme evaluation is meant to be conducted.

According to Get Informed's Centre manager; the appointed officials for monitoring and evaluating wear name tags that are titled 'Community Development Practitioners'; which suggests they are appointed by the Department to implement community projects and that *M & E* may be an additional duty given to them. Considering the manner in which these training programs are poorly evaluated; suggests that GDSD's evaluation methodology is conducted by individuals who have not undergone any *M & E* training nor possess the relevant qualifications for the field.

The second problem with how GDSD evaluates these programs is that the data used is quantitative in nature. As outlined in the previous chapter, three documents are used to evaluate GDSD's skills development programs; namely:

- (a) Attendance registers
- (b) The Level Agreement (SLA)
- (c) Technical Indicator Description Schedule (TIDS)

All of these three documents are attached as an addendum at the end of this paper.

Attendance registers are used to check whether programme participants are within the youth age bracket (i.e. from eighteen to thirty-five); and that there is an Identity number/birth data with a signature on all names appearing on the registers. According to the Centre manager, these registers are used to evaluate whether they implemented the programme as expected. Quantitatively analyzing attendance registers does not

form part of the evaluation process, which is another indication that GDSD's evaluation methodology is erroneous and unreliable.

To support my assertion, in the literature review section Rossi *et al* (1999) define programme evaluation as the process in which social research procedures are applied to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social programs meant as interventions to improve the community members' social conditions. In the same vein; Kariuki (2014:143) states that "Evaluation can therefore be conceptualized as a review of the whole project in order to assess its overall value and effects". Both definitions highlight that programme evaluation is about assessing programme effectiveness and examining the value and effects of a programme on the people it was meant to assist. While attendance registers may be significant during monitoring, it does not play any role in evaluating a programme.

Furthermore, Patton's definition of what evaluation should entail gives a nuanced perspective of the factors that an evaluator should focus on to conduct an effective evaluation. Programme evaluation "involves the systematic collection of information about the activities; characteristics and outcomes of programs, personnel and products used by specific people to reduce uncertainties, improve effectiveness, make decisions with regard to what those programs, personnel or products are doing and affecting" (Patton, 1981:15).

Kariuki and Patton's definition of evaluation suggests that qualitative data is crucial for the evaluation process to be effective in assessing the program's outcomes and effects. In this regard, programme participants play a crucial role as they are advocates of the degree at which the program has impacted any area of their lives as an intervention.

However, GDSD's evaluation does not incorporate the beneficiaries' views on any aspect of the training programme, as the evaluation is focused on the extent at which the programme was compliant in terms being aligned with TIDS and the signed SLA. None of these documents involve feedback from programme beneficiaries, which is a cause of concern about what and how GDSD understand the evaluation process. The next section describes and discusses some of the main findings from programme

beneficiaries to analysis further whether GDSD's evaluation methodology is fit for its intended purpose.

5.3 Main research findings

This dissertation began by giving an overview of *M & E*, its purpose and how it should be applied on community development programs/projects to ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved. Based on this overview, I then argued that the evaluation methodology employed by GDSD on its skills development is flawed and ineffective based on four compelling reasons.

First, the data obtained from interviews suggests that GDSD largely performs monitoring on these skills development programs by requesting attendance registers of programme beneficiaries, while an evaluation of these programs as a social and economic intervention is extensively ignored. Secondly, I argued that there are discrepancies between GDSD's intended objectives of these programs and the evaluation methodology applied to evaluate the degree to which such outcomes are achieved.

Third, evidence obtained from interviews suggests that in despite of undergoing training and obtaining an accredited certificate from Get Informed, most programme beneficiaries were not placed in jobs and remained unemployed despite GDSD's promises that the skills training would serve as an essential intervention for creating employment. Conversely, GDSD's reports highlight success of these programs as an intervention for unemployed youth. I emphatically argued that while GDSD may be sufficiently monitoring these training programs, it is failing decisively to evaluate them and thus, programme beneficiaries' experiences during and post-training do not resonate with GDSD's positive reports about these training programs.

