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Understanding the dynamics that enable and constrain the implementation of learnership programmes as skills development interventions in South Africa: A descriptive analysis of learnership programmes funded by the Education Training And Development Practices –Sector Education Training Authority (ETDP Seta)

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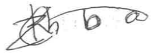
RESEARCH TOPIC: UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS THAT ENABLE AND CONSTRAIN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMMES AS SKILLS DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA. A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMMES FUNDED BY THE EDUCATION TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES –SECTOR EDUCATION TRAINING AUTHORITY (ETDP SETA)

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21 SEPTEMBER 2023

DECLARATION

By submitting this research report in both electronic and hard copy formats, I affirm that the entire work contained therein is my own original work, that I am the sole writer thereof (save to the extent openly otherwise stated), and that reproduction and publication thereof by the University of the Witwatersrand will not invade any third party rights and that I have not before in its entirety or in part submitted to achieve any qualification anywhere.

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to understand the dynamics that enable and determine the implementation of Education, Training, and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA) funded learnerships (2017/18 and 2018/2019) as critical skills development interventions in South Africa.

The qualitative analysis considered the viewpoints of learners, host employers, and ETDP SETA Officials. Several key enablers have been identified, namely workplace-based learning, effective mentoring and monitoring, and evaluation of learnerships. On the other hand, certain key constraints have also been identified including limited involvement of corporate employers, inadequate resourcing, lack of educational progression, and the delays in issuing of certificates. It is important to note that the latter two constraints directly affect the employability of beneficiaries.

The study recommended that the ETDP SETA improve its efforts to cultivate a consistent understanding of the national skills development imperatives amongst its stakeholders; incentivise employers to enhance their participation in workplace-based training and enforce policies and legislation that promoted improved pathways and connections to the rest of the PSET system. The SETA should consider enforcing measures that promote the timely issuing of certificates.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research report to my supportive family and friends. Thank you so much for your unconditional love, patience, support, and belief in me to complete and obtain the M Ed degree.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study expedition was long and arduous, but I thank God, the Almighty who provided me with the strength to endure the excursion. Indeed, it was a period of hard work and good learning curve. To my supervisor, Dr Presha Ramsarup, you are such an inspiration and caring mentor. I have learnt a lot under your guidance, even in times when I wanted to give up, you were there to spur me on. I appreciate your endless motivation, patience, and academic input. You were indeed a resourceful supervisor.

My sincere gratitude goes to the officials at the ETDP SETA who granted me permission to conduct this study within the Education, Training, and Development sector. To the officials at ETDP SETA and the TVET colleges who participated in the study by sharing their views, thoughts, and insights, I truly appreciate all your inputs. Thank you for sacrificing your valuable time and without your support there would not have been a research study.

I thank you.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
EC	Eastern Cape
ECD	Early childhood development
ETDPSETA	Education, Training, and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
ETD	Education, Training, and Development
FET	Further Education and Training
GP	Gauteng
HSRDS-SA	Human Resource Development Strategy - South Africa
HEI	Higher education institution
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
NCV	National Certificate Vocational
NSF	National Skills Fund
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NDP	National Development Plan
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
NSDP	National Skills Development Plan
NQF	National Qualification Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PSET	Post-School Education and Training
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
STWT	School to Work Transition
UoTs	Universities of Technology
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
VET	Vocational Education and Training

WBE	Work-Based Experience

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and introduction

The study aimed to understand the dynamics of the Education, Training, and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA) funded learnerships (2017/18 and 2018/2019) that enable and determine the implementation of learnerships as skills development interventions in South Africa. Addressing skills shortages continues to be a major concern for South Africa within a context of socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and inequality. Whilst the South African government is struggling to address the rapid growth of youth unemployment, there is recognition of the important contribution that skilled workforce play in advancing economic transformation (Kraak, 2015). The South African government has contributed significantly to skills programmes and interventions to drive employment, particularly for youth (Graham et al., 2019). As the key organisations that mediate between education and work, SETAs are responsible for the development of a skills pipeline through promoting and supporting learning interventions such as learnerships (Motala et al., 2020).

There have been developments and transitions in the South African economy from the apartheid era to the democratic one. The apartheid era has been characterised by decades of systemic and social bias, racial segregation, and a system of selective developmental and economic exclusion (Arends et al., 2016). It excluded and denied Black South Africans the access to education and decent employment whose effects are evident in the triple challenge of poverty, unemployment, and inequality that is endemic in South Africa (Arends et al., 2016).

In South Africa, black and coloured youth face the highest levels of unemployment compared to their Indian and white counterparts (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). Individuals with limited levels of education are disproportionately affected by unemployment (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). Of great concern are the three million youth (15-24 years) who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) (37.0%), the rate climbing 4.6 percentage points higher than the previous year (Statistics South Africa, 2022). This phenomenon

exacerbates South Africa's poor human development trajectory as the labour force is characterised by an oversupply of people with low skill levels.

The most contributing factor to youth unemployment, often described as a "ticking time bomb" in South Africa, is the limited growth in the number of jobs that can match the number of new workers entering the labour market each year (Arends et al., 2016). Furthermore, the skills mismatch has been cited as a key driver of unemployment and youth unemployment (De Lannoy et al., 2018; Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). In the context of this thesis, skills mismatch refers to the phenomenon where job creation in South Africa has been skewed to the tertiary sector which typically requires higher skills levels than those of the average job seeker (De Lannoy et al., 2018). Structurally, the South African economy has shifted away from activities based in the primary sectors of agriculture and mining, where the majority of workers with lower skill levels are employed, towards more knowledge-based activities in the tertiary and secondary sectors that require higher skills (Davies & Farquharson, 2004). Internationally, there is a greater demand for skilled labour, making it difficult for South Africa to compete globally because of its oversupply of low skilled workforce which is exacerbated by failures of the basic and post-secondary education and training (PSET) systems (De Lannoy et al., 2018). Young people enter the labour market with a relatively low skills profile, which further limits their job prospects (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). The concerning high dropout rate from secondary school in South Africa where half of the learners that start in Grade one does not reach Grade twelve fuels the problem (Spaull, 2015). Furthermore, the poor quality of education in socio-economically disadvantaged schools leaves mainly black African children illiterate (Ibid.). The poor participation rates in higher education, i.e., TVET colleges and universities, persist as a concern in South Africa, when compared to other middle-income countries (Graham et al., 2019).

Generally, the South African government has invested significantly in skills development programmes and interventions to drive employment, particularly for youth employment (Graham et al., 2019). In response to employment creation, the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) were established in terms of the Skills Development Act 97

of 1998 to remedy the shortcomings of the PSET system and to spearhead skills development within specific economic sectors.

The National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS III) provides strategic direction to the SETAs to address skills shortages and the "skills mismatch" (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). It notes that "relevant, sector-based programmes addressing the needs of unemployed people and first-time entrants to the labour market will be developed and piloted by the SETAs" (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). Learnership programmes are one of the flagship initiatives of the SETAs intended to improve the employability of low-skilled youth, and drive growth in employment and labour absorption (Motala et al., 2020). The ETDP SETA is one of 21 SETAs that have been mandated to facilitate skills development and employment creation in the education, training, and development (ETD) sector through the implementation of the NSDS III goals (ETDP SETA, 2018). During the 2017/18 and the 2018/19 financial years, respectively, the ETDP-SETA enrolled a total of 2000 unemployed youth in learnership programmes as part of its funded workplace-based skills development programmes (ETDP SETA, 2018). The programme aims to address a broad objective of the NSDS III, which is "to promote a skills development system and architecture that effectively responds to the needs of the labour market and social equity" (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011).

1.2 Problem Statement

Responding to skills challenges and attempting to even out the learning to work transitions, the White Paper recognises the inadequate skills levels and poor readiness of new entrants into the labour market (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012). This specifically talks to the new entrants leaving formal secondary and tertiary education and entering the labour market for the first time. The situation is even worse for those who lack any form of formal education, lack basic numeracy and literacy skills, and thus lack the necessary entry-level skills and work experience.

To address the problem of an under-educated and under-skilled workforce, the South African government proposed implementation of the NSDS to address socio-economic challenges faced by South Africa, including problems of economic growth and inequality, while simultaneously addressing social problems of a high level of unemployment. However, Babb (2005) agrees that unemployment and unemployability are an ongoing challenge in South Africa, despite substantive financial investments emanating from the skills development levy system.

The NDSD III concluded on March 31, 2020, and the National Skills Development Plan (NSDP) 2030 was launched on April 1, 2020. The NSDP aims to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the skills development system by implementing seven strategic goals, designed to address the key skills needs identified for South Africa (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019). One of the strategic goals is to ensure that South Africa has an educated, skilled, and capable workforce that will contribute towards economic growth, job creation, and social development (Schroeder et al., 2019). In line with the NSDP, the learnership programmes form part of skills development system that aims to address skills development challenges and improve workplace training in the country. Consistent with the purpose of the learnership programme, ETDP SETA formulated learning programmes that address skills development requirements in the country and in the ETD sector specifically (Motala et al., 2020).

A review of youth employability programmes in South Africa, including learnerships, found that these programmes were most impactful when providing youth with psychosocial support and guidance, technical skills training, connections to educational institutions and the labour market, as well as a stipend (De Lannoy, 2019). However, contradictory opinions exist regarding what enables or deters the implementation of learnerships relating to their socio-economic objective, namely, to serve to improve the employability and living standards of learners (Louw, 2009). Furthermore, it is evident that the focus of role players such as SETAs and policymakers has been primarily on meeting performance targets and completion rates, while little consideration has been given to learners' actual opinions and experiences (Louw, 2009). Despite the overall confidence reported by the key role players

responsible for the facilitation of learnerships, independent researchers have been critical of their success, citing high dropout rates, poor recruitment techniques, and poor support mechanisms as some of the main reasons for learnership programmes inability to respond to the unemployment and skills challenges (Letsoalo et al., 2007). It is against this backdrop that a core purpose of this study is to understand the dynamics that enable and constrain the implementation of learnerships as critical skills development interventions in South Africa.

1.3. Research aims and sub-objectives

1.3.1 Aim of the study

The study explored the dynamics that enabled and constrained the implementation of learnerships through an example of ETDP SETA funded learnerships that were implemented during 2017/18 and 2018/2019.

1.3.2 Sub-objectives

i) To understand learner`s and host employers' perceptions of the employability of learners.
ii) To find out the programme design features of learnerships that promote improved employability.
iii) To determine the enablers and barriers to the implementation of learnerships as critical skills development interventions.

1.4 Research Questions

1.4.1 Main research question

What are the dynamics enabling and constraining the implementation of ETDP SETA funded learnerships as skills development interventions?

1.4.2 Sub-questions of the study

i) What are the perceptions of learners, ETDP SETA programme managers, and host employers of the employability of learners?

ii) Which design features of learnerships contribute to improved employability of beneficiaries?

1.5 Research Assumptions

It is assumed that the research participants i.e., ETDP SETA programme implementers and the host employers will answer the research questions honestly and candidly based on their experience in the implementation of learnership programmes. It is further assumed that the programme managers and host employers are knowledgeable on programme implementation and that they attempt to be objective in their assessment of programme performance. The researcher further assumed that the programme participants can accurately recall their experience of participating in the learnership programmes given that the research was undertaken about two years post-programme completion.

1.6 The structure of the thesis

The rest of the thesis is organised as follows:

Chapter 1 is the introduction to the South African labour market and skills system structure, including the ETDP SETA. This chapter provides a general overview of what the rest of the report investigates. Chapter 2 is a review of the existing literature to contextualise the study. Chapter 3 describes and justifies the methodological approach that was applied in this study. Chapter 4 describes the key findings that emerged from the data, and chapter 5 locates and discusses the findings within the context of the existing literature and draws similarities and contrasts. Finally, chapter 6 presents the main conclusions and recommendations supported by the findings and highlights the implications for practice, and further suggests potential areas for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Despite the myriad of micro and macro level factors that drive unemployment, particularly for youth, this literature review interrogates the skills mismatch as one of the important drivers of youth unemployment in South Africa, where learnerships are integral in addressing the skills mismatch (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012). Furthermore, the literature review critically appraises the PSET system as being in line with the SETAs and the implementation of learnerships as a flagship programme. It provides an overview of learnerships, the dynamics that enables and deters their implementation as a skills development intervention, and their impact on youth employability and unemployment. Thus, this study attempted to expand on the HSRC's assessment of ETDP SETA funded work-integrated learning programmes that included learnerships (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020) by offering an improved understanding of the dynamics that enable and deter the implementation of learnerships as skills development interventions from the perspective of all the key stakeholders (host employers and SETA project managers) involved in learnerships.

In this chapter, learnerships in relation to the skills mismatch are discussed. The chapter commences by discussing the concepts of learnerships and their legislative and policy context for learnerships. This is followed by locating learnerships within the PSET system and its role in addressing skills mismatch. The chapter further provides an overview of the existing literature on learnerships with a focus on the enablers and barriers to implementation and learnerships' impact on the employability and employment outcomes of learners. It further interrogates how employability is defined in the literature and concludes by describing the HSRC Theory of Change for Learnerships and Kirkpatrick's four-level model for evaluation as lenses through which the findings of this study were interpreted.

2.2 Overview of Learnerships

South Africa's legacy of inequality in education and training necessitated an inclusive and resolute policy, which is aimed at fast-tracking the process of skills acquisition, through improved employability and living standards for its workforce (Kraak, 2008). To redress this legacy of inequality, a skills development policy proposed the concept of learnerships as a method of vocational workplace training. This policy was promulgated in the form of the NSDS and legislated in the Skills Development Act (97 of 1998), which was formally introduced in 2001. The Skills Development Act (97 of 1998) (SDA) consequently proposed skills development programmes such as learnerships to afford opportunities to previously excluded workers to engage in learning through education and training, which translates into a recognised qualification. Learnerships provide the skills and knowledge required to perform in an occupation and link all the components in such a way as to facilitate the employability of a learner on successful completion of the learnership programme (De Jager et al., 2002).

The learnership programme is intended to assist the ETDP SETA to achieve its strategic outcome-oriented goals that are aligned with South Africa's national skills development strategy, the NSDP. One of the most important directives from the then Department of Education (now the Department of Higher Education and Training) since the publication of the White Paper 3 – A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (July 1997) – came through the promulgation of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) in October 2008. The NSDP's goal is the achievement of economic growth, employment creation, and social development in South Africa (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019). Thus, the learnership system's objective is to "redress the unequal access to education, training, and employment opportunities, as well as skills shortages in the labour market for a specific competency" (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020). This suggests that, in addition to skills development, learnerships must fulfil an employment creation function as well. This is consistent with other scholars' views of a learnership system as a tool to address unemployment, skills shortages, and the skills mismatch that characterises the South African labour market (Davies & Farquharson, 2004;

Visser & Kruss, 2009). This is achieved by providing skills to unemployed youth and increasing their opportunities of gaining employment (Davies & Farquharson, 2004).

The White Paper on PSET regards learnerships, apprenticeships, and internships as critical interventions to link education to the workplace (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019). Visser and Kruss (2009) argue that the aim of learnerships cannot be simply understood as training for skills, but learnerships also need to address the needs of vulnerable groups, including women, youth, and the unemployed which is a key social equity concern in South Africa. In other words, other authors also recognise the socio-economic transformational objective of learnerships.

Given the potential of the learnership programmes and their ability to improve employability and the living conditions of the learners, there are dynamics that unpack what enables and constrain learners from accessing the labour market and provide opinions on how learners perceive the learnerships programmes funded by the ETDP SETA (Motala et al., 2020). It was anticipated that such an understanding would provide a measure of how well the theoretical courses and experiential learning were aligned, and the possible difference such collaboration made to the quality of skills and capabilities envisaged in the learnership programme. The White Paper highlights the importance of collaboration between colleges and employers in the provision of learnerships and other learning interventions, with the aim of enabling clear linkages between educational provision and the labour market (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019).

2.3 Legislative and Policy Context for Learnerships

Skill development practices of the apartheid era impacted on several aspects of the education system, i.e., access, quality, and reduced funding for coloured, Indian, and African people (Badroodien, 2004). Beyond the impact on the education levels of non-whites, these educational practices also translated into labour market practices that ultimately had negative impacts on the overall employment rates and economy in South Africa (Gamble, 2022; McGrath, 1996). The results of the previously mentioned practices meant that the democratic government needed to develop policies and strategies aimed at transforming the various structures within the economy to bring about equality (Gamble, 2022; McGrath, 1996). Likewise, legislative and policy frameworks for learnerships were

introduced with an aim to redress the legacy of apartheid-era discrimination and misrepresentations in skills development, access to training, and equality of opportunity (Horwitz, 2013). The South African Council for Higher Education (CHE) Articulation Policy revised the higher education sub-qualifications framework (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019).

Several new policies were introduced by the post-1994 government, which led to the formation of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), which later led to the promulgation of the Skills Development Act (SDA) of 1998 and the Skills Development Levies Act (SDLA) of 1999. The promulgation of the two key pieces of skills development legislation created institutional arrangements to facilitate implementation of skills development in the country and put mechanisms in place for funding of skills development initiatives driven by the government. The SDA brought about the establishment of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) (McGrath & Badroodien, 2006).

Through the SDA, skills development programmes such as learnerships were introduced to provide opportunities to previously excluded workers and previously disadvantaged persons to engage in education and training programmes that lead to a recognised qualification. Allais (2013, p. 206) indicates that the focus was on two types of skill formation: (1) vocational education and training focused on developing specialised skills for an occupation and vocational competence, and (2) the development of general skills aimed at employability in the labour market.

The NSDS has undergone three phases, i.e. NSDS I (2001–2005), NSDS II (2005-2010), and NSDS III (2011 -2016). NSDS I and II were centred on the achievement of five objectives that were concerned with the delivery of high-quality lifelong learning initiatives to workers, formal enterprises, small businesses, and labour market entrants to promote employability, stimulate economic growth and job creation, and raise socio-economic living standards (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019). NSDS III emphasised the prioritisation of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the skills development system (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019).

The NSDS III expired on the March 31, 2020, and was replaced by the NSDP (2030), which was launched on 1 April 2020. The overarching goal of the NSDP is to ensure that, by 2030, the vision of the White Paper for PSET of a responsive, and well-coordinated PSET system is achieved. This system is meant to provide access to a diversity of quality education and training opportunities, wherein students have a reasonable opportunity to achieve success, and with improved linkages between education and the world of work (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019).

The White Paper for PSET affirms the critical role of the PSET system in addressing systemic challenges including the skills deficit and skills mismatch, key drivers of youth unemployment, to achieve inclusive growth and employment creation as envisioned in the National Development Plan (National Planning Commission, 2013). The White Paper further emphasises the accurate identification of current and future skills demands as being critical for the realisation of the goals of the NDP, the New Growth Path, and the Industrial Policy Action Plan. For this to be achieved, the White Paper calls for improved performance of the PSET system, thus, reiterating the goals of the NSDP (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013).

In sum, it is evident that South Africa has a very enabling legislative and policy environment that is responsive to changes in global and local labour markets. The current skills development policy landscape emphasises public-private collaboration in education and training provision, and learnerships are critical in this regard. A key characteristic of the learnership programme as a skills development system in South Africa is that it has been shaped by a complex consensus between government, organised labour, and organised business, facilitated by a series of tripartite structures (Visser & Kruss, 2009).

2.4 The Skills Mismatch as Driver of Youth Unemployment

The skills mismatch, which is the result of a disconnect between supply and demand in the labour market, emerges as an important driver of youth unemployment and youth NEET in South Africa (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). Learnerships are critical to addressing the skills mismatch, as their design necessitates collaboration between educational institutions (supply) and industry (demand) to overcome this disconnect. Learnerships as vocational

programmes are located within the post-secondary education and training system, and inefficiencies within this system in South Africa potentially undermine the intended impact of learnerships. This is despite vocational education and training systems being lauded globally for the positive impact on the reduction of youth unemployment and NEET-hood (Solga et al., 2014).

A systematic overview of the drivers of youth unemployment in South Africa, confirmed that micro and macro level drivers have been fuelling the scourge (De Lannoy et al., 2018). Micro-level factors including the high cost of work-seeking, youth lacking basic skills (literacy, numeracy, technical, and soft skills), a lack of social capital, and a lack of work experience continue to impede young people's chances of finding employment (Ibid.). At the macro-level, economic growth has been inadequate and has not been able to create enough jobs to absorb the growing labour force (Ibid). There is no consensus regarding the relationship between economic growth and job creation, with some scholars arguing that economic growth has been jobless, and others arguing that there has been job creation despite low growth (De Lannoy et al., 2018). Nevertheless, educational deficits and the skills mismatch have been identified as significant macro-level drivers of youth unemployment (ibid).

The skills mismatch persists because of quality deficits in the South African education system that leave most school leavers with inadequate skills to enter the labour market (De Lannoy et al., 2018). Today, this legacy is evident in an unequal and fragmented basic and post-secondary education system that is predominantly divided along socio-economic lines (Marumo & Sebolaaneng, 2019). These systems fail to equip the youth with the relevant technical and workplace related soft skills that are required by employers (De Lannoy et al., 2018). Disadvantaged schools are characterized by poor literacy outcomes and high dropout rates that put black youth at a disadvantage. This, in a local and global economy that places a premium on high skill levels due to a growing demand for the tertiary sector, the knowledge economy, and digital skills (De Lannoy et al., 2018; Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Marumo & Sebolaaneng, 2019).

