

The Relevance and Effectiveness of Learnership Programs in South Africa: A Survey of Trainees from within a SETA

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ABSTRACT The focus of this paper results from a survey undertaken to understand the challenges, which trainees in learnership programs face within a selected South African Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA). In addition, the research evaluates the impact that this has on the ultimate success of learnerships and the progress towards skill development of the labor force in South Africa. The research covered an analysis of responses from a selected cohort in a learnership program, and how incumbents experienced various facets of the learnership training and development activities and interventions. The broad areas that were analyzed were the level of 'organization-fit' during the duration of the program, the content of learning programs, and the recognition of these programs in the appropriate industry.

INTRODUCTION

The legacy of apartheid has left South Africa and its companies in dire need of skills. Annual reports conducted by the South African Department of Labor (DOL) depict not only the growth in employment and the unemployment statistics, but also the shortages of more versatile and experienced managers and professionals who are regarded as skilled labor across the South African economy (DOL 2014:18). This and the concomitant lack of supplying the industry with the required skills are illustrated in many of the reports of SETAs and academic commentators as evidence of the current situation (Bernstein 2016; Mictseta 2015; RSA 2014; Sharrock et al. 2015).

The DOL was tasked with taking renewed measures to improve, promote and motivate training and development in order to augment existing skills, as well as develop skills that are scarce or currently non-existent. With the aid of research, solutions were identified by the Department of Labor and have been implemented since the termination of apartheid and the establishment of the SETAs. It can be inferred that training and development are part of the Skills Development Act of 1998 (Act No. 97) in South Africa in order to promote the development and training of the workforce.

The DOL introduced the 23 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) operating within the South African Qualifications Au-

thority (SAQA) and National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to produce meaningful training and education programs and development. The relevance and impact of these programs are important to assess, as their objectives are to help implement the National Skills Development Strategy and to increase the skills of people in their respective sectors (SETAs SA 2014).

Current View of Labor Concerns and Skills Development Processes

According to a recent report of the DOL (2014: 23), the following concerns remain. Firstly, the insufficient skills and poor work preparedness of many youth leaving formal secondary and tertiary education, and accessing the labor market for the first time are exacerbated by a lack of coordination between institutional learning and workplace practices. Secondly, skills deficiencies in the artisanal, technical and professional fields are critical to the growth and development of the economy. Thirdly, when structural changes occur, the outcome is often retrenchments rather than redeployment and reskilling of employed people. Moreover, there is a deficiency of systematic skills advancement and development to maintain and sustain growth and development. In addition, there is an urban preference regarding the skills development plans and programs, resulting in skills development for rural areas being neglected.

Consequently, according to the DOL (2014: 24), South Africa needs to grow to address the challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality. Highly skilled and adaptable individual workers who are able to respond immediately to the labor market change need to be developed through training and learnerships. In addition, lifelong learning needs to be strengthened and supported. Employment also needs to be improved through adequately resourced employment services. Another issue is that policymakers should consider improving and developing science-based education.

These frequently asked questions in terms of training and development were examined in order to assist in developing solutions to these identified gaps. The following key questions are raised by Cornelius (2001: 96). Firstly, how do people on learnership programs adapt to the organizational culture when placed into an organization for training? Secondly, are there adequate benefits offered to learners on these programs in order to motivate them to complete the training program? Thirdly, are training and development carried out simply so that learners understand what is expected of them? Finally, what measures are taken to reduce stress and decrease language barriers that exist as challenges on the program?

According to Hamlet (2005: 25), there are many challenges for SETAs and organizations when implementing learnerships, particularly concerning added value. Furthermore, there are not many guidelines available to assist with the process, and hence the need to constantly assess whether the learnerships and training provided by the SETAs are in fact making a contribution to skills development in South Africa.

A subsequent report by Archer (2010: 3) raised a number of issues regarding vocational training in South Africa, including the fact that "...policymakers need to know a great deal more precisely what skills in production are required for new jobs in expanding enterprises, and the state can carry out this research satisfactorily" (Archer 2010: 5). The feedback provided by this research on one sector may be a small contribution, but provides a start in assessing the value of what is provided at this level.

For the purpose of this article, a selected SETA was surveyed. Owing to confidentiality agreements, the specific SETA requested not to be identified, but this research may indicate some

trends that need to be investigated throughout the SETA sector as a result of the general concerns mentioned above. The findings of this study strongly correlate with those of many other studies and findings of investigations as illustrated by Bernstein (2016), Nkosi (2014), NSA (2015) and Sharrock et al. (2015).