Since these research study's findings were organized into themes as they were outlined in the previous chapter, this chapter will follow the same path in conducting an analysis. The first theme to be discussed is the beneficiaries' reasons of enrolment, followed by beneficiaries' expectations. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the beneficiaries'

employment background and the extent to which the two training programs had a contribution to their employment status post-training.

5.3.1 Reasons for enrolment

This research project's central focus is to examine GDSD's evaluation methodology employed for skills development programs as an intervention for unemployed youth. In specific, the study examined the degree to which this evaluation methodology was effective enough to evaluate programme outcomes and impact of Life skills and computer training. In this regard, the beneficiaries' reasons of employment were investigated to find out whether they understood the objectives of both programs and what these were sought to achieve as intervention programs. Furthermore, reasons for enrolment were significant for examining whether they were congruent with GDSD's intended outcomes of these training programs.

According to data collected during interviews, nine out of the total fifteen beneficiaries highlighted that attending both training programs served as a beacon of hope for increasing their chances of employment. Stated differently, majority of the beneficiaries enrolled for training in order to be employed post-training, which is in alignment with GDSD's objective of that one of the envisaged outcomes of these training programs is to qualify people for cashier training and place them in various training stores for employment.

One of the factors to be evaluated in these programs is to investigate the state of unemployment of beneficiaries before forming part of the training, and their employment status post-training. The theory of change, as outlined in chapter two, advocates that the outcomes of an intervention programme determine the degree at which the programme has positively changed the participant's life post-training. GDGD's current evaluation methodology has not been able to effectively determine the successes and failures of Life skills and computer training as interventions for social and economic change respectively.

Positive feedback was received for this programme during interviews. According to beneficiaries, this training was effective and substantial as most of them acquired essential skills such as goal-setting, writing a CV, time management and interview preparedness. These skills are essential and fundamental to possess if one is unemployed and still searching for employment. In this regard, the programme's desired outcomes were achieved as the beneficiaries' Life skills were improved because of this training. If an evaluation was conducted using pre-and post-tests were conducted as Matsuba (2007) maintains, the tests would indicate improvements on Life skills.

However, GDSD's methodology does not interrogate the beneficiaries' level of life skills prior to entering the program and post-training to measure the impact of training on beneficiaries' skills. It should be noted that from the data collected, most beneficiaries were under the notion that Life skills is synonymous to Life Orientation offered as a subject at a secondary level in basic education. However, in undergoing this training, they gained more skills than they expected, which is a positive projection going forward.

As the custodian of these programs, GDSD should extent the responsibility of conducting pre-evaluations on these programs to interrogate the beneficiaries' reasons of enrolment and possibility mitigate the level of dropouts during training. The Centre manager mentioned that some of the beneficiaries drop out during training, which leads to fruitless expenditure for the department and NPOs.

Kariuki (2014) argues in the literature review that cost-benefit evaluation is crucial to measure the programme's costs against its benefits. In this regard, GDSD's evaluation methodology does not entail a cost-benefit analysis, which makes it challenging to examine the Return on Investment of these programs. As an annually funded Department, it is imperative to conduct a cost-benefit evaluation to assess the worthiness of these training programs by interrogating their outcomes and economic impact on beneficiaries. One of the ways to achieve this is to interrogate the beneficiaries' reasons of enrolment, a factor that the current evaluation methodology does not consider.

In terms of Cashier training, most beneficiaries' who were interviewed for this study highlighted that their fundamental reason of enrolling for Cashier training is they heard from the previous programme beneficiaries that Get Informed places people in jobs at various retail companies. This reason is attributable to expectation (s), which is discussed in the theme to follow.

5.3.2 Expectation from training

This theme was centered on finding out the beneficiaries' expectations of both Life skills and computerized cashier training. Furthermore, the theme was aimed at investigating the degree to which the beneficiaries' expectations were met post-training. Interrogating the beneficiaries' expectations is important as it forms an integral part of the change they would like to see in their lives post-training, which should correspond to the long term programme outcomes as outlined on the revised programme theory diagram in chapter two. It should be noted that this research project examined GDSD's evaluation methodology and its effectiveness to successfully measure programme outcomes and impact from both training programs.