It is argued that interventions targeted at addressing youth unemployment have limited interaction with employers and thus fail to equip youth with the skills that are of interest to employers (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). In an evaluation of the NSDS III, it was found that only 300 000 of the two million registered companies in South Africa at the time were levy paying and members of the SETAs (National Skills Authority, 2018). The evidence demonstrates that the limited participation in workplace-based learning was pronounced among small enterprises (Franz et al., 2022; Rankin et al., 2015).

The skills mismatch has been recognized by the South African government, as expressed by President Cyril Ramaphosa in the State of the Nation Address (2020):

> *"As the South African government, we are scaling up youth employment services by working with TVET colleges and the private sector to ensure that more learners receive practical experience in the workplace to complete their training".*

Allais (2013); Ngcwangu (2019); and Wedekind (2014) stated that it is apparent that the word 'skill' is related to vocational education. Allais (2013 p. 29) notes that "skill is seen as a salvation for poor people". From this, it is apparent that the perceptions of vocational education, and, in turn, 'skill development' has not changed much. This raises a question of concern as to, what difference will all the reforms, policies and measures make if the underlying perceptions and challenges and problems remain?

Allais (2013); Ngcwangu (2019); and Wedekind (2014) also note that unemployment remains a priority on the political agenda even over twenty years after the democratic government came into power. Wedekind (2014) indicates that there is an unwavering belief within society that investment in human capital development is the solution to socio-economic challenges experienced in South Africa. Central to this perceived solution is the role of Further Education Training colleges in the country (Ngcwangu, 2019). Wedekind (2014) points out that state strategies for addressing challenges related to unemployment and economic development have been focussed on the role education must play.

2.5 Locating learnerships within the PSET system and its role in addressing the skills mismatch.

The National Skills Development Plan (2030) recognises the need for skills development programmes that respond to the needs of the labour market to drive economic growth. It further notes that the economy's skills needs are dynamic and evolving rapidly. The PSET system has been identified as critical in addressing the skills mismatch, and ultimately, youth unemployment (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013).

Pauw (2006) argues that the purpose of the PSET system is to ensure that individual and public investment in education is directed towards the skills needed in the world of work. However, several authors highlighted that the persisting inefficiencies in the PSET systems undermined this purpose since the system is often described as central to the youth unemployment problem (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). In the South Africa education and training, Bhorat et al., (2020, p. 15) notes that "expanding access to PSET opportunities to students who were previously excluded will only yield dividends if PSET institutions provide quality education and training programmes that adequately prepare students for entry into the labour market".

Participation rates in PSET in South Africa remain very low partly, due to negative perceptions of vocational education as inferior to university education, cumbersome application processes, high entry level requirements, and high fees (Branson et al., 2015). The vocational system is characterised using outdated curricula that is out of step with the realities and the workplace due to scant employer involvement in its design, and limited articulation with the university system (Ibid.).

There is evidence that employers in South Africa are risk averse, which is attributed to distrust in the quality of the basic education and PSET systems in South Africa (De Lannoy et al., 2018). This is not only true for South Africa but a global phenomenon where employers cite the lack of skilled youth as the most common reason for not filling a job (Jayaram & Engmann, 2014). As a result, employers place higher demands on the youth when recruiting for entry level positions. Employers have been found to demand higher

certificates for even unskilled positions and require work experience and basic skills that they perceive young people to be lacking (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Marumo & Sebolaaneng, 2019).

Research conducted in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa revealed that employers require three main types of skills sets when recruiting youth: cognitive skills (critical thinking, literacy, and numeracy), non-cognitive skills (life or behavioural skills), and technical skills (i.e., skills geared towards a specific occupation) (Jayaram & Engmann, 2014). The study found that secondary schools were not adequately prepared to impart these new skills that are required by employers, and the problem was compounded by the limited interaction between educators and industry, "with educators generally unaware of the skills that are required in today's workplace (Ibid., p. 223).

Globally, in developed and developing countries Vocational Education and Training (VET) that combines theoretical and practical learning (i.e., a dual programme), and that aligns education curricula with employers' needs is considered a necessary precondition for the employability and productivity of the youth (Audu et al., 2013; Zimmermann et al., 2013). Germany's VET system has been lauded for its comparatively low youth unemployment and NEET rates (Solga et al., 2014).

2.6 The role of the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) in addressing the skills mismatch.

SETAs are critical in this partnership between educational institutions and employers and are supposed to function as intermediaries between education attainment (theoretical learning as offered by TVET colleges) and workplace experience (practical learning as offered by employers) (Bilsland et al., 2019). This essentially means that SETAs are responsible for developing a series of sector-specific skills plans that are guided by the current NSDP strategy (Bilsland et al., 2019). The objective of this strategy is to ensure zincreased access to skills development and training opportunities that contribute to economic growth, employment creation, and social development to redress past injustices.

The strategy clearly maintains that SETAs are mechanisms through which this objective might be realised (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019).

It is within this framework that SETAs work towards meeting the skills demand through skills development programmes to reskill and upskill individuals (Bhorat et al., 2020). Furthermore, with the high youth unemployment and youth NEET in South Africa, millions of young people need to be equipped with the skills required by the world of work. The role of the ETDP SETA as an intermediary body is postulated as a key component in linking the world of work and education (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019). SETAs are meant to act as a bridge between formal education and the labour market by facilitating workplace-based education and training opportunities (Bilsland et al., 2019). A key example of the skills development programmes currently promoted by the SETAs are learnership programmes that encompass a theoretical component offered by the TVET colleges and a workplace-based component offered by the public and private sector employers.

As one of the 21 SETAs, the ETDP SETA is a public entity established in terms of Section 9(1) of the Skills Development Act, No. 97 of 1998, to advance skills levels in accordance with the National Skills Development Strategy III (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019). The mandate of the ETDP SETA is to promote and facilitate the development and improvement of the skills profile of the sector's workforce to benefit employers and employees in the ETD sector. Through its Five-Year Strategic Plan (2016-2018), the ETDP SETA implemented several skills development programmes which include but are not limited to the following:

i) Supporting Further Education and Training (FET) institutions to be responsive to the ETD sector and national priorities.
ii) Increasing student access to and graduate output in higher and further education institutions.
iii) Support for TVET and HEI lecturer development, and progression into high-level and support for work-based learning.

In terms of youth development, the ETDP SETA has a dedicated skills development programme for unemployed youth in its Annual Performance Plan (APP) known as Skills Programme 4 – Access, success, and progression into high level skills and support for work experiential learning and progression into high level skills and support for work (ETDP SETA, 2018). Programme 4, with a learnership as a sub-programme, aims to develop young people for employability or self-employment.

2.7 Enablers and barriers to learnerships' implementation as skills development interventions

A review of youth employability programmes in South Africa, including learnerships, found that these programmes were most impactful when providing youth with psychosocial support and guidance, technical skills training, connections to educational institutions and the labour market, as well as a stipend (De Lannoy, 2019). However, contradictory opinions exist regarding what enables or deters the implementation of learnerships relating to their socio-economic objective, namely, to serve to improve the employability and living standards of learners (Louw, 2009). Furthermore, it is evident that the focus of role players such as SETAs and policymakers has been primarily on meeting performance targets and completion rates, while little consideration has been given to learners' actual opinions and experiences (Louw, 2009). Despite the overall confidence reported by the key role players responsible for the facilitation of learnerships, independent researchers have been critical of their success, citing high dropout rates, poor recruitment techniques, and poor support mechanisms as some of the main reasons for learnership programmes inability to respond to the unemployment and skills challenges (Letsoalo et al., 2007). It is against this backdrop that a core purpose of this study is to understand the dynamics that enable and constrain the implementation of learnerships as critical skills development interventions in South Africa.

Evidence shows that the enrolment rates in learnership and apprenticeship systems are significantly lower compared to enrolment in public higher education institutions and that these programmes are limited in reach (Kruss et al., 2012). Learnerships were concentrated

in the metropolitan, densely populated, and more affluent provinces (i.e., Gauteng, the Western Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal) (Ibid.). This coincides with the finding that larger firms, concentrated in urban, affluent provinces, were more likely to implement learnerships, than smaller firms (Rankin et al., 2015). This phenomenon is attributed to the design of learnerships where the subsidisation of these programmes benefits larger firms and is biased against smaller firms (Ibid.). This design limitation ultimately inhibits the training and employment of lower-skilled workers in smaller firms (Ibid.) which is counterproductive to the objectives of learnerships. Thus, this section interrogates the factors that enables and deters the implementation of these programmes and the achievement of their objectives.

A carefully designed, fair, transparent, and inclusive recruitment and selection process that involves all key stakeholders emerges as an enabler to the successful implementation of learnerships (Davies & Farquharson, 2004). Selection criteria should be clear and linked to the objectives of learnerships to ensure the right learners are selected (Ibid.). At the individual level, learner motivation for enrolling in the learnership emerges as an important factor that influences retention in these programmes (Naidu, 2019).

Earlier findings demonstrate a trend that participation in learnerships is skewed toward young Black Africans who enter the system with qualifications at intermediate (NQF level 4) to lower skill levels (NQF levels 1 to 3), and that there is no indication of progression above these levels (Kruss et al., 2012). Recent findings suggest that participation in learnerships was biased towards individuals with intermediate skills and that those with lower skills levels were left out (Rankin et al., 2015). Learnerships pitched at NQF levels higher than level four was primarily occupied by White, male beneficiaries (Kruss et al., 2012) which confirms the racial bias in the skills profile of the South African labour force.

The workplace experience component of learnerships is regarded as critical to the success of learnerships (Naidu, 2019). An enabling workplace environment characterised by supportive supervisors and mentors, a structured and well-resourced training programme, and that instituted mechanisms that promoted engagement and communication with

learners was considered critical in the retention of learners on these programmes (Ibid.). The converse also holds, i.e., lack of perceived support from supervisors and mentors, limited engagement and communication with learners, and an unstructured and inadequately resourced workplace training programme contributed to learners dropping out of the programme (Ibid.).

Despite the implementation of a skills development system aimed at addressing racial inequalities, evidence shows that racial inequalities persist. Addressing the high burden of unemployment in South Africa will be determined by developments in the broader socio-economic and political context, not just the ability of firms to create new jobs (Chisholm, 2012). The logic underpinning the government's initiatives in terms of skills development is that the latter would provide opportunities for employment and, in this way, address income inequality and poverty (Chisholm, 2012). If jobs are not available, then skills development will fail to redress racial income inequality and unemployment will remain a driver of this inequality.

2.8 Impact of learnerships on youth employability and employment in South Africa

It is critical for SETAs to assess the impact of their skills development initiatives to ensure that the country's skills development imperatives as outlined in the NSDP, and its predecessor, the NSDS, are achieved.

One of the studies on learnerships was conducted in 2004 and mainly focused on how these new programmes at the time were implemented (Jennings et al., 2004). In 2006, a study focused on the impact of learnerships on employability and found that learnerships improved the employability of learners and the structured workplace learning component was indicated as the determining factor to improve employability (Louw, 2009). Most of the learners found full time employment upon completion of the learnership (Ibid.).

In 2007, the HSRC conducted a study that investigated the employment and learning pathways of learnership beneficiaries (Human Sciences Research Council, 2007). This study characterised the pathways to learning and employment after completing a learnership as zig zagged, i.e., non-linear progression. Upon completion of the learnership,

some learners entered new learnerships at a lower NQF level; others entered learnerships at successive levels; some found jobs in related industries; others found jobs in unrelated fields. The study attributed the zig zag progression to a lack of employment opportunities in South Africa. Most of the learners were employed in full-time jobs upon completion of the learnership or in a related field. The learners felt that the learnerships improved their employability (Human Sciences Research Council, 2007).

A year later, i.e., in 2008, the HSRC was commissioned by MERSETA to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of learnerships and apprenticeship systems and to assess their impact on the demand for and supply of skills for the industry (Mukora et al., 2008). This study was one of the first to include the voices of the various stakeholders involved in learnerships, i.e., training providers, employers, and learners, as opposed to previous studies that only interviewed learnership beneficiaries. The study found that four in every ten (43%) learners who were unemployed upon entry of the programme, and two thirds (67%) who were employed upon entry, were employed upon completion of the learnership in fields related to the training. Most of these learners attributed their finding employment to the learnership (83%) and felt that the learnership improved their technical skills (97%).

The HSRC conducted three case studies related to learnerships that were implemented by the Health and Welfare Seta, the Manufacturing, Engineering, and Related Services Seta (Merseta), and the Financial Services Seta (Fasset) (Mukora et al., 2008). The study found that most beneficiaries who completed learnerships and apprenticeships found employment almost immediately after completing the programme. The majority were employed in the formal sector, primarily in permanent positions. The study concluded that learnerships and apprenticeships produced employable individuals, i.e., equipping them to enter employment. On the contrary, the study found that the employability of learners was compromised by learnerships that were pitched at lower NQF levels than what participants held when they entered the programmes (Ibid.). This supports evidence which found that in recent times (NSDS II) learnerships are increasingly implemented at lower NQF levels compared to previously (NSDS I) (Kruss et al., 2012). The authors identified the need for policy changes that promoted the implementation of learnerships at intermediate to higher

levels to facilitate improved articulation in the PSET system. Mukora et al., (2008) also identified the need to investigate why the SETAs continued to implement learnerships at these basic to low levels. This study further found an imbalance between the acquisition of soft and technical skills on learnerships, with most beneficiaries reporting acquisition of the former. The study identified a mismatch between the adequacy of skills and capabilities developed during the training and those required in the workplace and questioned the extent to which skills certification translated into skills and capabilities that were required in the workplace. The authors thus recommended the strengthening of the structures, frameworks, and mechanisms that enhanced the interaction between SETAs, companies, education and training providers and intermediary organisations to improve the quality of curriculum and assessment standards.

In 2014, the Fibre, Processing, and Manufacturing SETA (FP&M SETA) commissioned a study that assessed the impact of learnerships, apprenticeships and bursaries on learners and determined the extent to which they achieved their objectives (FP & M SETA, 2014). The study found high levels of agreement among employers that the skills of learnership beneficiaries met workplace requirements. Learners emphasised the soft skills (communication, self-esteem, confidence, etc.) that they have acquired during the training. Unemployment dropped from 72% to 44% amongst learners who were unemployed upon entering the programme, and there was an increase in learners' earnings post-completion. However, three years upon completion of the learnership, some learners had not obtained their certificates which could compromise their chances of finding employment as certificates serve as a signal of employability to potential employers (De Lannoy et al., 2018).

Rankin et al., (2015) followed a group of youth over four years and compared the outcomes of those who participated in learnerships to those who had not previously participated in learnerships. This is the first study that tracked the outcomes of learnership beneficiaries longitudinally and compared their outcomes to those of youth who have never participated in learnerships. This study found that learnerships were not achieving its objective of training individuals with low skills levels because the programmes favoured individuals

who already had high skill levels and higher education. Although beneficiaries of learnerships were more likely to be employed compared to those who never participated in learnerships, this benefit faded rapidly over time. At least one year after completion of the learnership, those who completed the learnership were no more likely to be in wage employment compared to others. The study concluded that "learnerships have no impact on employment probabilities except for during and potentially immediately after completion of the learnership" (Ibid.).

Recently, in 2020, the HSRC assessed the impact of ETDP SETA learnerships, internships, work-integrated learning, and bursaries that were implemented in the 2015/16 and the 2018/19 financial years (Motala et al., 2020). The study found that the interventions have exceeded the equity targeting of the previously disadvantaged, i.e., women, youth, and black people (Ibid.). Almost half of learnership beneficiaries (46%) were employed one to five years post-completion, predominantly in full-time employment. More than half (54%) of the beneficiaries indicated that the training was highly relevant to the work that they were doing (Ibid.) Two thirds (69%) of the beneficiaries attributed their finding work to the ETDP SETA intervention (Ibid.). A fifth (21%) of learnership beneficiaries recommended that ETDP SETA provided greater post-programme support to link them with employment.

Although the study found that learnerships improved the employability of the beneficiaries, it also revealed that individuals took part in learnerships that were pitched at lower skill levels than they may already have attained (Ibid.). The study found that not all learnership beneficiaries followed the same trajectories, and that access to the labour market and earning potential was determined by participants' race, gender, and socio-economic status, which reflected South Africa's traditional occupational patterns (Ibid.). African participants, particularly those from a lower socio-economic background, had more complex labour market trajectories than participants from other races and from higher socio-economic groups (Ibid.).

2.9. Theoretical Frameworks: Theory of Change and Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model

A theory of change was developed to inform the implementation of learnerships that were funded by the ETDP SETA (Motala et al., 2020) and was used as a theoretical lens through which the current study aimed to understand the dynamics that enable and deter the implementation of learnerships' as critical skills development interventions. Furthermore, to understand how learnerships potentially contributed to employability, the study used Kirkpatrick's four-level model of evaluation as a theoretical lens model to evaluate educational programmes.

2.9.1 Theory of Change for Learnerships

The narrative statement of the theory of change for learnerships reads as follows: (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020):

> *"If the ETDP SETA invests its resources in the development of systems, guidelines, and a supportive skills development institutional framework, then it will be able to implement the learnership programme. This will allow learners who cannot afford full-time study and those that cannot afford to be on a learning programme that is not directly (or practically) related to their field of work to further their post-school education towards an NQF qualification. This will increase their knowledge and work experience in a cost-effective way and empower them with relevant skills. This will lead to an increase in the number of learners with job-ready skills and competencies, which in turn will enhance their opportunities for career mobility, and progression in the workplace due to the acquired qualifications. This will lead to an overall improvement in the qualifications of the workforce, with increased earning capacity and sustained employment".*

Implicit in this theory of change is a recognition of critical elements that need to be in place at the institutional level for the effective and efficient implementation of learnerships. These include sufficient resource investments and the development of skills development guidelines and frameworks (Motala et al., 2020). According to the narrative statement of the theory of change, learnerships are intended to make PSET accessible to those who are

excluded; equip learners with job-relevant skills; facilitate access to sustainable employment that promotes career progression; and improve the socio-economic living standards of beneficiaries. Thus, learnerships should facilitate both skills development and improved employability, as well as job creation for the intended beneficiaries.

The hypotheses for the learnership programme are articulated as follows (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020):

"ETDP SETAs learnership intervention enables beneficiaries who cannot afford full-time study, and those that cannot afford to be on a learning programme that is not directly (or practically) related to their field of work to":

I. Enhance their skills and qualifications in a way that meets the demand for scarce and critical skills.
II. Gain access to new or enhanced employment or self-employment opportunities, including the possibility of career mobility.

Thus, based on this hypothesis, learnerships should provide individuals who cannot afford to study, access to PSET and, upon completion, equip them with scarce and critical skills, employment opportunities that enables career progression, and increased earnings. **Error! Reference source not found.** demonstrates that for learnerships to achieve their objectives of supporting beneficiaries to be employable and to transition into sustained employment with opportunities for career advancement and higher earnings, several building blocks need to be in place. These include:

I. Employers who are willing to host learners.
II. Theoretical and workplace learning that are job relevant and address scarce and critical skills.
III. Experienced mentors.
IV. Collaboration between education providers and employers.
V. Learners receiving certificates upon completion of the learnership.

This study assessed the ETDP SETA funded learnerships against these critical building blocks to understand the dynamics that enable and deter the implementation of learnerships as skills development interventions.

2.9.2 Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model

The study drew from the Kirkpatrick four-level evaluation model to inform the methodological design of the evaluation, and the data collection instruments. This model's emphasis on the assessment of programme outcomes was especially useful for this study as it allowed the researcher to carefully think through the possible unintended consequences of a skills development programme and how these could lead to potential challenges for young people who access them. This theory's main conceptualisation of the four levels of reaction which are briefly discussed below, provides insights into how programme beneficiaries perceived the impact of the learnerships on their employment outcomes.

Kirkpatrick's model is a commonly used model to evaluate education and training programmes. The model comprises four levels, namely reaction, learning, behaviour, and results. Each consecutive level of the model signifies a more precise measure of the effectiveness of a training programme. Bates (2004) argues that Kirkpatrick's Evaluation Model is by far the most popular approach used to evaluate training that takes place in organisations. He further asserts that the model "has provided a straightforward system or language for talking about training outcomes and the kinds of information that can be provided to assess the extent to which training programs have achieved certain objectives" (Bates, 2004, p. 341).

The first level, i.e., reaction, of the evaluation, focuses on the participants' reaction to the programme. At this level, the evaluator had a clear indication of the success of the programme or how the participants experienced it. Under level 1 the focus was on the learner's reactions to the program (Fernandez-Rio et al., 2017). The second level, i.e., learning, concerns itself with content evaluation, where participants were required to indicate whether they learned anything from participating in the programme. A favourable outcome includes a change in attitude, improved knowledge, and an increase in skill sets

(Fernandez-Rio et al., 2017). In this study, students who have participated in the learnership programme were asked a series of questions to establish whether they have learned anything from participating in the programme. The third level, i.e., behaviour, of the model evaluates behaviour and assesses the extent to which participants applied the knowledge and skills they had acquired. The fourth level, i.e., results, evaluates the results. An example of this would be whether a programme achieved the goals it set out to achieve at the start of the programme.

Kirkpatrick's model draws attention to centering the perspective of participants to better understand the barriers and challenges that the learnership programme might present. Examining the shift in attitudes of young people towards a programme is valuable for informing the ways in which we approach skills development and training programmes because young people are not a homogeneous group.

2.10 Conclusion

Twenty-eight years post the democratic transition in South Africa, the educational and ultimately the economic trajectories of Black youth from poor socio-economic backgrounds continue to be subservient to that of their counterparts from different racial and socio-economic backgrounds. The evidence shows that Black youth today remain disproportionately affected by unemployment and NEET-hood despite higher levels of education than their predecessors.