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

Amongst other considerations, the key areas that directly link to the execution of learnership training and the subsequent development of the participants are the following. Firstly, the level of 'person to organization fit'¹ during the duration of the program, that is, what is the value of the learnership program to ensure this 'organization fit'? Secondly, the content of learning programs, that is, are there negative factors associated with the training, and if so, what are they? What are the positive experiences associated with the training? Is there adequate communication within the learnership program to enhance the experience and content transmission? Thirdly, choosing career paths and recognition of certification: Is the qualification generally recognized by employers or the industry for career enhancement or employment purposes?

METHODOLOGY

The study comprises the results attained from a survey (structured questionnaire) completed telephonically by people who had recently completed programs within a selected SETA (Akbar 2012: 65-82). The presentation of results will be followed by an analysis and conclusions. The results and description of data were integrated into a final analysis to achieve the objectives of this study. A total of 80 questionnaires were completed out of 100 questionnaires administered, hence the response rate achieved was eighty percent. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The results and discussion will be presented as per the sections of the questionnaire: Firstly, respondent information and analysis, secondly, perceptions of the respondents on the programs of the SETA, and finally, an analysis and summary of the major issues that emanated from the survey.

The statistical analyses was done using SPSS version 19.0 (SPSS Inc. Chicago, Illinois, USA). The five percent (5%) significance level was used

for statistical comparisons. It is imperative to note that SPSS stores values accurately to 15 decimal places. A loss of precision occurs when the display of decimal numbers is forced to fewer than 15 decimal places. SPSS and other software packages store numbers similarly to Microsoft Excel (Pearson 1998: 23).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the interviews and the specific questions, solicited in an order that would minimize the possibility of leading or framing specific responses and perceptions, are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents' position

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Employee	80	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Akbar 2012:84

Respondents' Information

In Table 1 the response rate of the targeted population is illustrated. All 80 respondents were employees in the related industry of the targeted SETA.

As per Table 2, the majority of the respondents (46) were between the ages of 18 to 24 years. This is equivalent to more than half of the respondents and is graphically represented as 57.5 percent. There were only two respondents between the ages of 51 to 60 years, and the remaining 32 respondents were between 25 to 35 years of age. None of the respondents were between 36 to 50 years of age.

Table 2: Respondents' age

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	18-24	46	57.5	57.5	57.5
	25-35	32	40.0	40.0	97.5
	51-60	2	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 85)

In relation to the participants' gender, this research revealed that majority of the respondents were female and just less than half of these participants were male (37) as per Table 3. It illustrates that 53.8 percent of the respondents were female and the remaining 46.3 percent were male.

Table 3: Respondents' gender

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Male	37	46.3	46.3	46.3
	Female	43	53.8	53.8	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 86)

Responses of the Trainees

The following tables reflect the responses and the statistical analysis of the responses to every question. The questions were not initially clustered in order to ensure the ultimate validity of the broad outcomes of the areas that were probed as depicted in the summary following the list of responses. As per Table 4, all the respondents acknowledged that the SETA qualification is recognized nationally. It reveals that most of the respondents (39) stated that it is often recognized, followed by 30 respondents stating that it is always recognized and the remaining 11 stating only sometimes. Table 4 illustrates the percentages of these respondents with 48.8 percent, 37.5 percent and 13.8 percent for 'often', 'always' and 'sometimes', respectively.

Table 4: SETA qualification nationally recognised

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Always	30	37.5	37.5	37.5
	Often	39	48.8	48.8	86.3
	Sometimes	11	13.8	13.8	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 87)

Table 5 reflects the extent to which learner-ship programs provide learners with a qualification and experience to assist them. It has been

found that almost fifty-eight percent of these respondents stated that the program sometimes assists. There were only two respondents who stated that the program always assists in providing learners with the qualification and experience. There were also three of the 80 respondents who stated that the program never provides assistance.

Table 5: Learnership programmes assist in selection programme

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Always	2	2.5	2.5	2.5
	Often	12	15.0	15.0	17.5
	Sometimes	46	57.5	57.5	75.0
	Rarely	17	21.3	21.3	96.3
	Never	3	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 88)

In Table 6, it is clear that a total of 71 of the 80 respondents stated that there was a degree of communication between the learners and trainees. One of the nine remaining respondents stated that there was never any communication between the learners and trainees. As per Table 6, it is illustrated that less than half of the respondents (46.3%) stated that communication between learners and trainees exists sometimes. This is followed by 33.8 percent and 8.8 percent representing the view that communications exists often and always, respectively.