From Life skills training, ten out of the total fifteen beneficiaries interviewed maintained that they expected to be training on personal development (i.e. goal-setting, resilience, time management and preparing for interviews). The beneficiaries were probed further and asked whether their expectations on life skills training were met and positive responses were received. Of the fifteen beneficiaries interviewed, nine beneficiaries alluded that life skills training superseded as they were trained with another essential skill that they had not expected." Thus, most of them gained self-esteem and confidence on themselves after completing training.

Yvonne articulated the extent at which her expectations were met in the following manner: "After attending life skills, I had a deeper understanding of the essential contents when writing a CV. My interview skills were also sharpened as I now understand how to dress for an interview and the importance of body language.

While GDSD claims to have an effective evaluation model for skills development programs, there is no component that incorporates the beneficiaries' views regarding their expectations being met, which is one of the indications that GDSD's evaluation methodology is flawed. Another crucially important factor to consider is that the programme beneficiaries' expectations should be attributable to the objectives of the program (Hulme,1997).

As it has been emphatically argued on the previous chapter, GDSD's evaluation methodology is quantitatively conducted and does not consider the qualitative aspect of evaluation, which focuses on feedback received from beneficiaries. It is disingenuous to conduct an evaluation on the effects and impact of a development programme without considering and acknowledging the beneficiaries' views (Alkin & Taut, 2002).

To lament this view, Weisbrod (1966) argues that if the achieved outcomes are stated with reference to the training provider and the trainees are neglected, then the evaluation results obtained are unsubstantial and unreliable. We now move to discussing the beneficiaries' employment background, a section which reveals whether the skills training had any economic impact as intended by GDSD and Get Informed.

5.3.3 Employment background

The ultimate objective of both Life skills and cashier trainings as an intervention is to reduce the unemployment rate by assisting young people to enter the job market with the relevant skills and a training certificate to prove their competence. Furthermore, according to the Sustainable Livelihoods and youth development (n.d); the skills development training must result in the following outcomes at the end of each programme:

- Individuals must be able to secure a job opportunity through placement facilitated by the funded NPO.
- The individual should be able to start their own business enterprise if they wish to venture into entrepreneurship.

Based on the data gathered during interviews, of the fifteen programme beneficiaries that were interviewed, three said they could secure employment. However, one of the three beneficiaries was hired as a security guard and the other two were in an internship programme in Transnet. When interrogated further, they stressed that their training certificates did not play any role in them securing their employment opportunities. All three beneficiaries did cashier training hoping that they would be placed on jobs within the retail sector, but were told that they would be contacted once Get Informed has identified opportunities for them.

It is against these findings that the outcomes and impact of both training programs should be analyzed. In terms of interrogating employment and income change to training programs, Sadoul *et al* (2001) contend that vigilance must be applied if an organization intends to ascribe changes in employment or income status of participants to a training program since these can result from a number of factors which may not be attributed to the training programme.

In lamenting this stance; Weisbrod (1966:1094) states “Benefits from training programs are only those favorable consequences that would not have occurred in the absence of such programs- that is, would not have occurred under the assumption that the level of total demand for output would be the same whether or not the training program existed.” if this research study did not employ a qualitative methodology to gather data (i.e. conduct interviews with program beneficiaries), claims made by GDSD that these skills training programs resulted in job placements would have been valid. However, it is evident that those who were able to find jobs were able to not as a result of training, but as a result of other factors that were unrelated to GDSD’s skills training programs.

However, it should be acknowledged that the Life skills training may have played a role in these three beneficiaries obtaining employment. Improvement in their CV writing and job interview preparedness might have played a role. These are some of the elements that should form part of GDSD’s evaluation methodology (i.e. finding out the degree and extent to which the training programs contributed positively to the beneficiaries’ social and economic wellbeing).

This view is buttressed by Weiss & Carol (2001) by arguing that a useful program evaluation for a training program is one which provides a useful analysis of the income and employment status prior to and after training. The evaluation should sufficiently indicate the employment or income status of the program participants before training, and how these were affected after training. In this instance, GDSD's methodology falls short of performing such a task. Programme beneficiaries are profiled during Life skills to obtain their social and economic background, but such is not conducted post-programme to investigate and examine changes that programme(s) has made in their lives post-training.