The disconnect between the supply and demand side of labour, i.e., the skills mismatch, continues to be the main driver of youth unemployment. This is despite an enabling legislative and policy environment that aims to bridge the divide between education and the world of work that perpetuates this skills mismatch. Learnerships, due to its location in the vocational education and training system and their design that combines academic learning and practical workplace-based training, are critical to addressing the skills mismatch. However, learnerships remain limited in reach and their ability to significantly improve the employability of learners and their access to sustainable employment remains questionable.

This chapter demonstrated mixed results regarding the impact of learnerships on youth employability and employment. Learnerships do seem to promote employment creation for learners, especially for individuals who have completed learnerships that were pitched at levels higher than NQF level four.

There are questions related to the quality and relevance of training offered in learnerships and its responsiveness to the labour market, as the evidence suggests a lack of progression within these programmes and limited articulation with the rest of the PSET system. The dynamics that enable the implementation of learnerships include an enabling legislative and policy environment and effective workplace-based learning. Factors that deter learnerships' implementation as critical skills development interventions include the delivery of programmes at low NQF levels and ineffective workplace-based learning that is characterised by inadequate resources and limited mentorship and supervision.

There is a dearth of studies that survey all the stakeholders involved in the implementation of learnerships, as they mostly focus solely on learnership beneficiaries. The study aimed to understand the dynamics that enable and deter learnerships' implementation as skills development interventions and their perceived impact on employability from the perspectives of the various stakeholders involved in the implementation of learnerships. It evaluated learnerships through the lenses of the HSRC-developed theory of change for learnerships and Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model. The next chapter describes the methodologies that were used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1. Introduction

This section provides an overview of the methodological approach employed in the study. The aim of the study was to understand the dynamics that enable and deter the implementation of learnerships as critical skills development interventions. The study focuses on ETDP SETA-funded learnerships that were implemented during the 2017/18 and 2018/2019 financial years.

To address the study objective, a qualitative, theory-based evaluation approach was undertaken. The sections that follow elaborate on the approach, the data collection and instrument design, data management, data analysis, and ethical principles that were followed during the study.

3.2. Research approach and design

3.2.1 A qualitative approach

The study followed a qualitative research approach. Contrary to a surface description of a large sample of a population, qualitative research offers a deeper understanding of a specific organisation, event, or intervention. Qualitative research is described as a broad umbrella term for research methodologies that describe and explain a person's experiences, behaviours, interactions, and social contexts without the use of statistical procedures or quantification (Fossey et al., 2002). This study focused on the individual experiences and perceptions of learnership programmes.

A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because it sought to understand, through first-hand experience, the dynamics that enable and deter the implementation of learnerships as skills development interventions and their perceived impact on the employability of beneficiaries from the perspectives of the various stakeholders, i.e., learnership beneficiaries, ETDP SETA programme managers, and the host employers.

3.2.2 Selection of Sample

Sampling includes choosing a subgroup for study from a larger group. The study sample is used to make an approximation about the larger group. Sampling is crucial in a study because it is impossible to include everyone due to time and cost restrictions. It is very important to set clear borders on who should be included or excluded in the study.

Due to the qualitative nature of the research and the difficulty experienced in locating the learnership beneficiaries, the sampling lent itself to less structured protocols to select the respondents, i.e., non-probability sampling (Etikan & Bala, 2017). In non-probability sampling, contrary to probability sampling, not all elements in the universe have an equal chance of being selected for participation in the study (Ibid.). Hence, the findings generated cannot be generalised to the population.

Purposive sampling was used to select the learnership beneficiaries. According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (1972), purposive sampling involves the selection of variables to be included in the sample based on the suitability of their characteristics to build up a sample that is satisfactory to specific requirements of the research project. The purposive sampling technique, also known as judgment sampling, involves the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant holds (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Therefore, participants were selected from those who successfully completed the learnership. Expert sampling was also deployed, and it involved approaching programme implementation experts in the field of interest, i.e., ETDP SETA officials and host employers.

The study included thirteen learnership beneficiaries who participated in learnership programmes across four provinces: namely, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, and the Western Cape. In each case, equal representation of the sexes was envisaged.

Table 1 summarises the profile of learnership beneficiaries who were interviewed in this study.

3.2.2.1 Profile of learners

Characteristics		Frequency
Gender	Male	9
	Female	4
Age	25 and below	3
	Between 25 and 35	9
	Above 35	1
Race		
	African	12
	Colored	1

Table 1: Profile of learnership beneficiaries

Table 1 demonstrates that the majority of learnership beneficiaries were black Africans (12) and fell within the 18-to-35-year age category. Thus, they were youth as per the definition in South Africa. Youth consists of those aged 15 to 34 years. Males dominated the study sample.

3.2.3.2 Profiles of host employers and ETDP SETA programme managers

Four employers who have hosted learners on learnership programmes in these four provinces were interviewed. Three of the host employers were public TVET colleges, and the fourth employer was the Department of Education. Finally, a total of four officials from the ETDP SETA provincial offices in KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, and Gauteng, as well as one official from the national office in Gauteng, were interviewed.

Table 2 summarises the characteristics of the ETDP SETA programme managers and host employers who were interviewed.

Province	ETDP SETA	Organisation	Job title
Gauteng	Respondent 1	ETDP SETA	Head Office Programme Manager
Gauteng	Respondent 2	ETDP SETA	Gauteng Province Programme Manager
Mpumalanga	Respondent 3	ETDP SETA	Mpumalanga Province Programme Manager
KwaZulu-Natal	Respondent 4	ETDP SETA	KZN Province Programme Manager
Gauteng	Respondent 5	Motheo Training Institute	Director
Eastern Cape	Respondent 6	Eastcape Midlands TVET College	ETQA Manager
KwaZulu-Natal	Respondent 7	Majuba TVET College	Assistant Director: Occupational Programmes
Mpumalanga	Respondent 8	Department of Education	Senior Manager: Learnership Programmes

Table 2: Profiles of ETDP SETA programme managers and host employers interviewed.

3.2.4 Data collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with all the participants. According to Scanlan (2020), semi-structured interviews have long been acknowledged as the standard method in data collection that aims at investigating experiences. The databases of learners' contact information were obtained from the ETDP SETA. The main challenge encountered was the poor quality of learnership beneficiary contact information, i.e., contact numbers often did not exist, and calls went unanswered or straight to voicemail. Several beneficiaries declined participation in the study, mainly because they were

disgruntled in cases where they were not issued with certificates by the ETDP SETA upon completion of the programmes. Essentially, semi-structured, telephonic interviews were conducted with 13 learners who had contactable details for the programme and were willing to participate in the study. A mixture of face-to-face and telephone interviews were conducted with host employers and ETDP SETA officials. As noted previously, four host employers and four ETDP SETA programme managers were interviewed, respectively. All interviews were conducted between October and December 2022.

An advantage of telephonic interviews is that they are cost-effective and relatively easy to conduct (Farooq & De Villiers, 2017). Telephone interviews enabled the researcher to interview respondents from across various geographical locations. A disadvantage of telephonic interviews includes the inability to observe the behaviour or body language of the respondents (Farooq & De Villiers, 2017). Furthermore, it can be difficult to build rapport during a telephonic interview as opposed to a face-to-face interview.

3.2.5 Data Collection Instruments

In this study, semi-structured interview guides were administered to the learnership beneficiaries, the host employers, and the ETDP SETA programme managers (see Annexure 1: Learner Schedule). These interview guides are discussed in the sections that follow.

3.2.5.1 Beneficiary Instruments

The objective of the semi-structured interviews with learners was to profile unemployed learners who participated in the ETDP SETA learnerships and their career progression (see Annexure 1: Learner Schedule). The semi-structured interview guide provided a clear set of instructions for interviewers and provided reliable, comparable qualitative data. Essentially, it was aimed at establishing their perspectives on the contribution of education and training to their career paths and their labour market outcomes. Interview guides were developed to contain a list of questions and topics to be covered during the conversation. The aim of an interview is to develop an understanding of participants in their natural

environment. This is useful for getting the story behind a participant's experience. A draft instrument was piloted, and this was revised to ensure alignment with the study objectives and research questions.

The semi-structured interview guide was informed by Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model, as discussed earlier. Semi-structured interviews contain open-ended questions, and discussions may diverge from the interview guide (Jarbandhan & Schutte, 2006). The semi-structured interviews also allowed interviewees to freely express their views and opinions. The duration of each interview was approximately 45 minutes.

3.2.5.2 Host Employer instrument

The employer interview was also conducted telephonically, and the duration of each interview was approximately 45 minutes (see Annexure 3: Employer Schedule). The objective of the interviews with employers was to seek employers' perspectives on the effectiveness and value of the learning programmes that beneficiaries were exposed to and to assess the impact that these had on the learners' performance in terms of productivity. The interview further sought to understand the challenges that employers experienced with respect to hosting learners.

3.2.5.3 ETDP SETA Officials Instrument

The objective of the interviews with ETDP SETA programme officials was to gauge their assessment of the learnership programme, i.e., in terms of programme effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability, and impact (see Annexure 2: ETDPSETA Officials Schedule). The interviews further probed the challenges associated with learnership programmes as identified by the respondents, and their recommendations for the improved implementation of such programmes.

3.2.6 Data management

The data generated through the semi-structured interviews conducted with the thirteen unemployed learners, four ETDP SETA officials, and the four host employers were recorded and transcribed. Permission to record the interviews was sought from the participants. The transcripts and audio recording were archived to preserve the collected

data. The audio recording of data assisted in safeguarding against possible researcher bias when writing up the findings, classifying and evaluating data to ensure the validity of the research process. All the data collected (verbal and written) for this study was converted to electronic format and archived in password protected files on a personal computer, where only the researcher has access to the computer.

3.2.7 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was used in this study because it enabled data analysis through the identification of patterns or recurring themes, thus allowing the meaningful interpretation of the data. This is the most suitable approach because the main aim was to provide a description and understanding of the answers provided by the interviewees. In other words, the approach led to the discovery of patterns and developing of overarching themes. The researcher was guided by the six phases of thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (Ibid.). Braun and Clarke (2006) developed a six-step framework consisting of familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for the themes, reviewing the themes defining and naming the themes, and producing the report. These are demonstrated in the table that follows.

Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with the data	**The researcher read the interview transcripts to identify recurring themes.**
Phase 2: Generate initial ideas	The researcher used the structure of the interview guide and the literature review to guide the coding process, and to generate initial ideas.

Phase 3: Searching for themes	The researcher read the transcripts and noted recurring themes, i.e. how frequently the same response to a question was repeated by the group or the individual.
Phase 4: Reviewing themes	The researcher reviewed the identified themes to establish if there is similarity in the identification of themes (i.e., verifying consistency), and to review themes that were different.
Phase 5: Defining and naming themes	The researcher assigned codes to each recurring theme.
Phase 6: Producing the report	The researcher then generated codes and quotations report from Atlas Ti to ascertain the salient codes under each theme.

Table 3: Steps in thematic analysis of qualitative data

In this study, the researcher further identified differences and similarities in the coding of the data. Where there were similarities in the identified codes, the researcher accepted these as confirmation that she interpreted the data correctly. Where there were differences, the researcher reviewed these and concluded on the final code(s).

3.2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study is underpinned by general research ethics principles. Ethical clearance to conduct the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand. Permission to conduct the study was also obtained from the ETDP SETA. Potential participants were informed about the nature of the study and its implications. The information shared was accompanied by an informed consent letter, which participants had to sign as an indication of their willingness to participate in the research. The researcher answered any questions participants had before they were asked to sign the consent form.

To circumvent potential power dynamics in terms of the positionality of the researcher and the participants, the researcher reassured participants of their choice to withdraw from the

study at any point in time. Given the fact that unemployment could be an emotive topic, the researcher explained as stipulated in the consent letter, that this study was not a skills development or training initiative, nor did it offer any form of employment or incentives. This was to eliminate the possibility of raising the expectations of the learnership beneficiaries. In keeping with the tenets of research ethics, the researcher ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants by using pseudonyms during the data collection and presentation phases of the research. The data will be stored for a period of five (5) years and then destroyed to maintain confidentiality.

Ethics committees enforce ethical standards as well as inspect research designs and methods before application. The research proposal for this study was endorsed by the ethics committee at Wits School of Education (Protocol Number: 2019ECE007M). The ethics clearance certificate was issued to the researcher (see Annexure 4: Ethics Clearance Certificate). The researcher signed the ethics clearance certificate to acknowledge and bind herself to the code of ethics. The ethic clearance certificate was shared with parties involved in the study, namely, the supervisor, co-supervisor, research participants (i.e., learnership beneficiaries), ETDP SETA programme managers, and the host employers.

The research participants voluntarily agreed to participate upon information provided to them. Permission was granted by the ETDP SETA to conduct the study with unemployed learners, host employers, and ETDP SETA officials. ETDP SETA identified four programme managers responsible for the implementation of the learnership programme to be interviewed. A letter was issued to the researcher from ETDP SETA giving permission to conduct interviews with unemployed learners and host employers across four provinces. All participants agreed to participate in the study by signing the consent forms which outlined the details of the study to indicate that they had been consulted and that they had voluntarily participated in the study.

In sum, the following ethical standards were observed in conducting this study:

i) Seeking permission from authorities and participants.

ii) Participants had a right not to answer any questions that they did not want to answer or were uncomfortable with.
iii) Assurance to everyone involved that confidentiality or anonymity would be respected.
iv) Seeking permission from all interviewees to audio-record the interviews.
v) Sticking to agreed times for interviews and respecting their operational hours.
vi) Participants could end the interview at any time without penalty; and
vii) Being transparent with all information relating to the study.

More importantly, whilst writing up the findings, the researcher did not reveal the identities of the participants but used pseudonyms.

3.2.9 Strategies Employed to Ensure Quality Data

In qualitative research, credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability are the four principles or measures implemented to achieve a trustworthy study (Shenton, 2004). Credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability were ensured in this study to ensure that the process is credible and trustworthy (Nowell et al., 2017). On the same note, Nowell (2017) indicates that it is important for the researcher to situate himself or herself in relation to the context of the research and to declare possible biases that might influence the interpretation of data. This is important because the researcher brings their own experience, ideas, and preconceptions, which must be declared before the commencement of data collection to enhance the transparency.

Validity refers to the integrity and application of the methods undertaken and the precision in which findings accurately reflect the data (Noble & Smith, 2015). Reliability describes the consistency within the employed statistical procedures (Noble & Smith, 2015). According to Notwell (2017), a qualitative study that is trustworthy pays important attention to the conformability, dependability, credibility, and transferability components of research. Conformability refers to the researchers' ability to prove that the data is not affected by the researcher's biases, but that it represents the participants' responses. In this

study, the researcher was aware of possible researcher bias because of her work in the SETA space. Attempts were made to mitigate the possible effects of researcher bias by ensuring an accurate representation of participants' perspectives. In this regard, the researcher recorded the interviews with the consent of the participants and transcribed the interviews verbatim. In the reporting of the findings, the researcher extracted rich, verbatim extracts from the transcripts to accurately reflect participants' accounts.

To ensure credibility, each participant was given the choice of taking part in the study. No participant was forced into the process. Participants were further encouraged to share their opinions and experiences without fear of any possible biases. Dependability is synonymous with reliability, and it shows that the findings are consistent and can be replicated with comparable subjects in a similar situation (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008). To achieve this in the study, caution was applied to ensure that the research process was logical, traceable, and clearly documented by giving a detailed account of the research process.

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of the study can be applied to other contexts. Results of research are said to be transferable only if they fit into different perspectives separate from the actual study context (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008). To achieve this, there was a wide description of the phenomenon under study.

Cohen and Crabtree (2008) further explain that confirmability requires that findings are clearly obtained from the acquired data and not from researcher bias, inspiration, or interest. This study, therefore, used an audit trail as a quality measure in data analysis. The audit trail involved a process where the researcher detailed the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. To avoid any form of bias, the collected data was analysed by the researcher.

It is generally accepted that involving multiple methods of data collection enhances the trustworthiness of a study. Including several investigations or peer-reviewed studies assists with the interpretation of the data and enhances trustworthiness (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p.

82). This study employed multiple data collection methods, including interviews with multiple stakeholders.

3.2.10 Limitations of the study

The study employed a qualitative research design and purposively selected a sample of learnership programme beneficiaries. Thus, the sample is not representative of the number of learners who participated in the programmes during the 2017/18 and 2018/2019 financial years, and the findings are not generalizable. However, the qualitative nature of the study allowed for in-depth insights into the dynamics of learnerships and their perceived effects on the employability and employment outcomes of programme beneficiaries.

Another possible study limitation is that the ETDP SETA programme managers, given the fact that they are the custodians of the programmes, may have been biased in their assessment of the programmes. However, this limitation was potentially diffused by the researcher being a co-worker at the time of this study and gained their trust, which enabled them to express themselves candidly.

3.2.11 Reporting

The analysed data was reported into a framework of themes and sub-themes. The codes from the qualitative interviews were categorised into themes and sub-themes. The findings and the academic literature were then integrated into a framework for the discussion of the findings. The conclusions and recommendations refocused on the aims of the study and key findings regarding each aim.

3.2.12 Conclusion

This study aimed to contribute to the body of programme evaluation knowledge by shedding light on the various elements that work together to produce the outcomes (i.e. employability), instead of narrowly reporting on the achievement of outcomes. This was done using primary and secondary data collection methods, and the latter involved a strong theoretical grounding that informed the design of the research and the interpretation of

findings. This study confirmed the methodological challenge in tracing programme beneficiaries, as evident from the outdated nature of beneficiary contact details that resulted in the realisation of a smaller sample. There is thus a recommendation for regular interaction with beneficiaries' post-programme completion to constantly update beneficiary information for future evaluation studies.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS: ETDP SETA PROGRAMME MANAGERS AND HOST EMPLOYERS' FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This section presents the findings that emanated from the interviews with learnership programme managers at the ETDP SETA and host employers who offered the workplace experience. The presentation starts with a description of the key components of learnerships and the relationship between the ETDP SETA and the host employers.

The section then presents the findings on the ETDP SETA programme managers and host employers' perceptions of learnership programmes in terms of the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability, and impact of these programmes (ETDP SETA, 2020). The presentation concludes with the findings on the challenges that respondents associated with learnerships and their recommendations for the improved implementation of the programmes. Thereafter, the findings based on the interviews with the learnership beneficiaries are presented.

4.2 Description of learnerships

The respondents were asked to describe what the learnership programme is about, its objectives, and the recruitment criteria. Respondents were also asked to describe potential changes that may have occurred between 2017 and 2019, the years in which the ETDP SETA was implementing the learnerships that were assessed as use cases in this current study. These findings are presented in the sections that follow.

4.2.1 Programme design features of learnerships

The learnership programme was described as a qualification, with a minimum duration of 12 months. One respondent noted that some learnerships can be up to three years in duration. The ETDP SETA learnerships that were mainly mentioned by respondents included Occupationally Directed Education, Training and Development Practices (OETD), Early Childhood Development (ECD), and Community Development.

Respondents emphasised that the learnerships were targeted at unemployed youth, who were mainly recruited through organised structures such as community-based organisations and TVET colleges. They confirmed that the learnerships consisted of a theoretical component (30%) and a practical component (70%). They further explained that for the theoretical component, learners attended an academic institution such as a TVET college, and for the practical component, they were placed with a public or private employer to acquire workplace skills and to practically apply the theory that they have learned.

According to the ETDP SETA head office programmes manager, learnerships were previously mainly implemented by private service providers that were appointed by the ETDP SETA through the tendering system. Subsequently, since 2017, a decision was taken to enter formal partnerships with TVET colleges to drive the implementation of learnerships as preferred training service providers and, in some instances, host employers as noted below:

> *"We engaged the TVET colleges for the learners. So instead of procuring them, we simply engage with the TVET colleges. So, the TVET college becomes a service provider and an employer" (ETDP SETA Head Office Programmes manager)*

Other changes that have been introduced to the learnership system since 2017, as mentioned by the respondents, included the process of the re-curriculation of learnerships into occupational programmes. This decision, according to a respondent, was motivated by questions related to the relevance of learnerships in addressing unemployment. The Quality Control Council for Trade and Occupations (QCTO) was appointed as the quality assurance body for these new programmes, a position that the ETDP SETA currently holds for the legacy programmes.

Several respondents noted that the design and implementation of learnerships were informed by skills needs that were identified through a process of consultation with relevant stakeholders, including communities, skills development practitioners, and employers. The following quote demonstrate these sentiments:

"In Eldorado Park, we did ECD Level 4. Most of the children there are kept at home and the crèches aren't equipped to look after them. And that is one of Jozi's main needs" (ETDP SETA Gauteng Office Programmes Manager).

4.2.2 Recruitment criteria employed in learnerships.

One of the principal attributes of successfully implemented learnerships is the ability of the program to identify learners with the appropriate personal attributes, i.e., potential and motivation to learn, and personal interests that match the learnership program. This entails having a recruitment and selection strategy in place including advertising the program to have a broad reach.

In terms of the recruitment criteria for the learnerships, respondents emphasized the minimum educational requirements more than the equity criteria (i.e., race, gender, and disability). Respondents noted that the minimum educational requirement varied from programme to programme and was determined by the NQF level at which the learnership was pitched. As a result, some learnerships allowed access to learners with less than grade 12, as explained below:

"The criteria depend on the qualification itself. You use the minimum requirements of each qualification. For example, for ECD level 4, we want someone who has at least Grade 11, as it is equivalent to a Matric" (ETDP SETA Head Office Programmes Manager).