Table 6: Communication between learners and trainees

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Always	7	8.8	8.8	8.8
	Often	27	33.8	33.8	42.5
	Sometimes	37	46.3	46.3	88.8
	Rarely	8	10.0	10.0	98.8
	Never	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 89)

In relation to the extent to which the learnership programs offer practical experience, Table 7 illustrates that the majority of the respondents

stated that the programs had sometimes offered practical experience. This is followed by 17 and 8 responses to the effect that practical experience is gained often and always, respectively. In Table 7, it is noticed that twenty percent and 7.5 percent of the respondents stated that there is rarely or never respectively, any practical experience gained from the learnership programs.

Table 7: Practical experience from learnership programmes

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Always	8	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Often	17	21.3	21.3	31.3
	Sometimes	33	41.3	41.3	72.5
	Rarely	16	20.0	20.0	92.5
	Never	6	7.5	7.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 90)

There were 28 respondents as per Table 8 who stated that the learnership programs do not offer growth in terms of being able to develop their careers. There were nine (9) respondents who somewhat agreed that the learnership program does offer growth. The majority of the respondents (more than half) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement as can be seen depicted in Table 8.

Table 8: Learnership programmes offer growth

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Strongly disagree	3	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Disagree	25	31.3	31.3	35.0
	Neutral	43	53.8	53.8	88.8
	Agree	8	10.0	10.0	98.8
	Strongly agree	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 91)

As per Table 9, it is noticeable that exactly half of the sample size neither agreed nor disagreed that the learnership program offered guidance in relation to choosing career paths. Of the 80 respondents, 24 disagreed and four (4) strong-

ly disagreed with the statement. There were only 12 respondents in total who were somewhat in agreement that there was guidance provided, which assisted in selecting career paths. These results have been graphically represented in Table 9, which demonstrates the percentage of respondents.

Table 9: Career path guidance through learnership programmes

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Strongly disagree	4	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Disagree	24	30.0	30.0	35.0
	Neutral	40	50.0	50.0	85.0
	Agree	10	12.5	12.5	97.5
	Strongly agree	2	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar 2012:92

Table 10 reflects that a total of 35 of the 80 respondents generally disagree that their career development is limited by the learnership training. There were 27 respondents who agreed with the statement and the remaining 18 respondents were neutral about the statement that their career development was limited by the learnership training. Overall, more than one-third of the respondents stated that the learnership program limited their career development.

Table 10: Career development limited by learnership training

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Strongly disagree	3	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Disagree	32	40.0	40.0	43.8
	Neutral	18	22.5	22.5	66.3
	Agree	24	30.0	30.0	96.3
	Strongly agree	3	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 93)

Table 11 illustrates the fact that more than half of the sample size disagreed that this industry, supported by the SETA, provides consistency in promotions and developments. There

were 20 respondents (25%) who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement and two (2) of the remaining 18 respondents strongly agreed with the statement.

Table 11: The SETA provides consistency in promotions and development

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Strongly disagree	5	6.3	6.3	6.3
	Disagree	37	46.3	46.3	52.5
	Neutral	20	25.0	25.0	77.5
	Agree	16	20.0	20.0	97.5
	Strongly agree	2	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 94)

Almost half of the sample size neither agreed nor disagreed with stress being created through their participation in learnership programs. This is represented by 39 respondents in Table 12. The next highest is 22 respondents who agreed that stress was created through their participation and six respondents strongly agreed. Just less than one-fifth of the sample size disagreed with the statement.

Table 12: Stress created by learnership program participation

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Strongly disagree	4	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Disagree	9	11.3	11.3	16.3
	Neutral	39	48.8	48.8	65.0
	Agree	22	27.5	27.5	92.5
	Strongly agree	6	7.5	7.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 95)

An interesting finding is in relation to job security after participating in a learnership program. As per Table 13, it is seen that more than half of the sample size disagreed that job security was increased after such participation. There were only three (3) respondents who somewhat agreed with the statement. Table 13 depicts that

fifty-five percent agreed with the statement, followed by 38.8 percent of the sample size that neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

Table 13: Learnership program participation increases job security

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Strongly disagree	2	2.5	2.5	2.5
	Disagree	44	55.0	55.0	57.5
	Neutral	31	38.8	38.8	96.3
	Agree	2	2.5	2.5	98.8
	Strongly agree	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 96)

Generally, respondents stated that the program did not really allow them to identify future promotions and developments for their career. Table 14 reveals that fewer than half of the respondents (37 of 80) disagreed with the statement. There were 27 participants who neither agreed nor disagreed (neutral) and the remaining twenty percent of the sample size agreed, as illustrated in Table 14. There were no respondents who strongly agreed with the statement, which is a strong indicator of the lack of substantial value.