Furthermore, of the fifteen beneficiaries, nine were not placed in jobs after the training program. They were told that they would be contacted once Get Informed has secured job opportunities for them, which raises a concern regarding GDSD's evaluation methodology to identify failure in achieving the program's objective of placing people in jobs or assisting them to start their businesses.

These program outcomes are stated on GDSD's website and its published brochures; which indicate a disservice of these programs as envisaged outcomes have not materialized. The findings indicate that GDSD does not have a clear evaluation framework and thus, the evaluation methodology is also poor. Rao *et al* (2003) share the same sentiment and lament that an evaluation methodology for any training program can only be deemed efficient if its framework directs the program analyst in identifying the advantages and disadvantages of the training program. Having a clearly defined framework affords the evaluator an opportunity to realize whether the program is plausible. The next chapter outlines the study's conclusion, limitations of the research and makes recommendations based on the study's findings and the literature review.

CHAPTER SIX

6.1 CONCLUSION

The purpose of my study was to examine the Gauteng Department of Social development's evaluation methodology applied on evaluating the outcomes and impact of the skills development programs offered to young and unemployed individuals by funded NPOs. My study specifically focused programme beneficiaries who were trained under Get Informed Youth Development Centre for Life skills and computerized cashier training.

This research was intended to examine and reveal the degree to which GDSD's evaluation methodology effectively and efficiently evaluates the outcomes and impact of these skills development programs. Moreover, since these programs are aimed to alleviate youth unemployment in Gauteng and empower young people with social skills; this thesis had the aim of exploring the experiences of programme beneficiaries and found out from them the level and extent of impact that these training programs on their lives in social and economic terms. Hence, this study's research design was largely qualitative.

Several interesting findings were obtained during fieldwork. First, what I found was that GDSD's monitoring method resonates with other's scholars' definitions (Casley and Kumar,1987; Valadez & Bamberger;2004; Amo & Cousins,2007) of how and when should program monitoring taken place.

In ensuring that programme implementation is successful, GDSD has appointed officials to conduct onsite visits to their funded NPOs on a quarterly. However, the scholars cited above advocate that for programme monitoring to be efficient, it should take place on a continuous basis. It remains questionable whether GDSD's quarterly visits falls within the 'continuous' category as a quarter implies that these visits take place once in every three months.

Second, the findings from fieldwork suggest that GDSD's evaluation methodology is largely quantitative and solely depends on the documentation used during programme implementation (i.e. attendance registers, TIDS documents and the SLA signed by

GDSD and its funded NPOs as the latter are the service providers of skills development on behalf of GDSD). As advocated by Stem *et al* (2005), I found that GDSD does not clearly distinguish its monitoring process from how it evaluates these programs; which implies that GDSD does not have a detailed understanding of what an evaluation process entails, hence its methodology is largely quantitative. None of the documents used by GDSD speak to programme outcomes and impact. Instead, the three documents are for compliance purposes. Furthermore, by interviewing Get Informed's Centre manager, it was found that GDSD's appointed officials do not have any expertise on *M & E* as their titles are Community Development Practitioners, which is a serious concern.

These findings are in harmony with those of researchers such as Roche (1999); Narayan (1999); Conlin and Stirrat (2008); who maintain that the development field is confronted with a range of challenges on employing effective evaluation methods for development projects/programs, and revealing their impact as development interventions (Schaumburg-Muller,2005).Moreover, the difficulty of finding and applying an effective evaluation methodology on a development program that is meant as an intervention is not unique and peculiar to GDSD.

While I was reviewing the literature, I found that this challenge emanates from the fact that practices such as 'impact assessment', 'program outcomes' and program impact are activities that were not considered for development projects before the 1990s, as development projects and activities were birthed from assisting those in need through the provision of Aid (Bogenschneider & Corbitt,2010). It is only in the late 1990's that focus on project impact and outcomes has been considered (Fitzpatrick *et al*,2004). This suggests that evaluation practice is a new phenomenon with the development field.