Other criteria that were mentioned not so frequently included the applicant being unemployed and from a socio-economically disadvantaged background.

4.2.3 Learnership programme objectives

Respondents were asked what, in their view, the objectives of learnerships were. The main view was that learnerships were meant to address unemployment. The following section elaborates on this view.

4.2.3.1 Addressing unemployment through enhanced employability.

The overall sense amongst respondents was that the main objective of learnerships was to address the unemployment crisis in South Africa through skills development, as mandated in the Skills Development Act. The respondents noted that the objective of the programmes was to improve learners' employability through skills development so that they would access employment or self-employment opportunities.

The workplace experience component of learnerships was identified as the crucial lever, as practical experience is often a requirement for entry-level jobs. Respondents acknowledged that the theoretical component and the fact that learners' exit with a qualification upon completion of the programme, further enhance learners' employability and chances of finding employment. In addition, several respondents noted that learnerships were intended to promote articulation and improve young people's access to further and higher education and training to promote career progression. These sentiments are expressed in the following quotations:

> *"We look to see if they can open up their own crèche or go to ECD level 5 and then afterwards, their progression could be going for a B.Ed qualification and becoming a teacher with RQE 14 and be employed by various provincial education departments or in the private sector" (Gauteng Programme Manager).*

In sum, respondents emphasised the main objectives of learnerships were to improve the employability of beneficiaries so that they may ultimately access employment. The workplace-based learning component was singled out as the most important design feature of learnerships to improve employability. Furthermore, the respondents were also of the view that learnerships should articulate better with other parts of the post-secondary

education and training system, including promoting improved access to vocational and higher education. Notable changes that occurred in the period 2017 - 2019 include the re-curriculation of learnerships into occupational programmes and the ETDP SETA entering formal partnerships with TVET colleges to also serve as host employers. This is a positive step towards bridging the divide between educational institutions and the workplace, as envisioned in the White Paper on PSET.

4.3 Respondents' perceptions of learnerships

The respondents were asked to discuss the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and sustainability of learnerships. These findings are discussed in the following sections.

4.3.1 Respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of learnerships

To assess the effectiveness of the programme, respondents were asked if the programme enabled the learners to achieve the desired outcomes and whether it unlocked exit opportunities for them. Furthermore, respondents were asked if learnerships addressed skills shortages and to elaborate on the nature of the skills acquired during the programme. They were asked if there were systems in place to monitor the implementation of learnerships. These findings are discussed in the sections that follow.

4.3.1.1 Learnerships provide exit opportunities.

The sentiment that was pronounced amongst the ETDP SETA programme managers was that learnerships did offer exit opportunities, a feat that is increasingly difficult given the current economic climate that favours job shedding. These opportunities, according to respondents, were facilitated through the ETDP SETAs strategic partnerships with the government, the private, and the not-for-profit sectors. They asserted that exit opportunities were also offered through the host employers, who sometimes absorbed the learners upon completion of the programmes. The following quotations demonstrate these sentiments:

"They (the learners) do hold the positive perception that they will get employment. Some of them do indicate that those they know were able to get employment" (ETDPSETA Head Office Programme Manager).

"We try and tie them in with our partners, the Gauteng Department of Education and even the South African Development Agency. So, we speak to people and ask what they have available, and we also work with Smart Start and Harambee" (Gauteng Programme Manager).

4.3.1.2 Learnerships offer relevant job-readiness skills.

The overwhelming sense amongst respondents was that learnerships equipped learners with the required technical and soft skills that are required by employers to improve their employability and enable them to navigate the world of work. Some of the skills that the respondents discussed included community engagement or social facilitation skills and teaching skills that are transferred through the ECD learnerships. These sentiments are reflected in the following anecdotes:

"They (learners) work with communities to try and find economic opportunities. So, on behalf of the municipalities, they engage with the communities on the opportunities the government has available. So, the basis is that all the beneficiaries of our learnerships have got very good facilitation skills" (ETDP SETA Head Office Programmes Manager).

"They go into the world of work very quickly. If you look at ECD, you are training the person how to interact with the child, how to train the child, how to use toys as a means of education. So, instead of being a caregiver, or child-minder, the skill becomes that of a teacher" (Gauteng Programmes Manager).

A couple of respondents noted that mentors and coaches played a crucial role in ensuring that learners acquired skills during their learnership. Mentors were meant to motivate and

hold learners accountable to work towards achieving the goals of the programme as expressed below:

> *"It depends on whom they get as a mentor at the workplace, if they get a good a mentor then they are able to achieve the goals of the entire learnership programme and they are able to get skills" (KwaZulu Natal Host Employer).*

> *"In other institutions, you will find that while the learner is placed there, the learner is not capacitated, and the learner is not aligned with what they are in pursuit of academically and you will find that the learner has been reduced to a tea girl or a tea boy. There are stringent policies that is why we assign mentors and coaches…" (Gauteng Host Employer).*

There was a sense that the administrative and compliance requirements associated with learnerships often hamper effective skills training, as noted below:

> *"There is a lot of paperwork because they have to complete a P.O.E (portfolio of evidence) so you end up not getting a chance to observe whether the learners have acquired the skills and end up concentrating on whether they have completed the P.O" (KwaZulu Natal Host Employer).*

One of the host employers cautioned that learnerships should not be seen as the panacea to workplace skills shortages, but that employers should be mindful that learners were placed with them to acquire skills, rather than providing scarce skills to the workplace. Several respondents emphasised that learnerships equipped learners with job readiness skills. They explained that in addition to teaching learners how to apply for jobs and prepare for interviews, they educated them about workplace conduct. Learners were taught about workplace policies, etiquette, professionalism, and effective communication. The following quote demonstrates these findings:

"There's an additional programme which is called "job readiness programme" where they are taught the manner of conduct at work, how to apply for jobs and how to present themselves during an interview" (KwaZulu Natal Host Employer).

The respondents explained that each learnership covered fundamental skills that form the basis for the core competencies, for example, soft skills such as basic communication.

4.3.1.3 Monitoring and evaluation of learnerships

Two of the ETDP SETA programme managers noted that the ETDP SETA had systems in place to monitor the implementation of learnerships. According to the respondents, monitoring took place through site visits, steering committee meetings, and via the management information system. There was a view that monitoring is important to unearth lessons learned that could contribute to programme improvements. The following quotation captures these views:

"We also have the steering committee meetings, where we sit quarterly to look at the implementation" (KwaZulu Natal Programme Manager).

There was an acknowledgement that monitoring was previously not prioritized in these programmes, however, the sense was that there has been improvement over time. The programmes manager at the ETDP SETA head office attributed this improvement to the fact that the monitoring of programmes had been institutionalized and set as a target in the SETA's annual performance plan:

"We used to be weak on that (monitoring), but we have subsequently improved…there are monitoring systems and tools being implemented. We even have a target in the APP to force everyone to do monitoring" (ETDP SETA Head Office Programmes Manager).

The respondents explained that monitoring was conducted for purposes of improving programme implementation, determining if the programme offered value for money, and gathering information for impact assessments.

4.3.2 Respondents' perceptions of the efficiency of learnerships

To assess if learnerships were implemented efficiently, respondents were asked if the learnership programme offered value for money, i.e., did it equip learners with the required skills and enable them to execute their duties in the industry upon completion of the programme. In addition, they were asked if the programme had adequate systems in place for monitoring, and evaluation, and quality assurance. Respondents were further asked about partnerships between the various stakeholders and if this added value to programme implementation. These are discussed in the following sections.

4.3.2.1 Learnerships offer value for money.

Several respondents were of the view that learnerships offered value for money, however, with a few caveats. ETDP SETA programme managers acknowledged that learnerships were the most expensive training initiatives that were implemented by the ETDP SETA and that the investments made in these programmes were undermined by the low absorption rate of learners into employment.

There was also an admission that the lack of understanding of the objectives of learnerships amongst stakeholders (i.e., ETDP SETA programme managers and host employers) resulted in the initiative being approached as a tick-box exercise, which potentially compromised its ability to deliver value for money. These sentiments are demonstrated below:

> *"At face value, one might say that it is not worth the money spent. But some of these things are beyond our control. Like the low absorption rate" (KwaZulu Natal Programmes Manager).*

"The way we do things, is inadequate. We are ticking the boxes vs. value for money and being clear in terms of objectives as to why we are doing this" (Mpumalanga Programmes Manager).

Despite an acknowledgement that monitoring, and evaluation have improved, some respondents felt that there was room for improvement given that the weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation practices made it difficult to assess the true impact of learnerships. For the training providers, learners dropping out of the programme diminished the financial value that they were supposed to derive from implementing the programmes. The following quotation captures this view:

"When you start, you have twenty learners, and each student is twenty thousand rand; then you see value for money. By the time you finish having spent the money, you realise that the dropouts make a huge difference to the budget" (Eastern Cape Host Employer).

4.3.2.2 Resourcing for monitoring and evaluation and quality assurance of learnerships

The ETDP SETA programme managers were of the view that the SETA had sufficient financial resources to conduct monitoring and evaluation. However, they noted that these investments were undermined by stakeholders who treated monitoring and evaluation as a tick-box exercise and solely as a tool to report on training targets to the Department of Higher Education and Training. The following anecdote captures these sentiments:

"We should not focus on training just for the sake of training and numbers because what I have been seeing of late is that most of the SETAs concentrate on submitting numbers for the purpose of reporting; they don't concentrate on, out of those that have been trained, how many have been absorbed" (KwaZulu Natal Host Employer).

One of the provincial programme managers further noted that monitoring and evaluation efforts were impeded by a lack of human resources capacity:

> *"We are not monitoring the programmes implemented sufficiently…we have to divide ourselves among the many programmes we have outside the learnerships to ensure that all programmes are monitored correctly" (KwaZulu Natal Programmes Manager).*

Two of the programme managers noted that quality assurance systems were implemented throughout the learnership programme. These systems, they explained, served as early warning systems to prevent, or remedy challenges that threatened the successful implementation of the programme as explained below:

> *"You have a quality assurance section where you look at the number of verifications and processes that will be undertaken. Halfway through the programme, there must be an external verification that is conducted where we will get the report to analyse whether the programme is running in line with the implementation plan; so as not to realise at the last minute that a lot of things have not been done" (KwaZulu Natal Programmes Manager).*

4.3.2.3 Partnerships to implement learnerships.

The ETDP SETA programme managers were asked if the organisation pursued partnerships to implement the learnerships and if these were adding value to the operations of the SETA. The programme managers particularly emphasized the relationship with the TVET colleges in this regard.

The TVET colleges were mainly responsible for learner recruitment and training on the theoretical component of the learnership. However, respondents explained that TVET colleges often acted as host employers through workplace simulations given the dearth of

employers available to offer workplace-based learning, as expressed by some of the respondents:

> *"We do have a shortage of host employers. As they are not formalised, sometimes we find that learners struggle to find host employers. Hence you find TVET colleges end up being the host employers" (ETDP SETA Head Office Programmes Manager).*

Although to a lesser extent, some respondents referred to the ETDP SETA's initiatives to address the shortage of host employers by engaging the public and non-governmental sectors to offer practical experience to learners, as expressed below:

> *"We try and tie them in with our partners, the Gauteng Department of Education and even the South African Development Agency. We speak to people and ask what they have available, and we also work with Smart Start and Harambee" (Gauteng Programmes Manager).*

A couple of the host employers also referred to the importance of partnerships to promote the effective implementation of learnership programmes:

> *"We have almost 20 TVET colleges. Every year we collaborate with TVET colleges. We admit their student interns to the eighteen months experiential training programme" (Mpumalanga Host Employer).*

4.3.3 Respondents' perceptions of the relevance of learnerships

In terms of relevance, the aim was to ascertain if the learnership programmes were aligned to the mission, vision, and objectives of the ETDP SETA and if they were relevant to the education, training, and development sector. It was further investigated if learnerships were aligned to national policies and if they were responsive to the skills that were in demand in the labour market.

4.3.3.1 Alignment to ETDP SETA objectives

Two of the ETDP SETA programme managers noted that the mission and vision of the ETDP SETA formed the basis for the conceptualisation of the learnership programmes, and that these were encapsulated in the letter and spirit of the learnership agreements, as stated in the following quotations:

> *"The learnership, when it is designed, it is designed with the expected outcomes, objectives, expected criteria. So, you cannot implement outside of what has been approved" (Mpumalanga Programme Manager).*

> *"The purpose of the learnership is to ensure that they acquire skills that are required at the workplace in spite of the institution they come from. It is in line with the mandate of ETDP SETA" (Gauteng Host Employer).*

4.3.3.2 Learnerships' alignment to national policies and imperatives

Relevance further interrogated if the implementation of learnerships considered the South African policy environment. Two of the respondents mainly referred to the fact that the learnerships were aligned to the skills needs that were identified in the Workplace Skills Plans that were submitted annually by employers to the ETDP SETA. One of the respondents cautioned about a delicate balancing act between national imperatives and stakeholders' own skills development agendas, as expressed below:

> *"The aim is to achieve the objectives in the Sector Skills Plan. Simultaneously, you have strategic partners which will then conduct their own research and come up with their own strategic documents, which will not necessarily speak to what is in the Sector Skills Plan" (KwaZulu Natal Programme Manager).*

Some respondents were of the view that learnerships were responsive to the skills that were demanded in the labour market, as noted below:

"The most important thing about the learnership is to assist learners to do training that will assist them to get a job or to be self-employed once they have completed the training. For example, the learnership programme that we chose or that we applied for from ETDP SETA was technical support which has to do with fixing computers and identifying challenges in computers which I think is this 4IR (4TH Industrial Revolution)" (KwaZulu Natal Host Employer).

4.3.3.3 Learnerships' alignment to priorities in the education, training, and development practices sector

Several respondents were of the view that learnerships were aligned to the skills needs in the education, training, and development practices sector. They explained that the design of learnerships was informed by research, i.e., the Sector Skills Plans. Respondents noted that learnerships were responsive to the skills that were in demand in other economic sectors or industries, as expressed below:

"There are those projects that are more relevant to the sector, like the ECD. But we also have instances where we have projects that cut across, such as the ICT skills learnership. Every sector requires an ICT skills learnership" (KwaZulu Natal Programmes Manager).

4.3.4 Respondents' perceptions of the sustainability of learnerships

Sustainability focused on assessing whether partners understood and supported the objectives of learnerships, and the extent to which partnerships between the ETDP SETA and the various stakeholders were formalized. Sustainability further interrogated the respondent's perceived impact of learnerships on the employability of beneficiaries, and the mechanisms used to report impact to the various stakeholders. These issues are discussed below.

4.3.4.1 Nature of partnerships and partners' understanding of learnership objectives

Most respondents confirmed that partnerships were formalized as evident from the various legal agreements that the ETDP SETA and its various stakeholders entered. Several respondents referred to the tripartite agreement, i.e., the agreement between the ETDP SETA as the programme manager and funder, the host employer, and the learner.

Reference was made to service level agreements between the ETDP SETA and the approved service providers, as well as the agreement between the host employer and the learner. Some respondents explained that implementation cannot commence until all these agreements have been concluded. A couple of respondents referred to skills development collaboration memoranda of agreements between the ETDP SETA and other spheres of government:

> *"We also have a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of the Premier stating what we would be implementing for that financial year" (KwaZulu Natal Programmes Manager).*

There was admission that the partnership between the ETDP SETA and the host employers was not formalized and that efforts were being made by the SETA to appraise employers of the SETAs objectives about learnerships. The following quotation captures these sentiments.

> *"The only problem is that they are not formalised, except for TVET colleges which are formalised as service providers. Sometimes, they themselves struggle to place these learners in the workplace. So, the issue of an employer formal partnership is not there" (ETDP SETA Head Office Programme Manager).*

4.3.4.2 Partners' future interest in learnerships

The research interrogated the host employers', who were mainly public TVET colleges and the Department of Education, interest in participating in learnership programmes in future and the improvement thereof. Two of the host employers expressed continued interest in participating in future programmes, despite learnerships evolving into occupational programmes. The host employers expressed interest in hosting learners and contributing to the improvement of the programme.

In sum, respondents recognised the importance of partnerships between the ETDP SETA, all spheres of government, and the corporate and civil society sectors in learnerships to facilitate better transitions for learnership beneficiaries to employment opportunities. The fact that the ETDP SETA had formal arrangements in place with several partners is positive since these partners are often the source of exit opportunities.

It is concerning that the ETDP SETA, to a lesser extent, had formal partnerships with corporations and smaller businesses to serve as host employers and to offer workplace-based learning. This gap may affect the relevance of the workplace training that is offered in learnerships as learners miss out on the opportunity to acquire practical skills in a real workplace as opposed to a simulated workplace, which is often the case when TVET colleges offer workplace experience.

Respondents emphasised the fact that learnerships equipped beneficiaries with both technical and soft skills/work readiness skills. The latter is an important skill that is required by potential employers. However, the limited involvement of the corporate sector as host employers could potentially inhibit the relevance of the skills that are transferred via learnerships.

It is noteworthy that respondents seldom aligned learnerships to national frameworks such as the Skills Development Act, the National Skills Development Plan, etc. They were more likely to acknowledge that learnerships were informed by the ETDP SETA Sector Skills

Plans and strategic objectives. This raises the question of whether the key stakeholders involved in learnerships have a thorough understanding of the rationale for the implementation of these programmes. Some of the respondents questioned whether programme implementers were aware of the rationale for learnerships given that they were mainly preoccupied with the reporting of performance targets as opposed to measuring the socio-economic impact of learnerships. Lastly, it is a noteworthy observation that some of the respondents raised the administrative and compliance requirements associated with learnerships as a deterrent to effective skills development. These requirements often kept learners and training providers preoccupied while taking valuable time away from training and learning.

4.4 ETDP SETA programme managers and host employers' perceptions of the impact of learnerships

This section reports the findings of respondents' perceptions of the impact of learnerships on the employability and employment of the beneficiaries.

4.4.1 Respondents' perceptions of the impact of learnerships on employability

Host employers and ETDP SETA programme managers were of the view that the learnerships improved learners' employability and equipped them with the required work experience. The respondents noted that the fact that some learners were accessing employment upon completion was a signal of their employability. The respondents rarely mentioned skills acquisition in relation to employability. The following quotations demonstrate these views:

> *"…2-4% indicated that the programme assisted them to obtain employment…." (ETDP SETA Head Office Programmes Manager).*

> *"He did so well in the programme that he is now permanently employed at Builder's Warehouse, and he is doing so well, he has even bought a car. He renovated his*

family RDP house and now his family stays in a beautiful house" (Mpumalanga Host Employer).

4.4.2 Perceived impact of learnerships on employment

The respondents were asked if the learnerships contributed to the achievement of their organisations and companies' strategic goals and objectives. They were further asked if the learnerships enabled learners to access exit opportunities such as employment and further or higher education and training. Most respondents were of the view that learnerships had an impact on employment. There was consensus that learnerships resulted in a 30% to 40% absorption rate:

"Overall, there is a 40% success rate when these learnerships are looked at in totality" (ETDP SETA Head Office Programmes Manager).

"In technical support we started with fifty (50) learners but then we had dropouts and we ended up with about forty-two (42). I have heard that 30% or 40% percent of them have been absorbed by the employers where they were acquiring their work experience from" (KwaZulu Natal Host Employer).

Several respondents shared anecdotes of learners who found employment or were absorbed by the host employer upon completion of the programme:

"Most of the learners who completed this programme are now either fully employed in sports clubs or in schools" (KwaZulu Natal Host Employer).

Despite these positive impacts, several respondents expressed concern that the workplace absorption rate upon completion remained low. The respondents further acknowledged that the current economic climate, characterized by increasing job shedding in most sectors, contributed to this low absorption rate, as expressed below:

"We normally engage employers; part of our MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) would include a clause which says that a certain percentage of the learners must be absorbed by the employers. But it's not all of them who are willing to do that because of the economic situation that we are facing in South Africa" (KwaZulu Natal Host Employer).

Several of the ETDP SETA programme managers expressed concern regarding the low absorption rates of the learnership programmes and questioned its relevance to addressing youth unemployment. Some have expressed the need for the learnership programmes to be reviewed in favour of skills development initiatives that are more responsive and adaptive to the changing nature of work and the economy. These views are demonstrated by the following quotations:

"One might say that it is not worth the money spent. But some of these things are beyond our control, like the low absorption rate…That is why we have decided in 2020/2021 2021/2022, not to implement learnerships. With this small impact received from evaluation studies, it's about time that we critically review the implementation of these learnerships…" (ETDP SETA Head Office Programmes Manager).

4.4.3 Mechanisms for reporting the impact of learnerships.

Most of the ETDP SETA programme managers reported that there were mechanisms in place to report the achievements of learnerships to the various stakeholders. These included meetings and forums and internal management information systems to report to the Department of Higher Education and Training. The following quotations capture these views:

"We have the Management Information Systems that we use internally to report on the achievements, which will then be sent to DHET" (KwaZulu Natal Programmes Manager).

In sum, respondents generally were of the view that learnerships did improve the employability of beneficiaries, as evident from the fact that at least 40% are absorbed into employment upon completion of the programme. However, respondents noted that external factors such as the global economic downturn that favours job shedding inhibited learnerships' potential to link more beneficiaries with jobs.