Table 14: Ability to identify promotions and developments for career

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Strongly disagree	4	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Disagree	33	41.3	41.3	46.3
	Neutral	27	33.8	33.8	80.0
	Agree	16	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 97)

As per Table 15 it is noted that one-third of the sample size disagreed that the Learnership Program motivated individuals to participate in training. There were seven (7) respondents who strongly disagreed and exactly half of the sample size neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. It is also noticeable that only one of

the remaining six respondents strongly agreed that the learnership program motivates individuals to participate in the training.

Table 15: Learnership program motivate for training participation

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Strongly disagree	7	8.8	8.8	8.8
	Disagree	27	33.8	33.8	42.5
	Neutral	40	50.0	50.0	92.5
	Agree	5	6.3	6.3	98.8
	Strongly agree	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar 2012:98

As per Table 16, it is illustrated that a total of 31 respondents agreed that they have experienced an increase in stress levels due to unresponsive supervision. There were 26 respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement and less than a third of the respondents did not experience an increase in stress levels.

Table 16: Increased stress from unresponsive supervision

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Strongly disagree	3	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Disagree	20	25.0	25.0	28.8
	Neutral	26	32.5	32.5	61.3
	Agree	24	30.0	30.0	91.3
	Strongly agree	7	8.8	8.8	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 99)

Table 17 illustrates the fact that there are almost an equal number of respondents who agreed and conversely disagreed that they have experienced difficulty in achieving job security. This is depicted by 24 respondents in total who somewhat disagreed and 25 who somewhat agreed. The remaining 38.8 percent of the sample size neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

Table 17: Learnership program provide difficulty in achieving job security

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Strongly disagree	3	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Disagree	21	26.3	26.3	30.0
	Neutral	31	38.8	38.8	68.8
	Agree	22	27.5	27.5	96.3
	Strongly agree	3	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 100)

As per Table 18, half of the sample size had some level of agreement that management should show more interest in trainees to keep them motivated. There were 24 of the 80 respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. The remaining 16 respondents, amounting to twenty percent, disagreed that motivation is required from management showing interest.

Table 18: Motivation required from management interest

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Strongly disagree	3	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Disagree	13	16.3	16.3	20.0
	Neutral	24	30.0	30.0	50.0
	Agree	36	45.0	45.0	95.0
	Strongly agree	4	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 101)

An interesting finding is that 39 of the 80 respondents stated that they were not proud to have been trained by SETA. This is illustrated in Table 19 that depicts this response as 42.5 percent and 6.3 percent who disagree and strongly disagree, respectively. There were also 35 respondents (43.8%) who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. It also shows that only six respondents (7.6%) generally agreed with being proud of the training received by SETA.

Another finding is that 30 of the 80 (37.6%) respondents believed that the learnership pro-

Table 19: Proud to be trained by the SETA

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Strongly disagree	5	6.3	6.3	6.3
	Disagree	34	42.5	42.5	48.8
	Neutral	35	43.8	43.8	92.5
	Agree	5	6.3	6.3	98.8
	Strongly agree	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar 2012:102

gram environment was not commendable and comfortable. There were, however, 20 respondents who agreed that the environment was commendable and comfortable. These values have been illustrated in Table 20. Of the 80 respondents, more than a third of the respondents were neutral about the statement.

Table 20: Learnership program environment is commendable and comfortable

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Strongly disagree	5	6.3	6.3	6.3
	Disagree	25	31.3	31.3	37.5
	Neutral	30	37.5	37.5	75.0
	Agree	20	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 103)

In relation to the information in Table 21 relating to communication between the learners and trainees, it was found that almost half of the

Table 21: Adequate communication between learners and trainers

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Strongly disagree	4	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Disagree	34	42.5	42.5	47.5
	Neutral	29	36.3	36.3	83.8
	Agree	12	15.0	15.0	98.8
	Strongly agree	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 104)

sample size disagreed that there was adequate communication. This is reflected by 34 and five (5) respondents who disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively. This also reveals that just over a third of the sample size neither agreed nor disagreed about the communication between learners and trainees. Of the remaining 13 respondents, one (1) respondent strongly agreed that there was adequate communication between the parties.

The majority of the respondents, as per Table 22, stated that they disagreed with the SETA learnership program being well designed and understood. There were less than than a third of the sample size who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. There was one (1) respondent who strongly agreed that the learnership program was well designed and understood while 6.3 percent of the sample size strongly disagreed.