Although my findings are generally compatible with the cited research studies, there are other scholars which differ from assertions made by the scholars cited on the previous paragraph. Several studies cited in the literature review chapter (AusiAID NGO Effectiveness Review,1996; ODI,1996; Oakley;1999 and Kelly *et al*,2004) maintain that None Profit Organizations; prominently also known as NGOs; over-emphasize the impact of projects they are entrusted to implement because of increasing their chances

for donor support. However, in GDSD's case, *M & E* is conducted by its appointed officials and not the NPOs, which deems this argument invalid as it assumes that the responsibility of evaluating development projects must be done by the NPOs themselves; a suggestion that leads to conflict of interest for NPOs as service providers of these projects.

In terms of the data collected during fieldwork, the participants (program beneficiaries in this instance) highlighted some interesting factors regarding Life skills and computerized cashier-training. First, I discovered during interviews that the beneficiaries' reasons for enrolling for skills training was mainly driven by an expectation of being placed on a job after successfully completing training. This expectation was birthed from several sources, but largely from being told by those who had undergone the same training at Get Informed. Some of the beneficiaries also highlighted that they were told at the beginning of training by the skills facilitator., which raised expectations.

Furthermore, one of GDSD's information brochures titled 'Sustainable Livelihoods and Youth Development' (attached as part of an addendum) precisely states that skills development programme outcomes are achieved in one of the two ways; by enabling individuals to secure a job opportunity or individuals being able to start their own business enterprise at the end of the training program. However, what I found was that most of the programme beneficiaries interviewed were still unemployed after training, but were instead promised to be contacted as soon as Get Informed secures job or business opportunities for them.

I also found that those who managed to find a job did not attribute it to the training certificate. Their employment was not because of the training certificate as they were working in sectors which did not require a cashier training certificate. This then implies that there are very few success stories that can be attributed to these training program resulting to job placements for beneficiaries. In addition, data obtained from programme beneficiaries does not resonate with the programme theory outlined on the theoretical framework section in chapter two. According to the revised programme theory outlined in figure two, programme outcomes should be categorized into three phases; Short-medium and long- term.

According to programme beneficiaries, GDSD's skills development programs have only achieved short and medium term outcomes in the context of Life skills (i.e. providing face to face assistance to beneficiaries, profiling of beneficiaries, identification of their strengths and weaknesses and provision of internal training). However, the current evaluation methodology does not assess long term outcomes on life skills; which are whether programme beneficiaries have been referred to relevant sectors for employment, the extent at which their decision-making has improved in terms of career-choices etc.

In terms of comprised-cashier training, the programme theory diagram suggest that as a long-term outcome, GDSD should be able to effectively assess if beneficiaries have been placed for jobs after receiving training, an aspect that is neglected on the current evaluation methodology. From the findings outlined above, it can be concluded that GDSD's evaluation methodology is flawed, ineffective and inefficient to evaluate skills training program outcomes.

6.2 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY

I should stress that my study has primarily been concerned with emphasizing GDSD's evaluation method and I may have undermined the positive aspects of it. Though it does not evaluate program outcomes effectively at all, GDSD's evaluation method does ensure that the funded NPOs implement the programs according to the agreement as stipulated on the SLA document signed by both parties.

The findings of my study were mainly focused on and restricted to the importance of infusing the qualitative aspect of beneficiaries during evaluation, which was motivated by the current quantitative approach employed by GDSD. I admit that I may have overlooked at the importance that the TIDS document plays in terms of highlighting the importance of aligning project implementation with the set indicators, even though this document is not relevant for evaluating a project.

I should make it clear that I have intentionally not interviewed any official from GDSD because I work as an official for the Gauteng Department of Social Development. As one of my duties is to monitor and evaluate skills development programs offered

through our funded NPOs, I deemed it insignificant to interview any GDSD's official because I have been exposed to how these programs are monitored and evaluated. Nevertheless, that does not undermine the possibility that I would have obtained some insights and perspectives that might have differed with my stance of the poor way we evaluate these programs.

I concede that perhaps interviewing a couple of officials; including the Director of Sustainable Livelihoods directorate; would have provided some detailed nuances of GDSD's choice of its current evaluation methodology and its advantages thereof. Furthermore, the findings of my study does not allow me to speculate nor conclude that all programme beneficiaries that have undergone training at from Get Informed were not placed on jobs or that all of those who previously attended training were not assisted to start their own businesses.