4.5 Challenges in the implementation of learnerships

ETDP SETA programme managers and the host employers were asked to discuss the main challenges in the implementation of learnerships and the remedies to address the challenges. Respondents were asked to make recommendations for the improvement of the programmes. These findings are presented below.

4.5.1 Learners' cycling in and out of learnerships (learnership hopping)

When asked about the challenges that were encountered in the learnership programmes, several respondents referred to the occurrence where learners tend to "hop" from one learnership to the next. Respondents cited the stipend as the biggest driver of this phenomenon.

Respondents noted that learners often did not complete learnerships because of the prospect of earning a higher stipend in another learnership as there was no standardized amount for learnerships across the SETAs. The following quotations demonstrate these sentiments:

> *"We don't have major dropout issues. But we do have learners who go learnership-hopping and go where the stipend is higher" (ETDP SETA Head Office Programmes Manager).*

Another reason cited for the serial participation in learnerships, although not commonly mentioned, included boredom, resulting in learners participating in multiple learnerships to pass time. This sentiment was expressed by the following respondent:

> *"They are eager to receive the stipend because they are unemployed and have nothing to do or they have no funds to go to higher education institutions" (KwaZulu Natal Host Employer).*

Another respondent was of the view that learners hop from one programme to the next as a "shortcut" to their desired professions, as noted below:

> *"You get those students who move from one programme to the other, they just heard that with early childhood development qualification they might be assistant teacher or a teacher especially since COVID started. There's a lot of teachers and teacher assistants needed. So, they change programmes and careers just to take shortcuts" (Eastern Cape Host Employer).*

The implication of "learnership hopping", as noted by one respondent, is that learners' do not build a career specialization, and this, which, does not provide them with a clear career path. One of the ways in which programme implementers and service providers attempted to address learnership hopping, was by recruiting highly motivated and passionate learners, whose main motive for joining the programme was to learn and progress, rather than accessing the stipend as the main motivator.

4.5.2 Resource constraints as challenge in the implementation of learnerships

A few respondents, mainly host employers, referred to the lack of funding as a challenge to the effective implementation of learnerships. This was often mentioned in relation to the stipend and the training materials and equipment. They noted that the poor financial resourcing of learnerships resulted in programme implementers not having adequate training materials to effectively deliver the programme. Some host employers noted that they often had to improvise and devise creative strategies to address resource constraints. Unfortunately, small-sized service providers with limited capacity bore the brunt, as expressed below:

> *"If I was a small service provider I would have a problem with payment, claiming and stuff and buying learning and training material. But because we are a bigger institution, we could borrow from the college fund to get things going" (Eastern Cape Host Employer).*

The impression amongst some of the host employers was that the ETDP SETA sometimes did not have sufficient funds to pay learners' stipends. The unintended consequence, they explained, was a dropout rate from the programmes because the learners who participated were mainly from poor backgrounds and could not afford basics such as transport to the programme. The following quotations capture these views:

> *"Some of them don't even have the stipend and we would appreciate it if SETA can make funding available so that all learners participating in the programme can receive stipend. Some are in the programme and don't receive the stipend and some their TVET colleges have tried to secure stipends for them" (Mpumalanga Host Employer).*

In sum, respondents singled out learners' not staying the course and moving from learnership to learnership in pursuit of higher stipends as a phenomenon that deters the objectives of learnerships, i.e., skills development and employment creation. Importantly,

one respondent pointed out that the implication of learnership hopping is a lack of a career path and specialisation for learners, which may negatively affect their employability. A lack of sufficient financial support from the ETDP SETA to host employers, especially small and emerging employers, to fund training-related costs further emerged as a deterrent to the effective implementation of learnerships.

4.6 Recommendations for improvement in the implementation of learnerships

Respondents were asked to make recommendations for the sustainable implementation of learnerships in the future. These recommendations focused on initiatives to ensure the relevance of learnerships as well as the adequate resourcing of the programmes. These are elaborated on in the sections that follow.

4.6.1 SETAs to invest in targeted and relevant training.

A few respondents emphasized the importance of the continued implementation of training initiatives that were relevant, i.e., that were informed by sector needs as well as local and global economic demands. They asserted that this required engagement with employers and was imperative to improving the rate of absorption of learners into employment:

> *"Engage the employers because it is no use to train learners and not have employers involved. We should work hand in hand with the employers together with the provincial HRD and government departments and check what is needed in the province and what is needed in the district" (KwaZulu Natal Host Employer).*

4.6.2 SETAs to review the implementation of learnerships.

A couple of respondents noted that the review and re-curriculation of learnerships were important steps to be taken to ensure that these programmes were targeted and relevant:

> *"With the legacy programmes, there is an issue with the usefulness of the programmes and their fit for purpose. We do hope that this challenge will be dealt*

with by the occupational qualifications" (ETDP SETA Head Office Programmes Manager).

4.6.3 Deploy multi-pronged strategies to address resource constraints.

Respondents noted that all stakeholders, i.e., ETDP SETA and service providers (TVET colleges and host employers), should take a proactive approach in addressing resource constraints instead of thrusting this responsibility solely on the ETDP SETA. Some service providers have told anecdotes of how they have taken initiative to address resource constraints such as the lack of stipends or training materials.

Furthermore, there was a sense that TVET colleges should leverage their formal partnership with the ETDP SETA to negotiate improved resourcing of learnership programmes. There was also reference to a subsidy from the ETDP SETA to support host employers to incentivize them to place learners to acquire work experience. The following quotations capture these sentiments:

"We have been doing this for a very long time, so we have learned to paddle and improvise" (Eastern Cape Host Employer).

"We are thinking of paying a subsidy towards the host employer to encourage them to work in partnership" (Gauteng Programmes Manager).

In sum, respondents emphasised the importance of ensuring that the training offered through learnerships remained relevant and responsive to local and global labour market demands. They highlighted the importance of continued engagement with employers to inform the development of learnerships. They further called for improved financial incentives from the ETDP SETA to employers to encourage their participation in the implementation of learnerships.

4.7 Conclusion

Learnerships are a key programme of the ETDP SETA to address unemployment by equipping learners with the relevant theoretical and practical skills to enhance their employability. According to respondents in this study, learnerships were attaining their main objective, which was to improve employability. The respondents singled out the workplace-based training component as critical to enhancing learners' employability. In this regard, they acknowledged the importance of the deliberate efforts that the ETDP SETA needs to undertake to enter formal partnerships with, especially, corporate, and private sector employers. These partnerships and engagement with employers were recognised as crucial to ensuring the relevance of learnerships and responsiveness to local and global labour market demands.

Respondents mostly applauded learnerships for its alignment to organizational policies, as the design of these programmes were informed by research and extensive consultation with stakeholders. Although respondents mentioned national frameworks and policies explicitly to a limited extent, they did acknowledge the importance of Workplace Skills Plans and Sector Skills Plans to inform the design of learnerships to ensure its relevance. Several respondents were in favour of the re-curriculation of learnerships into occupational programmes as strategy to improve the relevance of these programmes.

Respondents were questioning the relevance of learnerships given that only three to four out of every 10 learners (30 - 40%) were generally absorbed into employment. They did acknowledge that external factors such as the constrained local and global economic situation undermined the impact of learnerships. However, they advised that greater effort was required to get more employers involved to accommodate learners for workplace experience and potentially absorb these learners. Respondents were also calling for improved financial support to host employers to incentivise them to offer workplace-based experience and train learners in the relevant skills.

Respondents were calling for a review of learnerships in its current format to factor in the changing nature of work. There was a call for meaningful measurement of the impact of learnerships that transcends treating monitoring and evaluation as a tick-box exercise and merely using it as a tool to report on organizational performance targets. As a result, the ETDP SETA has institutionalised monitoring and evaluation as an organisational performance target and has allocated more funding to this practice. As the ETDP SETA was working towards the re-curriculation of learnerships, stakeholders remained committed to working with the SETA and contributing towards the implementation and improvement of learnerships.

LEARNERSHIP BENEFICIARIES' FINDINGS

4.8. Introduction

This section presents the findings based on interviews with learners who completed the National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing (NQF level 3) and the National Certificate in Early Childhood Development (NQF level 4), respectively. These learnerships were implemented by the ETDP SETA in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 financial years respectively. The presentation includes a description of the profile of the learners and their experiences of the various aspects of the learnerships, i.e., the recruitment and selection processes and their exposure to the classroom (i.e., the theoretical component) and the workplace (i.e., the workplace-based experience). This section further presents the challenges that the learners encountered during the programmes and their perceived impact of the programmes.

According to the respondents, the learnerships did improve their employability to some extent because it equipped them with relevant technical and soft skills. However, they noted several limitations, including the fact that the End User computing learnership was pitched at NQF level three, which is lower than matric, which is equivalent to NQF level four. Furthermore, several learners who were employed about two years post-completion of the learnerships were in jobs that were not related to the learnerships. Thus, respondents

were questioning the learnerships' relevance and impact because of the low employment rates two years post completion. Workplace-based experience was singled out as the main enabler to improve employability. The learners raised the concern that they were primarily responsible for finding their own workplace placements because of the dearth of host employers to offer workplace-based experience. The following sections elaborate on these findings.

4.9 Education status of learners upon entry and post-completion of learnerships

		Frequency
Education (pre-learnership)	Matric/grade 12	10
	Post-matric	2
	No Matric	1
Education (post-learnership)	National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF level 3	8
	National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF level 4	5

Table 4: Education and employment pre- and post-participation in the learnerships

Table 4 shows that most respondents had completed grade 12/matric when entering the learnership program. Only one learner did not have matric. Two learners had post-matric qualifications in Human Resources and Financial Management respectively.

Upon completion of the learnerships, most learners (eight) attained the National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF level 3. Thus, they attained a qualification lower than grade 12. Five learners attained the National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF level 4, which is equivalent to grade 12. One learner reported that after completing the learnership, they had progressed to acquiring a bachelor's degree in education.

4.10 Employment status upon entry and post-completion of learnerships

Employment (pre-learnership)	**Unemployed**	**13**
Employment (post-learnership)	Employed	6
	Unemployed	7

Table 5: Employment pre-and post the learnerships.

Table 5 demonstrates that all learners were unemployed upon entry to the learnerships. This is expected because the programmes were targeted at unemployed youth. Only six of the learners had some work experience prior to joining the programme, mainly in sales and retail.

At the time of the study, i.e., about two years post-completion of the learnerships, half of the learners (six) were employed. The positions that they occupied, respectively, were handyman, grade R teacher, administrative clerk, security officer, police officer, and grade 5 - 7 teacher. Only two of the learners who participated in the ECD learnership were employed in the relevant field, i.e., education, as demonstrated in the quote below:

> *"I got the job because I had NQF level 4 qualification even though I didn't have a certificate. And when I applied for this post, they said I should bring all the qualifications that I have and the one from the learnership programme was the one that really stood out as it was the highest level of education I have" (Learner 1, National Certificate in ECD NQF 4, GP).*

The remaining four learners who were employed two years post-completion of the learnership were doing work that was unrelated to the learnerships, as shown in the quotes below:

> *"It is not related at all because currently I am working as an admin clerk for a private company and my job entails applying for tenders. I do quotations and general admin tasks. And these are the things that I did not do in the learnership programme" (Learner 2, National Certificate in ECD NQF 4, GP).*

> *"What I am currently doing is completely not related to what I learned in the learnership programme. I am now a police officer; I work for the South African Police services, and I am not in the IT department or admin department" (Learner 3, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3).*

Six learners remained unemployed for about two years after completing the learnership programmes. Two of these learners found brief, two to three months contracts shortly after completing the learnerships but fell back into unemployment shortly thereafter. Two of the unemployed learners were involved in other learnerships at the time of the study. One learner, who completed the National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing NQF level 3, was participating in the same qualification but at NQF level 4 at the time of the study. Thus, for this learner, there is an indication of career progression.

However, the second learner, who completed the National Certificate in Early Childhood Development (NQF Level 3) was participating in a construction-related learnership, which is completely unrelated, as noted below:

> *"I got another learnership in community house building and it was on construction. I am now pursuing a career in construction. I have lost hope in finding a job in early childhood development" (Learner 4, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 3, GP).*

In sum, the learnerships awarded learners qualifications that were at a NQF level lower than or equivalent to grade 12. This indicates a lack of educational progression. Furthermore, only six learners were employed two years after the learnerships, which represents an employment rate of 46%. Most of the employed were in jobs that were unrelated to the learnerships that they completed. These findings confirm that learners do not follow linear pathways after the completion of learnerships, i.e., some enter employment, others fall back into unemployment, whilst some re-enter learnerships at lower, equivalent, or higher NQF levels than the previously completed learnerships. There is limited indication of educational or career progression post completion of the learnerships.

4.11. Experience of the learnership program

This section reports on the respondents' experiences of various elements of the ETDP SETA funded learnerships, including the recruitment and selection processes, the theoretical components, and the practical components. This information is important because the skills-development components of a learnership are crucial for improving the employability of beneficiaries.

4.11.1 Recruitment and selection of learners

One of the principal attributes of successfully implemented learnerships is the ability of the program to identify learners with the appropriate personal attributes, i.e., potential and motivation to learn, and personal interests that match the learnership program. This entails having a recruitment and selection strategy in place, including advertising the program to have a broad reach.

Learners were asked how they learnt about the learnership program. Most of the learners became aware of the learnerships through active engagement in their communities, i.e., via church, community outreach programmes, political organisations, or social networks, as demonstrated in the following quotations:

> *"There was an announcement at church that all unemployed youth should bring their ID copies and curriculum vitae with them the following day and I went back the following day with all the required documents" (Learner 3, National Certificate in ECD NQF 4, GP).*

> *"I first heard of the learnership programme when I attended a community meeting hosted by the ANC (African National Congress) and they mentioned that they are looking for unemployed youths to be part of a learnership programme" (Learner 5, National Certificate in Information Technology, NW).*

Other learners found out about the learnerships through taking initiative proactively. Two frequently approached the Department of Education for opportunities, and another conducted on-line searches for opportunities, as narrated in the quotes below:

> *"I used to go to the Department of Education offices to enquire about learnerships or bursaries that were available, and I left my CV there" (Learner 12, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, EC).*

> *"I saw the advert on the internet, on "Indeed" website to be specific…" (Learner 6, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, WC).*

When asked about the recruitment process, i.e., ensuring that the right candidates are selected to address the skills gap, it was found that different criteria were employed to select candidates. Only three learners noted that they wrote an assessment test as part of the selection process. Most of the learners indicated that they did not go through any assessment, as expressed below:

> *"I applied and they gave me a call for to come and sign a contract. That's how I was selected" (Learner 9, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, WC).*

> *"I received a call that I should bring a copy of my CV and ID at Moretele local municipal offices, and they gave us contracts to sign" (Learner 5, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NW).*

Interestingly, one respondent was selected without applying for the learnership program, as expressed below:

> *"I am not sure how I was selected, but what happened was, I had initially applied for Fundza Lushaka bursary, but I did not receive it and instead I was given the*

SETA learnership program. I did not apply for the SETA learnership program" (Learner 7, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, KZN).

4.11.2 Learners' experience of the theoretical/classroom component of learnerships

Generally, respondents had positive perceptions of their training facilitators. According to most of the learners, the training facilitators were organized and well prepared. Additionally, respondents described the training facilitators as helpful, readily available, and responsive to learners' needs. Most learners related to the methods of teaching and interaction with the facilitators. They noted that facilitators used various approaches to enhance the learning:

"Absolutely, he was brilliant. He made sure that everyone was on par with the syllabus and if there was anyone struggling, he had the patience to make sure that the learner is on par with the rest of the group" (Learner 8, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, EC).

"The lady who trained us in class, was good. She knew what she was doing, and she had the passion for IT and teaching" (Learner 3, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).

However, there were a few respondents who felt that the training facilitators were not well experienced. They felt that the training facilitators were not adequately equipped to teach a particular program, citing that the facilitators sometimes did not appear certain of the course content that they were facilitating:

"Truly speaking I was not happy with the lady who was our training facilitator because it seems like she did not know what she was doing, she was like an amateur" (Learner 9, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NFQ 3, WC).

Conversely, one respondent acknowledged that although the facilitator did not have many years of experience in training, she had the confidence to effectively deliver the programme, as noted below:

> *"I think she also did a similar qualification (Learnership program qualification) and then had the opportunity to be a trainer. She didn't have a lot of experience as a trainer, but she had the confidence to do it" (Learner 10, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, WC).*

Regarding the training materials, the overwhelming sense was that they were of good quality and relevant to the industry. One respondent noted that the training material was written in complex English that made it difficult to understand:

> *"The only challenge I had was that because most of us the learners were from rural schools and the English that we are taught is different from the one that is taught in urban schools. So, the English that was used on the study material was very hard for us to understand" (Learner 2, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing NQF 3, EC).*

Resources are a key component of any program. Most of the respondents felt that the theoretical component of the learnerships were well resourced.

4.11.3. Learners' experience of the practical experience/workplace placement component of learnerships

The classroom experience on its own will not equip a learner with the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience to improve their employability status. For this reason, it is very important that relevant workplaces are identified. Additionally, it is pivotal that relevant partners are identified and upskilled within the organization to support the learners during the learning process. These partners, who include mentors and coaches, play an important role in enabling workplace learning.

The main criticism that the respondents levelled against the workplace placement aspect of the learnerships was the fact that the learners had to find their own workplaces for practical experience. Those that reported self-placement encountered difficulties in identifying workplaces, and the responses suggest weaknesses in workplace identification as noted in the quotes that follow:

> *"Honestly speaking there weren't a lot of challenges that I came across while undertaking the programme, other than that of struggling to find an ECD centre for me to do practical training" (Learner 4, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).*

> *"I feel like SETA should be involved in finding centres for practical trainings in that we don't have to struggle finding places to do practicals" (Learner 13, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).*

Generally, respondents were positive about the workplace experience. They were positive because of the skills that they have gained and the fact that they were able to add value to the workplace. They often described the experience as mutually beneficial and their work environments as supportive, as demonstrated through the following quotations:

> *"I got the experience of a clerk and assistant clerk and a bit of computing" (Learner 6, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, WC).*

> *"The founder and manager of the crèche was very receptive to my ideas and welcomed me with warm hands. I even came up with an idea on how the crèche can raise funds" (Learner 11, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).*

Most of the learners reported that they were assigned a mentor and often described them as supportive and patient, as evident from the following quotation:

"The staff was very pleasant, and I even had a mentor. She was the administration clerk at the school. I worked with her, and she taught me a lot about admin work. She was very patient…" (Learner 12, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, EC).

Learners who were assigned a mentor also commented on the attitude of their mentors. Most learners indicated positive experiences with their mentors and emphasised the importance of the constructive feedback they received. Many reported that their supervisors helped them in difficult situations, as noted below:

"They assigned me a mentor who was very supportive and always willing to answer any questions that I had or if I needed clarity. I struggled because some of the things I had not done in the classroom training; I didn't know what to do. However, my mentor would assist me in this regard" (Learner 5, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, EC).

A couple of learners noted that they were not assigned mentors, however, acknowledged that there was always someone available to assist them in the absence of a dedicated mentor. This was common among learners who participated in the End User Computing Learnership and were placed in schools where there were no staff with IT experience. For these learners, the support offered in the form of mentoring was almost non-existent, thus making organizational learning difficult to impossible:

"I didn't have a mentor but if I had issues that I needed assistance with, the principal was always available to assist me" (Learner 8, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, EC).

"XYZ primary school is a rural school and almost half of the teachers there are old and have been teaching for more than twenty or thirty years. So, they did not know

a lot about computers and information technology, and they somehow relied on me to assist them. I didn't have a mentor when I did my practical's and if there was something that I needed help with regards to IT, I would call our classroom training facilitator" (Learner 2, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, EC).

A couple of learners, mainly in the End User computing learnership, expressed concern that often the tasks that they were assigned at the workplace were not aligned to the theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom, as expressed below:

"The only thing that I had an issue with is that of workplace placement. I feel like they should have maybe placed us in one of the government IT departments or an IT company for us to do practical. Because in my case, as I mentioned earlier on, I mainly did more of administration practical training more than End User Computing training" (Learner 6, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, WC).

"I think the only thing that I did not like was that of us not doing or practising the stuff that we learned in the classroom" (Learner 10, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, WC).

There was a concern amongst some learners who were placed at schools about the non-alignment between the learnership programmes and workplace schedules, as noted below:

"We were supposed to do the practical training at a primary school, but then the school wanted us to start in January the following year and we couldn't because the learnership program started in the middle of the year" (Learner 14, Gauteng).

Several learners who mainly participated in the End User computing learnership often referred to a lack of laptops that hampered effective practical training, as expressed below:

"The other challenge that we had was that of laptops. We did not have enough laptops while we did the classroom training" (Learner 12, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, EC).

4.12. Challenges in the implementation of learnership programmes

This section reflects on learners' experiences of challenges in their learnerships. This information is useful as it provides insights into potential barriers that deter learnerships' implementation as skills development interventions.

4.12.1 Late or non-payment of stipends

A few learners referred to the non-payment or late payment of stipends as a challenge. They noted that this often hampered their ability to attend training, especially where training venues were situated in remote areas. The following quotations capture these sentiments:

"The main thing for me was the stipend issue that we received late and that led me to borrow money to be able to attend classes" (Learner 6, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, WC).

"I had to ask my mother to assist me with taxi fares for the first month because I could not miss the first classes of training" (Learner 12, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, EC).