Considering that only fifteen beneficiaries were interviewed, it would be disingenuous to assume that their views are a true reflection for all other programme beneficiaries who attended training prior to those interviewed for my study. If the number of beneficiaries was thirty or more, then informed deductions would have been made regarding commonly shared views about the training programs.

Unfortunately, other important aspects such as assessing the employment status of beneficiaries over a one-year period after undergoing training fall outside the scope of an MA dissertation. It would have been substantial to investigate the extent in which these training programs have succeeded in empowering beneficiaries in the workplace over a three-year period, which would provide a trajectory of the economic and social impact of undergoing training on Life skills and computerized cashier training.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

For future action, GDSD should contract an *M & E* service provider and allow for expert advice from those who are familiar with conducting evaluations on training programs. It is unrealistic to expect GDSD's evaluation methodology to be efficient and effective if it is conducted by officials employed by GDSD. We should not overlook the fact that in so doing, GDSD is a player and a referee at the same time, which opens room for biases in

terms of assessing programme outcomes and the effectiveness of these programs as an intervention meant to empower youth and assist in youth unemployment. In an event that there is lack of funds to outsource *M & E* services, I strongly suggest that GDSD should consider outsourcing *M & E* training for its officials as a short-term solution. Furthermore, a rigorous evaluation method that considers the state of beneficiaries' social skills and employment status prior and after training should be employed. This can only be effectively implemented offer a period of one year to explore if time is a factor in terms of job placements.

In terms of emphasizing job placement as an important outcome for training, GDSD should demand a Memorandum of Understanding that its funded NPOs has signed with relevant stakeholders that will absorb beneficiaries after training. This should be one of the pre-conditions for NPOs to qualify for receiving funding for these training programs. However, this should not exonerate GDSD's officials to conduct an investigate of whether indeed programme beneficiaries were placed on jobs after training as promised by NPOs.

6.4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study challenges researchers, educators, policymakers, civil societies and international organizations to think critically about the relationship between how 'development' is defined and the role played by evaluation methodologies as a yardstick in measuring the extent to which 'development' is achieved. The paper also raises a serious concern in terms of interrogating whose perspective matters when evaluating the extent to which a development project achieved the desired objectives?

Is it the programme beneficiary who was subjected to the 'development' process of the programme that is entitled to opionate on programme effectiveness or should the programme be evaluated by those responsible for its implementation? Allais (2015:1) poses critical questions in stating that "Which skills are needed by whom, and what role do they play in assisting individuals to improve their livelihoods and lives?" As it has been raised throughout the paper, a number of contentions have been raised by program participants stating the weaknesses of a development program, in this case on

skills training. Such questions and obscurities can be explored further through rigorous research studies.

The study also raises the need to transform post-school training systems to assist and meet the interests of urban and rural communities. As Baatjies *et al* (2018) all argue, the need to transform post-school education and learning is becoming urgent as the inequality gap widens, poverty is on the rise and an escalating unemployment rate. This means that the skills development programmes which are meant to capacitate those decide not to further their studies after matric should be assessed and interrogated in terms of their economic and social impact.

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APPENDIX A: Interview Questionnaire

1. Reasons for enrolment

- (a) How did you find out about Get Informed Youth Development Centre?
- (b) What led you to be interested in the skills development programmes offered at Get Informed Youth Development Centre?
- (c) Why did you choose to enroll for Life skills?
- (d) Why did you choose to enroll for Cashier training?

2. Expectations from training

- (a) What were you told about Life skills prior to enrolment from Get Informed Youth Development Centre?
- (b) What were you told about Cashier training prior to enrolment from Get Informed Youth Development Centre?
- (c) What were your expectations from Life skills prior to enrolment?
- (d) What were your expectations from Cashier training prior to enrolment?
- (e) Were your expectations met after Life skills training?
- (f) Were your expectations met after Cashier training?

3. Course Content and knowledge

- (a) What do you think you have gained during Life skills training?
- (b) What do you think you have gained during Cashier training?
- (c) How do you think the skills you have acquired from Life skills will assist you in future?
- (d) How do you think the skills you have acquired from Cashier training will assist you in future?
- (e) What improvements should be made to Life skills training if there are any?
- (f) What improvements should be made to Cashier training if there are any?

4. Educational background

- (a) What is your highest educational qualification?
- (b) Apart from Life skills and Cashier training, are you currently studying?
- (c) If yes, do you think Life skills training will assist you in your studies?
- (d) If yes, do you think that Cashier training will assist you in your studies?
- (e) If no, please share why did you not further your studies?

5. Employment background

- (a) Are you currently working? If yes, please specify your occupation.
- (b) If you are employed, what are your duties in the workplace?
- (c) Do you think enrolling for Life skills will enhance your chances of getting a job? If yes, how?
- (d) Do you think enrolling for Cashier training will enhance your chances of getting a job? If yes, how?

6. Beneficiaries perceptions

- (a) Would you recommend Life skills training to someone who has never enrolled for it? Explain.
- (b) Would you recommend Cashier training to someone who has never enrolled for any programme? Explain.

APPENDIX B: Participant Information Sheet



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Email: 1261986@students.wits.ac.za
Phone number: 011 820 0393

Dear Participant,

I am a student at the University of Witwatersrand studying towards Masters of Arts Degree. As part of my studies, I am conducting research on Examining the evaluation method employed on Cashier training and Life Skills programs (offered by Get Informed Development Centre) and I am interested in understanding your experiences of both programs.

Participation involves making yourself available at a time and place of your preference for an in-depth face to face interview; I expect it will last approximately 45 minutes to an hour. There could be follow up interviews in case I need clarity of your answers.

To both protect yourself and your identity from the organization offering this training and the department, the only requirement would be that the interviews be conducted away from the organization and the department (that is, if you prefer for the interview to be conducted in your home, this should be on a day and time when you are not required to attend training of either of the two programs). I would like, with your consent, to record the interview. This is for no other purpose but ensuring that I would be able to re-listen and rewind our conversation after the interview.

Participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate in the study without any consequences. Participation will not be beneficial to you in any way. There will be no compensation, nor can I assist you or the organization that offers training in any way. You can refuse to answer any questions, and to end the interview and your participation at any time, without any consequences. If you choose to participate, you will be assisting me, and I would really appreciate it.

I will ensure that no one will know that you participated in this research, and I will not use your real name in transcribing the interviews, or reporting the results of my research. You will therefore not be identifiable in any way. I will ensure that I send you an electronic link to my research report once it is deposited in the Wits university library and made public. I cannot guarantee that you will agree with my representation of you.

If you are willing to participate, I will be most grateful. You are welcome to contact me on 073 428 7164, and/or to contact my academic supervisor at the university at any time about this research: RajohaneMatshedisho, Rajohane.Matshedisho@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Zulu

APPENDIX C: Research Consent Form

Consent Form for Participation in Study

I, _____ am willing to participate in Michael Zulu' research entitled: ***Examining the evaluation method employed on skills development programs: A case study on Get Informed Development Centre***. I understand that there will be no direct benefit for me in participating in this study and that there are not likely to be any risks involved. I understand that participation is voluntary, there will be no benefits for participation, and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clear.

I have been guaranteed that the researcher will not identify me by name.

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet. My questions about participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, and I am aware of the risks and benefits of participating in the study.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Consent for Audio Taping of the Interview

I _____ hereby give the researcher Michael Zulu permission to tape-record the interview.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

REVIEWER'S COMMENTS: HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SOSS)