4.12.2 Delayed issuing of certificates

A couple of learners, mainly those who completed the ECD learnership, reported that, at the time of this study, they had not yet received their certificates from the ETDP SETA. They were of the view that the lack of certification was compromising their chances of accessing employment and educational opportunities, as expressed below:

"Even to this day I haven't received my certificate from ETDP SETA. When I applied for this current job, I had to use the statement of results from SETA and the certificate we received from the training provider. Some of the learners who applied for ECD posts at other institutions were not shortlisted for those posts

because those organisations wanted the SETA qualification" (Learner 13, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).

The sense amongst the learners was that the inability to verify attendance and completion of an educational program defeats the whole objective of the program. The qualification is often regarded as a signal of employability because the training that they have attended is accredited and thus recognised by employers. This, they noted, deprived them of the benefit of earning a salary, and the opportunity to further their studies, as expressed below:

"To think that we had one of the most beautiful graduation ceremonies that was hosted at Orlando stadium but still have not received our qualifications is very discouraging. The certificate is the most important thing for us because we must use it when applying for jobs and it is SETA accredited" (Learner 13, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).

"I haven't received my qualification or a letter that states that I have completed the learnership programme. This means that I cannot include it on my CV when I apply for posts or even continue with my NQF Level 5 qualification because I don't have anything to show that I have done NQF Level 4 qualification" (Learner 3, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).

4.13 Learner perceptions of the programmes' impact on employability and employment

This section discusses learners' overall perception of the programmes based on the expectations they had before entering the programme and whether these have been met. Learners discussed the effectiveness and relevance of the learnerships and their perceived impact on their employability and employment.

4.13.1 Learner expectations of the learnership

The success of a learnership program depends on, among other things, on proper induction to ensure that learners become well acquainted with the programme objectives. This is important to manage learners' expectations of the programme. In the absence of proper orientation, coupled with unstructured selection, learners are likely to attend learnership programmes without a clear goal in mind, consequently negatively affecting the knowledge, skills, and experience gained.

Interestingly, when asked if the program met their expectations, some learners were not able to respond conclusively, as from the beginning they were uncertain of what to expect. This might imply a lack of induction or may raise questions regarding the quality of inductions:

> *"I didn't know what to expect from this program and so I had no expectations. However, as the training progressed, I was enlightened, and I learned so much about information technology. So, at the end I did feel like it met my expectations" (Learner 5, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, NW).*

> *"I can't say it met my expectations for the following reasons, I didn't have expectations because I didn't know much. I only knew that it was going to be about IT with a bit of admin skills" (Learner 10, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, NW).*

The learners who noted that the programme did not meet their expectations were mainly those who were unemployed at the time of the study and who were hoping to be placed in employment upon completion, as noted below:

> *"I had hoped that once the programme is completed, we could be placed at private companies or government departments for permanent positions in that way we know that we will have a job" (Learner 12, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, EC).*

"In terms of linking the learners up with employment it did not meet my expectation at all" (Learner10, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, WC).

4.13.2 Learners' perceptions of learnerships' impact on employability

The study revealed that learners do perceive the learnership as a mechanism for enhancing their employability. Most of the learners commented on how the learnerships equipped them with technical and soft skills. Some acknowledged that they did not have some of these skills prior to the learnership.

The technical skills that they often mentioned included the End User computing, and ECD, and teaching-related skills. The technical skills that they mentioned to a lesser extent included administrative, project management, and report writing skills. The most mentioned soft skill was communication skills, and the learners noted that their self-esteem was boosted because they were able to express themselves confidently. The following quotations capture these sentiments:

"I have gained the experience of teaching particularly children; how to prepare your daily activities in class as a teacher and how to deal with different behaviours from children" (Learner 3, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).

"I have gained skills in communication, presentation skills. We had to do presentations in class and that also assisted in boosting my self-esteem as well because now I can stand in front of people and present" (Learner 4, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).

Several learners noted that the skills they acquired were relevant and that they could apply them practically, as noted below:

> *"The skills that are always relevant and that one always uses regardless of whether you are employed or unemployed is the Microsoft Office package and I gained advanced knowledge in those" (Learner 10, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, WC).*

Some of the learners noted that they were not yet given the opportunity to apply the skills that they have gained because they were unemployed or not employed in their areas of specialization, as expressed below:

> *"I am currently unemployed and there is nothing that I am doing that is related to the SETA programme" (Learner 8, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, EC).*

Most unemployed learners seemed optimistic about their potential to obtain employment because of the skills they acquired through the learnerships. Those who were unemployed at the time of the study felt that although the qualification had not offered them relevant employment yet, it offered them a foundation to begin searching for employment in their relevant fields of study:

> *"It has somehow created career opportunities even though I am still unemployed. When I apply, I add that qualification in all my applications and that helps because I have a matric certificate and an IT certificate. It assisted me then when I got a six months' contract for an admin position in the department of education, and this was after I had completed the learnership program" (Learner 8, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, EC).*

A couple of learners who completed the IT learnership expressed concern that the learnership was pitched at NQF level 3 which is lower than grade 12 (NQF level 4). They were of the view that it sent the wrong signals and reinforces the perception amongst employers that they were not employable as noted below:

"I think the reason we are not employable is the NQF level3 certificate and that is equivalent to Grade11 so for most employers it does not make sense to hire someone who has Grade11, and we are more equipped than your normal Grade11" (Learner 10, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, EC).

"It did not assist me because when I applied, I didn't include it in my application because they only needed matric certificate" (Learner 2, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, EC).

On the contrary, one of the learners who completed the ECD learnership that is at NQF level 4 noted that he was considered over-qualified by some employers and lost an employment opportunity as a result.

4.13.3 Learners' perceptions of learnerships impact on employment creation

Several of the learners who were employed at the time of the study, i.e., about two years post-completion of the learnership, did not attribute this employment to the learnership. This is because they were not employed in the relevant field or did not obtain the certificate upon completion. For some it was because the learnership was offered at a lower NQF level than what was required for the job as noted below:

"I wouldn't say it assisted me in finding my current employment, because I am now working for an NGO that deals with people with disabilities…" (Learner 11, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).

"It did not assist me because when I applied, I didn't include it in my application because they only needed matric certificate" (Learner 2, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, EC).

On the contrary, several learners who found employment immediately after completing the learnership, attributed this to the learnership as expressed below:

> *"When I applied for this post, they said I should bring all the qualifications that I have and the one from the learnership program was the one that really stood out as it was the highest level of education I have" (Learner 13, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).*

In sum, most of the learners, when starting the programmes, were not clear on what to expect of the programme. This may be indicative of a lack of induction at the start of the programmes, or inductions may be of an inferior quality. The learners who were unemployed two years upon completion of the programmes, more frequently noted that the programmes did not meet their expectations. Nevertheless, they were hopeful of finding employment in the future because of the skills that they have acquired through the learnerships.

With regards to learnerships' potential impact on employability, several learners felt that they were more employable because of the technical and soft skills gained during the programmes. However, those who participated in the learnership at a lower NQF level than their matric certificate felt that the learnership did not enhance their employability. Several learners felt that they are yet to apply the skills that they have acquired because they were not yet working or were working in fields that were unrelated to the learnerships that they have completed.

Most of the learners who were employed two years after completing the learnerships, did not attribute their finding employment to the learnerships. This was mainly because they were employed in fields that were unrelated to the learnership, or because they did not have a certificate to vouch for the skills that they have gained, or because the learnership was a qualification lower than grade 12.

4.14 Presentation of findings based on Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation.

The following section concludes on the key findings based on the interviews with learnership beneficiaries according to Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation i.e., reaction, learning, behaviour, and results.

4.14.1 Reaction

This level focuses on how the participants experienced the programme and the data reveals a combination of positive and negative experiences. Overall, respondents were positive about their experience of participating in the learnerships as indicated by several of the respondents. This is mainly because of factors such as the technical and soft skills acquired, the theoretical training that was characterised by helpful and knowledgeable training facilitators, adequate resourcing, and good quality training materials. The presence of supportive mentors and/or supervisors during workplace-based learning further made it a positive experience for the learners.

However, the main concern for the learners who completed the End User Computing learnership was that the qualification was offered at NQF level 3 which is a level lower than grade 12, thus they did not progress to a higher level in their education. These learners mostly did not have access to laptops in the workplace to enable practical learning and were often placed in workplaces that did not give them much exposure to activities that aligned with their theoretical learning.

Those learners who completed the ECD learnership expressed concern that they have not yet received their certificates from the ETDP SETA two years post-completion of the learnership. These factors, according to the learners, created negative perceptions of their employability amongst employers and compromised their chances of accessing employment. The delayed issuing of certificates may reduce the positive experiences that the learners had whilst participating in the programmes.

The non or delayed payment of stipends further compromised learners' ability to effectively participate in the programme because they did not have funds to cover travel

costs. Prolonged periods of unemployment post-completion of the learnerships may further erode the positive experiences acquired during the programme. This is evident in the fact that most of the learners who remain unemployed two years upon completion of the programmes felt that the programmes did not meet their expectations.

4.14.2 Learning

This level focuses on the knowledge and skills that learners acquired during the programmes. The learners agreed that the learnerships equipped them with both technical and soft skills. The learners who completed the End User Computing learnership were more inclined to emphasise the technical skills that they have gained. These included administrative, data capturing, computer or digital skills that were acquired during the work placement component of the learnership as demonstrated by the following quotations:

> *"I got the experience of a Clerk and assistant clerk and a bit of computing. Even if they can ask me to work at that clinic right now, I can do it because I know the work that they do and how they do it" (Male, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, WC).*

> *"It was a great experience for me and the staff at the school because when I got there most of the staff members did not have computer skills, so I taught them a lot and I was of great help to them to such an extent that they extended my contract with another six months" (Male, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, EC).*

The learners who completed the ECD learnership more frequently referred to the soft skills such as communication skills that they acquired during the learnerships. They often noted that these skills enable them to articulate themselves clearly which boosted their self-esteem and confidence:

"I do use my communication skills on daily basis at work, as I said I am an admin clerk and sometimes I deal with arrogant people on the phone or one on one and I have learned how to handle such people. I remain calm and address them politely and professionally" (Male, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).

However, a couple of learners who completed the End User computing learnership felt that the lack of resources such as limited access to laptops inhibited their ability to acquire practical skills. Several noted that the workplaces where they were placed exposed them to activities that were unrelated to the theoretical component of the End User computing learnership as expressed below:

"The thing is…we had access to computers and internet, but we did not fix computers like IT people would do. We didn't do programming as well and those are the things that we were taught about in theory classes" (Male, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, WC).

4.14.3 Behaviour

This level focuses on the extent to which participants applied the knowledge. Most of the learners who were employed at the time of the study, were not employed in the relevant fields related to the learnerships and thus felt that they were not adequately applying their newly acquired skills. Half of the learners were unemployed at the time of the study and felt that their skills were not utilized. However, there were instances where some who were employed in fields unrelated to the learnerships that they have completed, were given an opportunity to showcase the skills that they have gained as demonstrated below:

"There is this JMC thing that they have at SAPS, and we needed to do a presentation on that. I was able to assist in doing the power point slides for that presentation and they were very happy with the work that I had done. So had I not participated in this learnership programme I wouldn't have been able to the slides"

(Female, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, EC).

Some of the learners who completed the ECD learnership shared anecdotes of how they were applying the knowledge and skills acquired during the programme, through actively teaching children. A learner who did not work as an ECD teacher at the time of the study, noted that he was able to apply the soft skills such as patience that he was taught during the learnership:

"I have gained the experience of teaching particularly children; how to prepare your daily activities in class as a teacher and how to deal with different behaviours from children. I also gained a bit of experience in admin work" (Male, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).

"I am now working for an NGO that deals with people with disabilities, and such people need extra care and the patience. I feel like because of what I learned from the programme I was able to do my job here. …" (Male, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).

4.14.4 Results

This level focuses on whether the programme has achieved its intended results, i.e., whether it has achieved its objectives in terms of improving the employability of participants and their chances of accessing employment. In terms of employability, most of the learners felt equipped with new and relevant technical and soft skills. However, as noted previously, those who completed the End User Computing learnership were concerned that the programme was at an NQF level that is lower than grade 12, thus it did not improve their employability. Furthermore, learners who have not yet received certificates two years post-completion felt this prevented them from demonstrating their employability to potential employers. Respondents were less optimistic about the programme's impact on employment mainly because half of the learners remained

unemployed two years post-completion of the programmes or were not employed in relevant jobs that were aligned to the learnerships.

In sum, learners' reaction to the learnership, i.e., their experience on the programme was positive because of the positive aspects that were mostly associated with the theoretical component of the programme. Where learners had a less positive experience, it was mainly linked to shortcomings associated with the workplace-based learning (e.g., lack of resources, irrelevant exposure, etc.), or prolonged periods of unemployment. In terms of learning, learners generally felt equipped with technical and soft skills, however, some questioned the relevance of the skills acquired because they were trained at a lower NQF level or were exposed to unrelated skills in the workplace. Other felt that their learning was prohibited by a lack of resources in the workplace.

Several learners felt that their ability to apply the skills that they have gained (i.e., behaviour) was undermined by the fact that they were unemployed or not employed in the relevant field. Regarding whether the learnerships have achieved its intended results, i.e., improved employability, participants perceived a limited impact on employability. The End User Computing learners did not perceive improvement in their employability because the learnership was at a level lower than their highest qualification, i.e., grade 12. The ECD learners felt that the lack of access to their certificates made it difficult to demonstrate their employability to potential employers which may compromise their chances of finding employment. The learners generally felt that the learnerships had a limited impact on employment, because half of them remained unemployed two years post-completion of the programmes, and those who were employed, were in jobs that were unrelated to the learnerships.

4.15 Recommendations for improvement in the implementation of learnerships

The learners were asked to offer advice on how the learnerships could be improved. This question was asked to identify additional challenges that were undermining learnerships' potential impact on the employability and employment outcomes of beneficiaries. The learners recommended that the ETDP SETA conduct regular monitoring of the

programmes, that improvements be made to training material, and that awareness of learnerships be raised amongst the youth.

Learners who participated in the End User computing learnerships recommended that the course duration be increased and that the programme be pitched at a level higher than NQF level 4. Several learners, especially those who completed the ECD learnership requested more support from ETDP SETA with workplace placements. These recommendations are elaborated on below.

4.15.1 ETDP SETA should monitor learnerships.

Several learners appealed for the ETDP SETA to play an effective role in monitoring the implementation of learnerships. They referred to the importance of the SETA obtaining regular feedback from programme participants throughout the duration of the programme to gauge, amongst other, their interest in the study area, or if they would like to change course. Others noted that the SETA should ensure that training providers use training facilities that are fit for purpose, easily accessible, and situated in safe areas:

> *"They (ETDP SETA) should follow up with the learners during and after the learnership programme. They should also commit to this programme, as much as they outsource to service provider" (Female, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).*

> *"My suggestion to SETA is that they should do follow ups with learners who took part in their learnership programmes and find out if they are still interested in more similar learnerships or find out if they still want to continue with what they have learned" (Male, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).*

4.15.2 Digitise training content.

There were a few suggestions for the improvement of the training content. Some included digitizing the content to promote environmental sustainability goals, i.e., "going green"

and to improve ease of access for learners who have the means to access materials online. One learner recommended using simple English to promote greater understanding of the content:

> *"My suggestion would be that if they could change from using paper to tablets or phones for example, they could convert their study guide and study materials from paper and maybe create links where learners can just download them instead of printing everything. They should go green" (Male, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).*

4.15.3 Raise awareness of learnerships

Others felt that there was need to increase awareness of the programme to ensure that all qualifying youth benefitted:

> *"My suggestion to SETA is that they should make the learnership programme accessible to the youth and they should publish it on their social media platforms so that people know about them" (Male, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, GP).*

Additionally, it was suggested that the current recruitment process should include more stringent measures to ensure that only motivated candidates enrolled in the programme. Some respondents expressed concern that the current mechanism of recruitment was weak and that it attracted learners who had ulterior motives, i.e., who were solely attending to access the stipend.

4.15.4 Increase the duration of End User computing learnership.

Several learners, mainly those who completed the End User computing learnership, commented that the programme duration was too short to accommodate the theoretical and practical components of the programme. They suggested that the programme be extended to two to three years, or that the learning material content be condensed to fit in the prescribed 12 months' period:

"They should have learnership programmes that are two years long. One year is not enough to learn and understand the biology of Information Technology" (Male, National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, EC).

A few learners felt that the current grading of the End User computing programme should be in line with the main objective of learnerships which is to offer learners an opportunity to progress up the NQF levels and increase their employability. Thus, the expectation was that the learnership qualification enrolled for should be at a higher NQF level than the qualifications that learners held upon entering the program.

4.15.5 Provide more support with workplace placements.

Several learners preferred that the ETDP SETA assisted them to identify and secure employers for the practical, workplace experience. One recommended that the SETA issued them a reference letter upon completion to submit to potential employers. Some learners expressed that for the workplace experience to be meaningful, learners should be exposed to work related skills which were aligned to their learnerships. Respondents suggested that not only should learners be supported with workplace placement; but that the program should identify the appropriate workplaces that are aligned to the programs:

"I feel that they should have placed us in IT companies or government departments for us to do our practical instead of placing us in clinics or schools where there is a potential of us not doing what we learned in the classroom training" (Male, Nationale Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF 3, WC).

A couple of learners noted that learners should be linked with job opportunities upon completion of the programmes:

"They could also assist learners in finding permanent employment once they have completed the programme because it could be demoralising for us to complete a qualification of two years with practical experience" (Male, National Certificate in Early Childhood Development, NQF 4, KZN).

Other respondents were completely satisfied with the program and felt that the programmes were faultless and did not require any improvement.

In sum, several learners recommended that awareness of learnerships be raised so that more youth could benefit. The learners reflected that they mainly learnt about the learnerships via community-based structures which is positive that awareness is raised at that level. However, young people who are not actively participating in community life may still miss out on these opportunities. The study reveals that there were no consistent criteria applied to select the right candidates for each of the programmes. The lack of proper assessment and screening of candidates may have resulted in learners' being channelled to programmes that were pitched at a level lower than or equivalent to grade 12, thus inhibiting educational and career progression.

Learners were generally satisfied with the theoretical component of the programme because the training facilitators were well organised, knowledgeable, and available to assist. They were satisfied with the training materials but recommended the digitisation of training content to make it more accessible. The learners generally had sufficient to training resources during the theoretical component of the learnership.

The most positive aspect of the workplace-based learning was the availability of mentors and/or supervisors who were supportive. The learners who completed the ECD learnership were mainly appealing for more support from the ETDP SETA to help them secure workplace placements as they were primarily responsible for finding workplaces on their own. This may be indicative of the dearth of employers who offer workplace-based learning.

The End User Computing learners struggled to find workplaces that could offer them the relevant practical exposure and they were often engaged in activities that were unrelated to the theoretical learning, meaning that they were not gaining the relevant experience. These learners often experienced resource constraints (e.g., no laptops) in the workplace that further inhibited their learning. The learners further recommended that the National Certificate in Information Technology End User Computing, NQF level 3, be extended from 12 months to 36 months in duration. According to these learners, the current format did not allow sufficient time to sufficiently cover all aspects of the programme.

Furthermore, the protracted issuing of certificates upon completion of the programmes may also compromise learners' chances of finding employment. Most of the learners, across both programmes, appealed that the ETDP SETA play a more active role in monitoring the programme on a regular basis to gauge learner interest in the programmes and as an early warning system to identify and mitigate potential risks and challenges.

The next chapter presents a discussion of the above findings against the existing literature and the theory of change for learnerships as well as Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The study aimed to understand the dynamics enabling and constraining the implementation of learnerships as critical skills development interventions. It also highlighted workplace-based learning, effective mentoring, formal partnerships, and appropriate alignment of learnerships to sector priorities as enablers to the implementation of learnerships as skills development interventions. The limited participation of the corporate employers, inadequate resourcing, limited pathways upon completion, and the delayed issuing of certificates emerged as barriers to the implementation of learnerships as skills development interventions:

The respondents in this study perceived limited impacts of ETDP SETA learnerships on the employability and employment of beneficiaries. The learners mainly exited the learnerships with qualifications that were at an NQF level lower than or equivalent to grade 12, the highest level of education that most participants held when they entered the programmes. This means that there was no progression in the educational attainment of learners' post-completion of the programmes. This is an important dynamic around learnerships, as it raises questions about entry-level criteria and how these criteria are designed. Furthermore, only six out of 13 learners were employed two years post-completion of the learnerships, representing a 46% employment rate. Those who were employed were in jobs that were unrelated to the learnerships.

These factors are elaborated on in the sections that follow against the theory of change for learnerships (Motala et al., 2020), the existing literature, and Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model. The discussion is presented in terms of the main the sub-research questions.

5.2 The dynamics that enable the implementation of learnerships as skills development interventions.

The theory of change developed for learnerships (Motala et al., 2020) states that for learnerships to be implemented effectively and to achieve its objectives the ETDP SETA needs to invest its resources in the development of systems, guidelines, and a supportive skills development institutional framework. Furthermore, the theory of change identified the following pathways as critical for learnerships to achieve its objectives of improving beneficiaries' employability, which would ultimately lead to their accessing employment:

i) Employers who are willing to host learners and collaborate with education providers and employers,
ii) Theoretical and workplace learning that is job-relevant,
iii) Experienced mentors, and
iv) Learners receive certificates upon completion.

The following sections discuss the factors that were highlighted as enablers to the implementation of learnerships as skills development interventions, i.e., formal partnerships between the ETDP SETA and key stakeholders, investments in monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and effective mentoring.