DATE: 23 June 2016

Applicant's name: Michael Zulu	Reviewer's name: Shireen Ally
Protocol number: DEV16/06/11	
Degree: Masters by Coursework and Research Report	
Title of the research project: Effectiveness of M&E methods on Youth Skills Development Programmes (a case study of Get Informed Youth Development Centre)	
Comments for the applicant to address on the Ethics Application Form: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It would be advisable that the student/researcher explain in Section 2 why being employed by the Gauteng Department of Social Development does not constitute a conflict of interest. - It is advisable that formal permission is secured to access the list of participants of the Get Informed Youth Development Centre's Youth Skills Development Programme (this is in order to protect the researcher in the possible event of either the programme or a participant contesting the basis on which personal information was secured) - In Section 6 of the application, please check for spelling/typographical errors as well as answers that are irrelevant to this study (eg. domestic workers) - Please change the applicant name at the end to reflect the student/researcher for this study. 	
Comments for the applicant to address on the Participant Information Sheet (PIS):	
Comments for the applicant to address on the Consent Form:	
Reviewer's overall comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The application overall is not very carefully put together, but there are no ethical issues other than the recommendation to provide further information on why there is no conflict of interest, and to consider whether to secure formal permission. 	
Recommendation (please indicate):	
Accept as is	<input type="checkbox"/>
Minor revisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate revisions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Major revisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resubmit	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate if the Reviewer would like to see the amended version of the Ethics Application Form, PIS and Consent Form:	
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX D: Sustainable livelihoods brochure

Pillar 2: Social Programmes

- Promotion of health and well-being, within communities through facilitating awareness sessions (meetings or workshops) that relates to social issues aimed at empowering communities on matters such as education, early childhood development, housing, family violence prevention, substance abuse, help for persons with disabilities and income assistance, as well as linkage of young people coming out of substance abuse treatment centres and those coming out of juvenile detention centres.
 - Provision of material assistance and social relief to household and individuals who are poor and in distress, or those participating in the skills development programme. Material assistance may be in form of the following :-
 - Food Banks, in case of families which are hungry
 - Financial assistance
 - Prepared meals for Beneficiaries in training
- Other exception as part of material assistance can be made either based on the assessment of the situation of an individual being assisted or social worker assessment.

Social Work Services

This will be cases that require professional intervention either as result of the awareness programme, individuals will come forward to present their cases and the development centres will refer them to social workers for intervention. This will be important for youth in conflict with the law, those coming out of substance abuse treatment facility and young women experiencing domestic violence.

Pillar 3: Skills Development

Skills development remains a key area for social transformation and poverty alleviation in South Africa. The training must mainly be relevant to the demand to the economic sector and it must result in the following:-

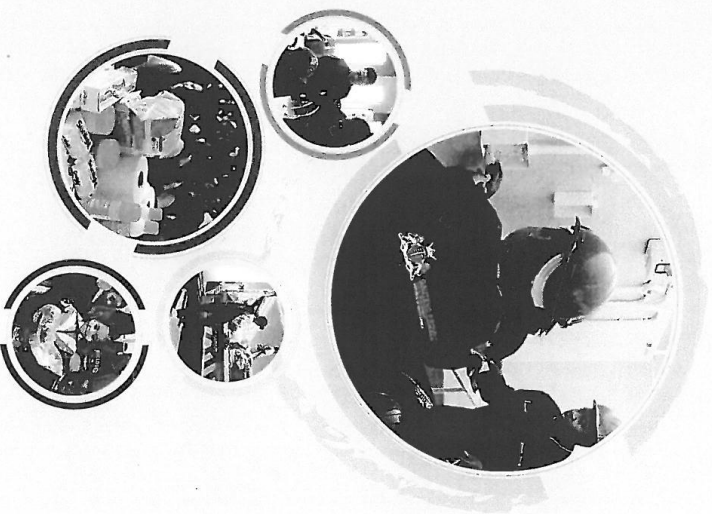
- Individual being able to secure a job opportunity
- Individual or group being able to start a business enterprise

The skills development training will have the following three Bouquet namely:-

Life skills – as a soft skills project
Technical skill – what enables an individual to be technically knowledgeable in a sector
Business skill - skill that enable an individual to understand the business component of the technical sector e.g. costing, and business management requirements.
(this is especially useful for those wanting to become entrepreneurs).

Pillar 4: Entrepreneurial Development

- Provision of incubation services and mentorship.
- Provision of entrepreneurship education, in relation to:
 - Business start-up
 - Maintaining business longevity
 - Access other resources and services
 - Business management/ operation skills – task must be provided



Sustainable Livelihoods
and Youth Development