5.2.1 Workplace-based learning as critical enabler to enhance the employability of learners.

Most of the host employers and ETDP SETA officials interviewed for this study regarded the workplace learning component of learnerships as critical to the enhancement of employability. This is consistent with previous studies, which found that learnerships improved the employability of learners and the structured workplace learning component was indicated as the determining factor to improve employability (Louw, 2009). According to Naidu (2019) an enabling workplace environment characterised by supportive mentors, a structured and well-resourced training programme, and mechanisms that promote engagement and communication with learners is critical to the retention of learners on these programmes and the improvement of their employability. However, this study found that

the potential impacts of workplace-based learning were diminished by the insufficient resourcing of this component of learnerships and the limited involvement of host employers to offer these opportunities. These factors are interrogated later in the discussion.

5.2.2 Effective mentoring in workplace-based learning

All respondents emphasized the importance of effective mentoring as an enabler for the effective delivery of workplace-based learning. Respondents described effective mentoring in this study as occurring with mentors who were supportive and available to the learners. This finding is consistent with the theory of change of learnerships (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020) and other studies that singled out effective mentorship as an important enabler for the effective delivery of the workplace-based component of learnerships (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020; Naidu, 2019).

5.2.3 Formal partnerships between ETDP SETA and TVET colleges

The study found that the ETDP SETA had formal partnerships, i.e., formalised legal agreements, with mainly public-sector-based partners, e.g., TVET colleges and other government departments, to collaboratively implement the learnerships. The Seta representatives that were interviewed in this study acknowledged that they had no formal partnerships with corporate or private businesses as host employers.

The TVET colleges served as both training providers for the theoretical component of the learnership as well as the provider of the workplace-based component of the learnerships. According to a respondent, the workplace-based experience was mainly simulated. The formal partnership between the ETDP SETA and the TVET colleges is positive because it is consistent with the objectives of the White Paper for PSET, which aims to develop a unified and responsive PSET system characterised by improved coordination and articulation between the various strands of the system, and to promote greater employer involvement in the skills development system (Department of Higher Education and Training , 2013).

However, the lack of formal partnerships between the ETDP SETA and corporate/private sector employers, which are discussed below, has implications for the relevance of the workplace-based training that is offered through learnerships.

5.2.4 Alignment of learnerships to sector priorities and investments in monitoring and evaluation frameworks

The alignment of learnerships to sector needs and priorities coincides refers to the extent to which the objectives of a skills development intervention are consistent with the needs of stakeholders and skills development imperatives (ETDP SETA, 2019). The ETDP SETA officials confirmed that the design of skills development interventions, such as learnerships were informed by sector and industry needs through Sector Skills Plans and Workplace Skills Plans. This implies that, in theory, learnerships should be responsive to labour market demands. Evidence reveals that high levels of youth unemployment persist because of a disconnect between training content and sector skills needs and an inadequate understanding of the requirements of the various economic sectors (Bhorat et al., 2020). Although learnerships are theoretically aligned to sector needs, the low levels of unemployment post-completion of the learnerships and the employment of learners in unrelated fields raise questions regarding the relevance of learnerships, which are elaborated on further in the discussion.

The study revealed that respondents reaffirmed the importance of monitoring and evaluating skills development interventions to ensure that, at a practical level, learnerships are responsive to sector needs and labour market demands. This is evident in the ETDP SETA's increased financial investments in monitoring and evaluation and the leadership instituting it as a key performance area in the Seta's annual performance plan, according to some of the respondents. The prioritisation of M & E is consistent with key national frameworks such as the NSDS III, which emphasises the prioritization of the improvement of the effectiveness and efficiency of the skills development system (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019).

In sum, respondents in this study regarded workplace-based learning, characterised by effective mentoring and monitoring and evaluation, as important enablers for the implementation of learnerships as skills development interventions.

5.3. The dynamics that deter the implementation of learnerships as skills development interventions

5.3.1 Limited participation of corporate/private sector involvement in workplace-based learning

The study found limited participation of corporate enterprises in workplace-based learning as host employers, as evident from a respondent's acknowledgment that the ETDP SETA mainly had formalized partnerships with TVET colleges and non-profit or social enterprises. This is consistent with previous studies that found limited participation of especially small businesses in workplace-based learning (National Skills Authority, 2018; Rankin et al., 2015).

This finding was consistent with the HSRC's assessment of ETDP SETA learnerships which found a decline in employers hosting learners over time (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020). The learners who completed the ECD learnerships in the current study often expressed that they struggled to find host employers because they had to identify their own workplaces, known as self-placement (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020). This may be further confirmation of the dearth of host employers.

The dearth of host employers for workplace-based training, especially from the corporate sector, has implications for the relevance of the training, i.e., the extent to which the objectives of skills development interventions are consistent with the needs of stakeholders and skills development imperatives.

Although respondents indicated that the theoretical design of learnerships were informed by sector needs, the relevance of the practical skills acquired during workplace training may be questioned due to the limited interaction with actual employers because the workplace-based learning offered in TVET colleges is often offered as simulated training. This is consistent with the literature which demonstrates that interventions targeted at

addressing youth unemployment have limited interaction with employers and thus fail to equip youth with the skills that are of interest to employers (Graham & Mhlatsheni, 2015). This perpetuates the skills mismatch, that has been cited as one of the main drivers of youth unemployment in South Africa (Ibid.)

Although ETDP SETA officials and host employers confirmed the existence of a supportive legislative and policy environment within which learnerships were implemented in South Africa, this study found that the practical application of these frameworks was limited on the ground, i.e., evident by the dearth of private sector host employers offering workplace-based learning. This is inconsistent with key national frameworks emphasis on the importance of the bridging of the divide between education and the world of work, and the SETAs have been identified as critical in narrowing this divide (Department of Higher Education and Training , 2013; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019).

5.3.2 Inadequate resourcing of workplace-based component of learnerships

The question regarding resources relates to efficiency which is a measure of how economically resources or inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc) are converted to results (ETDP SETA, 2019).

Several respondents, host employers and learners, noted that a lack of resources, especially related to the workplace-based learning component of learnerships, i.e., tools of the trade, inhibited learning on these programmes. This is consistent with a recent assessment of ETDP SETA-funded programmes which found that 10% of work integrated learning beneficiaries raised resource constraints as a concern (Motala et al., 2020). The learners in this study who completed the End User Computing learnership noted that they did not have access to laptops in the workplace to practically apply the knowledge that they have learnt during theoretical learning. This may be attributed to the fact that the subsidisation of learnerships, by design, tend to benefit larger firms and is biased against smaller firms (Rankin et al., 2015). Some learners in this study attended workplace-based learning at

smaller organisations such as community-based organisations, e.g., creches, and schools that may not have had sufficient financial resources to fund the tools of the trade requirements and overheads that are associated with the implementation of learnerships. Furthermore, several learners noted that the delayed or non-payment of stipends by the ETDP SETA curtailed their participation in the programmes because they were unable to afford transport costs to travel to the training sites. This is consistent with previous research that found that learners who participated in work integrated learning programmes mainly use the stipend to cover the cost of transport to training and to fund their job-search activities given the high cost of work-seeking (Graham, et al., 2016).

5.3.3 Lack of educational progression within the learnership system

The study found that learners completed learnerships that were implemented at levels lower than or equivalent to grade 12, which was the highest qualification for most of the learners upon entry to the programmes. This phenomenon contrasts with the objectives of learnerships that aim to improve employability and compromises the relevance of learnerships (ETDP SETA, 2019). This finding is consistent with previous assessments of learnerships (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020). This is in stark contrast to the learnership theory of change that states that the participation in learnerships should lead to an overall improvement in the qualifications of the workforce (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020). This finding is further inconsistent with notions that learnerships should lead to the development of new skills and capabilities through integrated training offered at basic, intermediate, and/or high skills levels (Kruss et al., 2012).

Previous studies do not interrogate why learners are channelled to learnerships at lower NQF levels (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020). However, the current study suggests ineffective recruitment strategies may be a contributing factor to this phenomenon. The literature confirms that a carefully designed, fair, transparent, and inclusive recruitment and selection process that involves all key stakeholders as enabler to the successful implementation of learnerships (Davies & Farquharson, 2004). However, this study revealed that strategies to recruit learners for the respective learnerships were

seldom applied consistently. This may have resulted in insufficient screening and placement of learners into learnerships that were at a level lower than or equivalent to their highest qualification.

Ineffective recruitment strategies may also be contributing to what several respondents referred to as "learnership hopping", i.e., a phenomenon where learners allegedly participate in multiple learnerships, seldom completing these, in pursuit of higher paying stipends. This, respondents noted, resulted in limited career progression and specialisation, and perpetuated the lack of articulation in the system because learners reportedly seldomly complete learnerships or participate in multiple, often unrelated learnerships.

Previous authors attributed the phenomenon where young people cycle through multiple training programmes to an increased awareness of the importance of education amongst young people (Graham et al., 2019). These studies revealed that youth tended to participate in multiple training programmes before entering employment and concluded that their pathways to the labour market were staggered (Graham et al., 2019) or zig-zagged due to limited jobs in South Africa (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020).

5.3.4 Delayed issuing of certificates

The current and other studies found that learners often did not receive their certificates upon the completion of learnerships (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020). Some of the learners in this study noted that they were excluded from certain job opportunities due to their inability to produce their certificate. The non-issuing of certificates held negative implications as employers regarded a qualification as a signal of employability (Rankin et al., 2015).

In sum, limited host employer involvement in workplace-based learning raises questions related to the relevance of the training offered which is inconsistent with skills development frameworks that aim to bridge the divide between education provision and work. Furthermore, the insufficient resourcing of workplace-based learning raises questions regarding the adequacy of support that host employers receive from the ETDP SETA. This

is an important consideration as insufficient support may further disincentivise employers from becoming involved in workplace-based learning.

This study suggests insufficient recruitment strategies as a possible reason for the channelling of learners to learnerships that are at a lower or equivalent NQF level to their highest qualification, and the resultant lack of articulation within the system. Learnerships' participating in multiple learnerships in pursuit of stipends, as reported by the respondents, may further exacerbate the lack of articulation. The study suggests that the non-issuing of certificates may further compromise potential employers' perceptions of learners' employability and their chances of finding employment.

The next section discusses the perceived impact of learnerships from the perspectives of ETDP SETA officials, host employers, and learnership beneficiaries. This is followed by a discussion of respondent's perceptions of learnerships' impact on the employment outcomes of learners.

5.4 Perceived impact of learnerships on employability and employment

Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model for skills development interventions refers to impact as "results", i.e., the extent to which the programme or intervention has achieved its intended results or objectives (ETDP SETA, 2019). Although this study did not assess the impact of learnerships, it did ask about respondent's perceptions of the impact of learnerships based on Kirkpatrick's evaluation criteria which are discussed in the sections that follow.

5.4.1 Respondents' perceptions of the impact of learnerships on employability

The study findings reveal that the attainment of improved employability is a complex issue. Most respondents in this study, programme implementers and learners, reported that learnerships improved beneficiaries' employability because it equipped learners with both technical (computer skills, teaching skills, etc.) and soft skills (communication, self-esteem, confidence, etc.) that are sought after by potential employers. Learning, i.e., the

acquisition of knowledge and skills when participating in a skills development intervention is considered critical in Kirkpatrick's four-level model to evaluate skills development interventions (ETDP SETA, 2019).

The importance of the acquisition of technical and soft skills during learnerships is consistent with research conducted in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa that revealed that 00employers require three main types of skills sets when recruiting youth: cognitive skills (critical thinking, literacy, numeracy), non-cognitive skills (life or behavioural skills), and technical skills (i.e., skills geared towards a specific occupation) (Jayaram & Engmann, 2014). This is further consistent with research that confirms that interventions such as learnerships that emphasise technical and soft skills training including workplace experience has a positive impact on the employability of the youth (De Lannoy et al., 2018).

However, the End User computing learners in this study were of the view that their participating in a learnership at a lower level than grade 12, may have compromised their employability. Contrary to conceptions of employability which emphasises the individual's capabilities including personal assets and intrinsic characteristics (absolute dimensions) (Cheng et al., 2022), learners in this study viewed the NQF level of the training, as opposed to their individual capabilities, as central to employer perceptions of their employability. The learners in this study were aware that employers were using educational qualifications as a signal of employability, thus aligning with conceptions of employability that emphasise the relative dimensions of employability, i.e., positing that employability is primarily determined by the labour market (Ibid.). This is consistent with evidence that demonstrates that the South African labour market tends to favour individuals who are highly skilled and tend to exclude those with low skills levels (Graham & Mhlatsheni, 2015).

Several End User computing learners in this study noted that the skills that they acquired during workplace training were mainly unrelated to what they learnt during the theoretical training. This perpetuates the mismatch between the skills produced during education or training and the skills required in the labour market (Bhorat et al., 2020). Furthermore, as

previously noted, the ECD learners in this study suspected that their inability to present their certificate to potential employers due to the non-issuing of the certificate from the ETDP SETA may have compromised employers' perceptions of their employability, some asserting that they lost employment opportunities as a result. Research suggests that certification may serve as a signal of employability to employers (Rankin et al., 2015). Previously, it was concluded that learnerships did not have an impact on employability when there is no certificate issued upon completion of the learnership (Louw, 2009).

Several authors interpreted learners' entry into employment upon completion of learnerships as a signal of employability. Where learners remain unemployed post-completion of a learnership, it was concluded that the learnership had no impact on employability On the contrary, where learners found employment upon completion of learnerships, it was concluded that the learnerships succeeded in producing employable individuals (Mukora et al., 2008).

5.4.2 Respondents' perceptions of the impact of learnerships on employment

This study confirms that learners' pathways to employment are not linear, but zig zagged as found previously (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020). Upon completion of learnerships, learners may find employment, others may revert to unemployment, whilst others may enter new learnerships, etc. This zig-zag progression is attributed to a lack of employment opportunities in South Africa (Ibid.). Furthermore, a recent assessment of ETDP SETA learnerships revealed that not all learnership beneficiaries followed the same trajectories, and that access to the labour market and earning potential was determined by participants' race, gender, and socio-economic status which reflected South Africa's traditional occupational patterns (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020). Black African participants, particularly from a lower socio-economic background, had more complex labour market trajectories than participants from other race and from higher socio-economic groups (Ibid.).

In this study, less than half of the learners were employed two years post-completion of the learnerships. This is consistent with previous studies which found learnerships employment rates that were above 40% but below 50% (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020; Motala et al., 2020). Respondents in this study attributed these low employment rates to slow economic growth which inhibits the demand for labour as consistent with the literature (Reddy et al., 2016).

These low employment rates of learnerships resulted in respondents questioning the relevance of learnerships and cited this as a reason for the re-curriculation of learnerships to occupational programmes to make it more responsive to labour market demands. The literature is inconclusive on the sustainability of employment over time. Sustainability refers to the continuation of benefits from the interventions, long after major development assistance had been completed (ETDP SETA, 2020). Some authors report that learnerships' employment effects fade over time (Rankin et al., 2015) and others report sustained effects over time (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020).

In the current study, the learners who were employed two years post-completion of the learnerships, did not attribute this employment to the learnership. This is in constrast to a

previous assessment of ETDP SETA learnerships which found that more than half of learners (58%) said their jobs were to a great extent linked to the learnership (Ibid.). The learners in the current study mainly did not attribute their employment to the learnerships because they were employed in jobs that were unrelated to the learnerships. This is consistent with a recent assessment of ETDP SETA learnerships where four in every ten learners (42%) noted that their jobs were not at all related (12%) or related to a limited extent to the learnership (30%) (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020). These findings reiterate the questions regarding the relevance of learnerships, i.e., the extent to which these programmes are equipping learners with skills that are required in the labour market.

The fact that most of the learners in this study who were employed two years post-completion of the programme were employed in jobs unrelated to the learnership furthermore undermines the learners' ability to apply the skills that they acquired during the programme, and it may result in their unlearning these skills over time. Behavior, the extent to which participants in skills development interventions apply the knowledge and skills acquired is the third level on Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model and is important to assess the effectiveness of skills development interventions (ETDP SETA, 2019). In the current study, learners noted that prolonged periods of unemployment undermined their ability to apply the skills that they acquired during the learnerships.

However, on a positive note, several of the learners who were unemployed in this study continued searching for jobs two years post completion of the learnerships and were confident that they would ultimately find employment due to the skills acquired during the learnership. Previous studies concluded that interventions such as learnerships may play a role in keeping youth oriented to the labour market over time, fostering job search resilience (Graham et al., 2019; Human Sciences Research Council, 2020).

In sum, this study found from the perspective of respondents, that learnerships had a limited effect on employability because of a lack of educational progression within the system, unrelated skills offered during workplace-based learning, and the non-issuing of certificates upon completion. Similarly, the study found that learnerships had a limited

effect on employment given the low employment rates two years post-completion of the learnerships, mostly in jobs unrelated to the learnerships.

5.5 Conclusion

This study found that workplace-based learning, effective mentoring, and monitoring and evaluation systems are important design features that can enable the implementation of learnerships as skills development interventions. However, a dearth of involvement of corporates as host employers and inadequate resourcing may undermine the effects of workplace-based learning. The study suggests that ineffective recruitment strategies and "learnership hopping" may be a possible contributing factor to the limited educational progression within the learnership system.

The study found limited perceived impact of learnerships on the employability of learners due to limited educational progression within the system and the non-issuing of certificates upon completion. The study further found a limited perceived impact of learnerships on employment due to low employment rates two years post-completion of the learnerships, and the employment of learners in unrelated jobs.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sought to understand the dynamics that enable and deter the implementation of ETDP SETA funded learnerships as critical skills development interventions. A secondary aim was to obtain insights into beneficiaries', ETDP SETA programme implementers', and host employers' perceptions of learnerships' effect on employability and employment outcomes for beneficiaries. The study concluded that:

i) Workplace-based learning, that is well resourced and characterised by effective mentoring and monitoring and evaluation systems may enable the implementation of learnerships as skills development interventions.
ii) Limited involvement of employers in workplace-based learning and lack of educational progression within the learnership system due to the offering of learnerships at low NQF levels may deter the implementation of learnerships as skills development interventions.
iii) The perceived impact of learnerships on employability was limited due to a lack of educational progression within the learnership system and the delayed or the non-issuing of certificates.
iv) The perceived impact of learnerships on employment was limited due to the low employment rates two years post-completion and the employment of learners in jobs that were unrelated to the learnerships.

The low levels of employment of learnership beneficiaries could be attributed to the negative economic trajectory of South Africa's economy, that is characterised by sluggish growth and job shedding in certain economic sectors (De Lannoy et al., 2018). It is further exacerbated by the skills mismatch, i.e., the disconnect between labour demand and supply which is cited as an important driver of youth unemployment (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). It is for this reason that national and skills development policy frameworks emphasise the bridging of the divide between education provision and the world of work to ensure the delivery of skills that are required by the labour market (Department of Higher Education

and Training, 2013; National Planning Commission, 2013). Learnerships are critical in bridging this divide due to their location as a vocational education programme that necessitates collaboration between educational providers and employers, and SETAs have been singled out as the bridge to connect these two worlds (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013).

This study points to workplace-based learning and mentoring as they are associated with essential enablers that could enable learnerships' implementation to address the skills mismatch. However, the study revealed certain shortcomings associated with work-based learning including a dearth of employer involvement and inadequate resourcing that may undermine the relevance of the training to address labour market demands. Limited employer involvement contrasts with key policies such as the NDP, NSDS III, and the NSDP that emphasise the improved integration of work-based learning with theoretical learning. The best vocational systems in the world emphasise the importance of the involvement of employers in curriculum development and training (Solga et al., 2014). In addition, the current and other studies confirmed that learnerships continued to be offered at low NQF levels which compromised employability and perpetuated limited articulation within the system (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020). This is inconsistent with skills development imperatives such as the NSDS III and the NSDP which promote programmes that enable sufficient progression to intermediate and higher-level qualifications. This may further exacerbate the persisting negative perceptions amongst employers about the quality of education in South Africa (De Lannoy et al., 2018). The study suggests that ineffective recruitment strategies may perpetuate a lack of articulation within the learnership system, which could be an area for interrogation in future studies. In addition, the non-issuing of certificates to learners upon completion of learnerships emerged in the current and other studies as a prevalent challenge Louw (2009) and may foster negative perceptions of employability amongst employers (Rankin et al., 2015).
Thus, based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 Incentivise employers to participate in workplace-based learning.

The ETDP SETA could create greater awareness of existing incentives to employers for participating in skills development, including the learnership tax incentive and the employment tax incentive. Furthermore, the ETDP SETA could reduce the administrative burden associated with learnerships that several employers in the current study raised as a concern and employers in a previous study cited as a key reason for non-participation in skills development (Franz et al., 2022).

6.2.2 Promote awareness of skills development policy imperatives to obtain employer buy-in and promote the relevance of learnerships.

The aim is for the ETDP SETA, as the facilitator of skills development programmes to leverage its partnership with TVET colleges to educate all stakeholders involved in the PSET system, including employers, training service providers, and programme beneficiaries, on the key objectives of key policies that inform skills development in the country, including the White Paper for PSET, NDP, the HRD-SA, and the NSDP. This is to ensure that all stakeholders have a consistent understanding of the skills development imperatives. The SETA could drive more deliberate efforts to continually capacitate stakeholders on the scarce and critical skills in the ETD sector and involve employers to promote the relevance of learnerships. These capacity development initiatives could take the form of multi-stakeholder forums that involve all the relevant stakeholders.

6.2.3 Implement improved learnership recruitment strategies policies to promote articulation within learnerships and the entire PSET system.

The ETDP SETA could consider developing and/or implementing policies that promote improved and consistent recruitment strategies for learnerships. This is to ensure that learners are channeled toward learnerships that are in line with their interests and that promoted progression, i.e., learnerships offered at a level higher than the beneficiaries' highest level of education upon entry to learnerships. This study found that learners were not sufficiently assessed upon entry to the learnerships and participated in learnerships that were lower than or equivalent to their qualifications upon entry, i.e., grade 12 at NQF level four.

6.2.4 Enforce agreements associated with issuing certificates to learners upon completion of learnerships.

The SETA Workplace-based Learning Programme Agreement Regulations state that learners should be issued a certificate within 30 days after the assessment and verification processes have been completed (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020). The SETA could appoint officers that are tasked with monitoring enforcement of and compliance with legislative frameworks as an early warning system to identify potential bottlenecks in the issuing of certificates. The SETA could further work towards reducing the administrative burdens associated with the issuing of certificates to learners.

6.3 Proposed recommendations for further research

The late or non-payment of stipends to learners and the non-issuing of certificates to learners upon completion of programmes by the ETDP SETA emerged as a recurring them in this and other studies (Human Sciences Research Council, 2020). There is a need for further research into the institutional factors that give rise to these challenges, as these factors affect learners' ability to optimally participate in the learnerships, which in turn may compromise their chances of accessing employment.

This study suggested that ineffective recruitment strategies may contribute to the limited articulation within learnerships and the PSET system. This finding is not conclusive and may be probed in future research.

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Annexure 1: Learner Schedule

Respondent Name:	
Contact Number:	
E-mail:	
Province (Centre location):	
Host Employer:	
Interview Date:	
Interview Time:	
Duration of the Programme:	

Demographic Information

1.

Age……

2. Gender

1	Male	
2	Female	

3. Race

1	African	
2	Indian	
3	Coloured	
4	White	
5	Other please specify)	

Question	**Response**
1. Please comment on the ETDP SETA Learnership Programme you undertook. **E.g., how were you selected, where did you attend classroom training, who was training you, where did you do your employer placement?**	

Question	Response
2. When you went into training, what qualifications and/or work experience did you have?	
3. Now that you have undergone the training, what qualifications and/or work experience have you gained? (The respondent should give the full qualification title as it appears on the certificate obtained)	
4. a) Please comment on your experience during assignment to an employer for experiential learning. **E.g. was it the right fit for you? Organizational culture? Support provided? etc.** b) How is what you are currently doing related to the ETDP SETA funded programme that you went through? If not, how is it not related?	
5. Tell us about the training provider: Who did the training? Were you happy with the quality of service offered by the training provider?	
6. Did the learnership meet your expectations? Please explain.	
7. a) What are your thoughts about the Learnership Programme you went through in terms of its relevance to what you studied for and your career aspirations? b) Could you please relay to me, the skills, and competencies that you acquired during the programme? c) To what extent are you using the skills and competencies gained from the programme? d) What career opportunities has the programme created for you?	
8. a) Are there aspects of the workplace placement that you did not like? b) If yes, what do you suggest the Learnership Programme could do or should have done to enhance workplace placement for you?	
9. Did you receive your stipends during your time in the Learnership Programme?	
10. Were you happy with the quality of learning material? **i.e. in terms of its relevance to the industry? Clarity of information? etc.**	
11. Did you experience any problems with the learning provider? Please explain.	
12. a) Has the learnership assisted you in finding employment?	

Question	Response
b) If not, in your view, why has the learnership not helped you find employment?	
13. What are some of the challenges you experienced while undertaking the learnership, if any? **E.g., finances? Support? Inadequate training? A lack of trainers/mentors? etc.**	
14. What suggestions do you have that would help improve the Learnership Programme?	

GENERAL PROBES

Can you say more about _____?
Please tell me a story regarding what you have shared with regarding _____?
Can you give me an example of _____?
How do you feel about _____?
Can you tell me about a time that _____?

Annexure 2: ETDPSETA Officials Schedule

Respondent Name:	
Job Title:	
Contact Number:	
E-mail:	
Province:	
Name of Company:	
Interviewer:	
Interview Date:	
Interview Time:	

Demographic Information

1. Age……

2. Gender:

1	Male	
2	Female	

3. Race:

1	African	
2	Indian	
3	Coloured	
4	White	
5	Other (please specify)	

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS:	**Response**
Briefly explain what the Learnership Programme is about. **E.g., skills development? addressing unemployment? Empowering young people? Increasing the workforce?**	
What recruitment criteria is used to qualify a graduate?	
What are some of the changes that have taken place in the programme between 2017 and 2019?	
What are the objectives of the Learnership Programme?	
How is the programme structured and managed?	
What are your expectations from the ETDP SETA, Provincial Government and National Government with regards to the Learnership Programme?	
EFFECTIVENESS:	
Are the outcomes for the programme clearly related to the goals of the programme? If yes, how so? If no, why?	
What are some of the opportunities created by the Learnership Programme for its participants? **E.g., employment opportunities in the industry? Networking opportunities? Exposure to different skills and competencies?**	
What types of skills are the graduates expected to attain upon completion of the Learnership Programme?	
Do you have a system in place to monitor and report on the achievements and challenges of the programme in terms of all of the indicators?	
EFFICIENCY:	
Do you consider the resources spent on the project worthwhile considering the results obtained? Please explain.	

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS:	**Response**
Is there an adequate financial management system in place?	
Has the organisation developed partnerships to implement the programme? **E.g., with non-profit organisations/NGOs? Private companies? TVET colleges and other higher education institutions? Government? etc.**	
Does the programme assess the competencies and experience of learners (RPL)? If yes, how so? If no, why?	
Does the programme enable the beneficiaries to attain learning and skills outcomes? If yes, how so? If no, why?	
Do you feel that the time allocated for the learnership is sufficient for the learners to acquire the skills required for the industry? Please explain.	
Are adequate resources available to conduct monitoring and evaluation (M&E) timeously? Please explain.	
RELEVANCE:	
Are the outcomes of the programme relevant to the needs of the ETD Sector?	
Is the programme related to the mission and vision of the organisation?	
Does the programme take into account the policy environment within which the programme is being implemented (such as the National Skills Plan Strategy, Sector Skills Plans, etc.)?	
SUSTAINABILITY:	
Do partner organisations/programme stakeholders understand and support the broad objectives of the organisation and the programme? Are these partnerships formalised?	
Does the programme improve the employability of the graduates? Please explain.	

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS:	**Response**
IMPACT:	
Do you have good organisational governance, financial management, HR administration, compliance with legislative requirements and sufficient funding to sustain the organisation?	
Have the strategic goals and objectives set for the programme been achieved?	
Do the learners (graduates) feel that the programme has enabled them to access exit opportunities?	
What mechanisms do you have in place for reporting regularly and for making this information accessible to different parties (i.e. beneficiaries, stakeholders, policy makers, DHET, TVET colleges, etc.)?	
CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:	
Overall, how would you describe the usefulness of the programme?	
What are some of the challenges ETDP SETA has encountered in providing this Learnership Programme? **E.g., lack of funding? Shortage of host employers and/or graduates? Lack of training resources? Inadequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms? Low programme completion rates? etc.**	
What steps, if any, have been taken to address the challenges mentioned above?	
What are some of the recommendations that you, as a coordinator of the programme, would make for the sustainable implementation of the programme in future? **E.g. improving the curriculum? Improving placement criteria? Better monitoring and evaluation mechanisms? Improving support to graduates and host employers? increasing training resources? etc.**	

GENERAL PROBES

Can you say more about the nature the nature of your involvement in _____?
When you say the programme is a "success", what do mean by "success"?

Can you give me an example of _____ ?
Would you elaborate on _____?
I would appreciate more detail regarding what you have share about _____?

Annexure 3: Employer Schedule

Respondent Name:	
Job Title:	
Contact Number:	
E-mail:	
Province:	
Name of Company:	
Interview Date:	
Interview Time:	
Duration of the Programme:	

Demographic Information

1.

Age……

2. Gender

1	Male	
2	Female	

3. Race:

1	African	
2	Indian	
3	Coloured	
4	White	
5	Other (please specify)	

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS	**Response**
What governs the ETDP Learnership Programme in your organisation? In other words, what are the objectives of the programme?	
What recruitment criteria is used to qualify a learner for placement?	
What are your expectations when the TVET graduates enroll for the ETDP SETA Learnership Programme?	
Programme Management Support:	
How would you describe your working relationship with ETDP SETA during the skills development programme?	
EFFECTIVENESS:	
What are some of the opportunities created by the Learnership Programme for its participants?	
What type of skills are the learners expected to attain upon completion of the Learnership Programme? **E.g., critical thinking skills, teamwork, technical skills? Time management skills, etc.**	
Does the Learnership Programme enable beneficiaries to attain the required outcomes?	
How have the Learnership Programme courses addressed skills shortages in your organisation?	
Did the Learnership Programme help graduates to get promoted in your organisation?	
EFFICIENCY:	
Is the training received from the Learnership Programme sufficient to cover your training needs for the graduates? If yes, how so? If no, why?	
To what extent are you as an employer willing to participate in the improvement of the Learnership Programme? **E.g., collaborating with TVET colleges/ SETA in developing a new curriculum? Improving monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the**	

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS	Response
programme? Offering more mentorship opportunities? Offering greater exposure to different skills for graduates? etc.	
Do you think the results from the Learnership Programme demonstrate value for money?	
RELEVANCE:	
How relevant is the training that graduates receive from a college in the world of work?	
How is the Learnership Programme designed to ensure that its intended outcomes are achieved?	
Is the Learnership Programme relevant to the needs of your sector? If yes, how so? If no, why?	
SUSTAINABILITY:	
How do graduates implement what they have learned during their time in the Learnership Programme?	
As an employer, do you think you would be prepared to host other graduates in future?	
To what extent are you as an employer willing to participate in the improvement of the Learnership Programme?	
IMPACT:	
Do you think the Learnership Programme has enabled your organisation to meet its strategic objectives? Please explain.	
Has the Learnership Programme assisted your organisation to meet its goals in terms of skills, BBBE, etc.? If yes, how so? If no, why?	
Overall, how beneficial has the Learnership Programme been to your company? **i.e. have you noticed changes in terms of finances? Productivity? Exposure in the industry? Relationship with SETA and TVET colleges?, etc**	
From your perspective, what do you think should be done to produce learnership graduates who are ready for the world of work?	

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS	**Response**
Do you feel that the time allocated for the Learnership Programme is sufficient for the learners to acquire the skills required for the industry?	
Challenges and Recommendations:	
Overall, how would you describe the usefulness of the Learnership Programme?	
What are the most common problems that you have encountered when providing this Learnership Programme?	
What steps, if any, have been taken to address the challenges mentioned above?	
As a mentor of the Learnership Programme, what are some of the recommendations you would make for the sustainable implementation of the programme in future?	
Do you have specific areas that you think ETDP SETA as the funder of the Learnership Programme should improve on in the future? **E.g., in terms of curriculum development? Placement of graduates? Support for host employers?, etc.**	

GENERAL PROBES (these will be refined after the pilot study)

Why is_____ important?
When you say the programme is a "success", what do mean by "success"?
Can you tell me about the last time_____ happened and what the outcome was?
I would like to hear more about_____?
Looking back, what would you do differently in this situation?

Annexure 4: Ethics Clearance Certificate

WITS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: 2020ECE173M**
PROJECT TITLE	The Impact of the Learnership Programme on the South African youth: An evaluative study of the skills development programmes funded by the Education Training and Development Practices –Sector Education Training Authority (ETDP SETA)
INVESTIGATOR	**ZANELE KHUBISA**
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	WITS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
DATE CONSIDERED	12 March 2021
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
EXPIRY DATE	Date of submission of the project report

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 20 March 2021 **CHAIRPERSON** (Dr Paul Goldschagg)

cc: Supervisor: Dr Presha Ramsarup

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

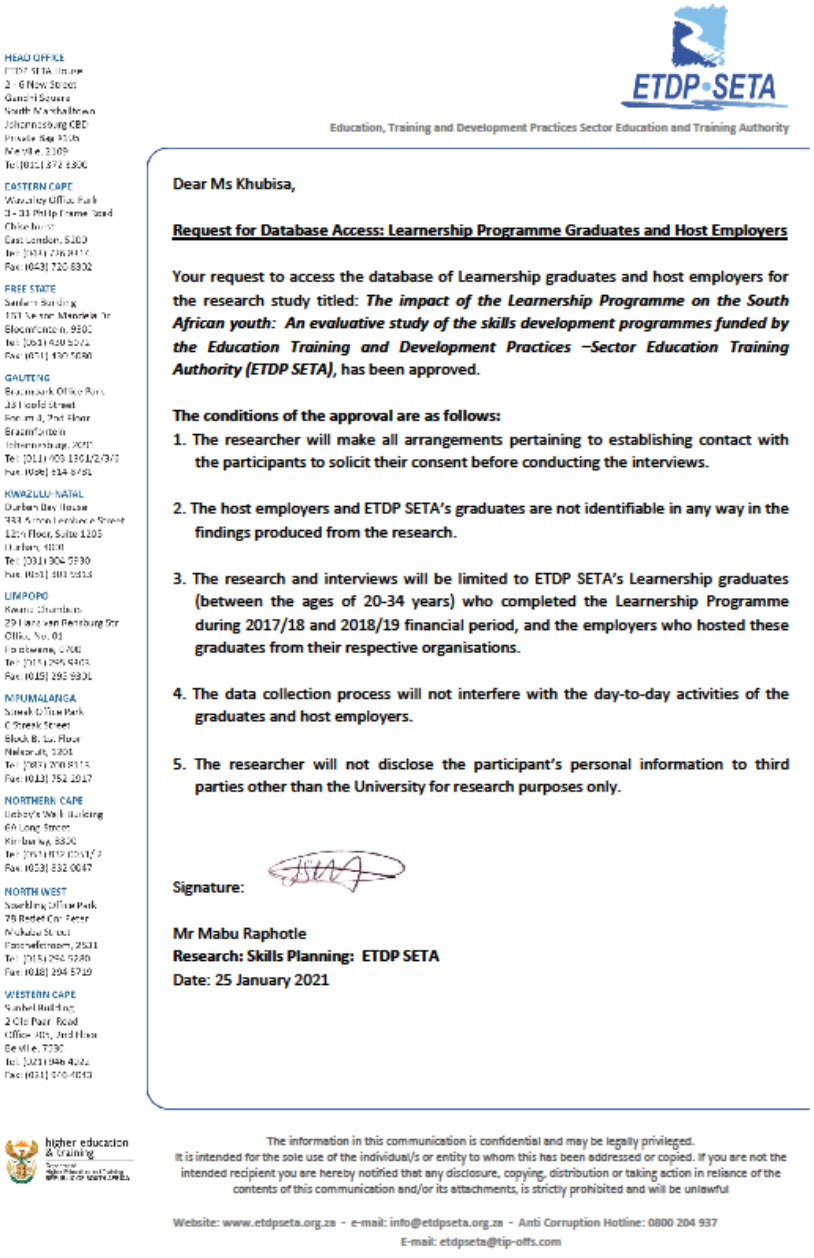
To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** emailed to the Ethics Office: Matsie.Mabuela@wits.ac.za

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature **Date** 8/04/2021

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Annexure 5: Permission from ETDPSETA to conduct interviews with unemployed learners and host employers



HEAD OFFICE
ETDP SETA House
2 - 6 New Street
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Fax: [043] 726 6302

FREE STATE
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Bloemfontein, 9301
Tel: [051] 430 5072
Fax: [011] 490 0090

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Forum 1, 2nd Floor
Braamfontein
Johannesburg, 2017
Tel: [011] 403 1301/2/3/7
Fax: [086] 514 8451

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12th Floor, Suite 1203
Durban, 4001
Tel: [031] 304 5930
Fax: [031] 301 9515

LIMPOPO
Kwena Chambers
29 Landdrost Rautenbach Str
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Tzaneen, 0700
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Fax: [015] 295 6801

MPUMALANGA
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Nelspruit, 1201
Tel: [087] 200 8115
Fax: [013] 752 2017

NORTHERN CAPE
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Kimberley, 8300
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Fax: [053] 832 0047

NORTH WEST
Sasolburg Office Park
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Mokalobi Street
Potchefstroom, 2531
Tel: [018] 294 5280
Fax: [018] 294 5719

WESTERN CAPE
Sinbel Building
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Office 4th, 2nd Floor
Bellville, 7530
Tel: [021] 946 4022
Fax: [021] 946 4043

ETDP SETA

Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority

Dear Ms Khubisa,

Request for Database Access: Learnership Programme Graduates and Host Employers

Your request to access the database of Learnership graduates and host employers for the research study titled: ***The impact of the Learnership Programme on the South African youth: An evaluative study of the skills development programmes funded by the Education Training and Development Practices –Sector Education Training Authority (ETDP SETA)***, has been approved.

The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all arrangements pertaining to establishing contact with the participants to solicit their consent before conducting the interviews.
2. The host employers and ETDP SETA's graduates are not identifiable in any way in the findings produced from the research.
3. The research and interviews will be limited to ETDP SETA's Learnership graduates (between the ages of 20-34 years) who completed the Learnership Programme during 2017/18 and 2018/19 financial period, and the employers who hosted these graduates from their respective organisations.
4. The data collection process will not interfere with the day-to-day activities of the graduates and host employers.
5. The researcher will not disclose the participant's personal information to third parties other than the University for research purposes only.

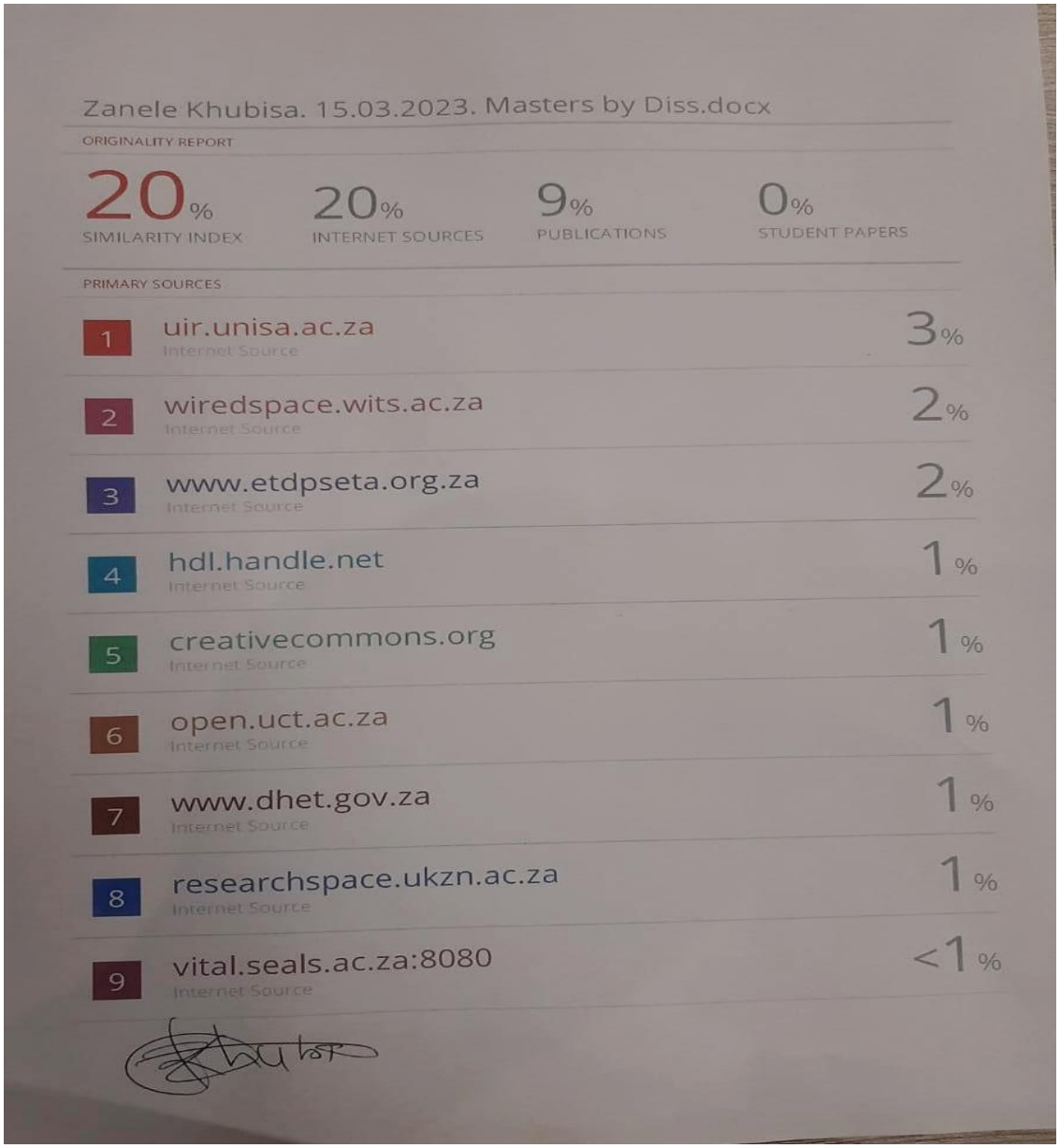
Signature:

Mr Mabu Raphotle
Research: Skills Planning: ETDP SETA
Date: 25 January 2021

higher education & training

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Annexure 6: Plagiarism Report



Zanele Khubisa. 15.03.2023. Masters by Diss.docx

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