Table 22: SETA learnership program is well designed and understood

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Strongly disagree	5	6.3	6.3	6.3
	Disagree	34	42.5	42.5	48.8
	Neutral	26	32.5	32.5	81.3
	Agree	14	17.5	17.5	98.8
	Strongly agree	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Agree				
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 105)

According to Table 23, 21.3 percent of the respondents would not recommend participation in the learnership program owing to numer-

Table 23: Not recommending participation in learnership program

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Strongly disagree	6	7.5	7.5	7.5
	Disagree	20	25.0	25.0	32.5
	Neutral	37	46.3	46.3	78.8
	Agree	17	21.3	21.3	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012:106)

ous challenges. There were, however, 26 respondents who somewhat disagreed and would recommend the program. This is reflected as twenty-five percent and 7.5 percent for those who disagree and strongly disagree, respectively. The majority of the respondents, equivalent to fewer than half of the sample size, neither agreed nor disagreed. There were also no respondents who strongly agreed with the statement.

Table 24 illustrates the fact that the majority of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with being willing to participate in another learnership program. This is depicted by fewer than half of the sample size. There were also only a few of the respondents, totaling eight (10%), who stated that they are willing to participate in another learnership program. The remaining 41.3 percent of the respondents are not willing to participate in another learnership program.

Table 24: Willingness to participate in another learnership program

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Strongly disagree	13	16.3	16.3	16.3
	Disagree	20	25.0	25.0	41.3
	Neutral	39	48.8	48.8	90.0
	Agree	7	8.8	8.8	98.8
	Strongly agree	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar 2012:107

Table 25: Stage challenges faced in learnership program

		<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Per- cent</i>	<i>Valid percen- tage</i>	<i>Cumu- lative percen- tage</i>
<i>Valid</i>	At the beginning of a programme	44	55.0	55.0	55.0
	Towards the end of a programme	29	36.3	36.3	91.3
	Consistently through a programme	7	8.8	8.8	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Source: Akbar (2012: 108)

Respondents indicated at which level they had experienced challenges in the learnership program. Table 25 illustrates that more than half of the sample size stated that they experienced such challenges from the beginning. There were 29 respondents, constituting 36.3 percent of the sample size that stated that the challenges were faced toward the end of the program and the remaining seven respondents stated that challenges were faced consistently throughout the learnership program.

Analysis of the Data

Table 26 is a reorganized summary of the various categories of questions depicted above, and is aimed at addressing the major issues that were interrogated during the interviews.

In Figure 1, the authors continued to extract and summarize the factors as described in the objectives of this research to determine the relevance and effectiveness of SETA learnership programs, and these will be addressed in the resultant conclusion and recommendations.

CONCLUSION

In line with the general concerns that SETA training and learnerships are not focused or suf-

ficient to address the vocational needs of learners, this survey has revealed in essence that much more needs to be done to make vocational training through learnerships more effective. The survey covered employees in one sector, and also included a good balance of respondents both from an age and gender perspective. The importance of this survey is that it supports the studies and the ongoing concerns regarding the poor performance of SETAs in general, and suggests that a renewed effort should be made to revive the actions and impact of SETAs in addressing the skills shortages in the various sectors. The following conclusions can be inferred from this research.

Firstly, there is general consensus that the certificate issued at the end of the training is recognized as a valid and will by and large be accepted by employers. Secondly, looking at overall value clustered questions, a small number, twenty-one percent on average, of respondents agreed that the learnership training had real value. Thirdly, looking at the overall positive experience, only 6.25 percent of respondents feel that their learnership training was a positive experience. Fourthly, on average 29.38 percent of respondents believe that good communication, both vertically (between trainers and learn-

Table 26: Summary and analysis of the factors that determine the success of the SETA programmes

1. <i>National Recognition of Learnerships</i>	86.25%	69	80
SETA qualifications nationally recognised	86.25%	69	80
2. <i>Overall Value to Future Career of Participant</i>	21.25%	119	560
Learnership programmes assist in a selection programme	17.50%	14	80
Ability to identify promotions and developments for career	20.00%	16	80
Practical experience from learnership programmes	31.25%	25	80
Learnership programmes offer growth	11.25%	9	80
Career path guidance through learnership programmes	15.00%	12	80
This specific SETA industry provides consistency in promotions and development	22.50%	18	80
3. <i>Positive Experience of the Learnership Programmes</i>	6.25%	15	240
Learnership programme participation increases job security	3.75%	3	80
Learnership programmes motivate for training participation	7.50%	6	80
Proud to be trained by this SETA	7.50%	6	80
4. <i>Good Communication</i>	29.38%	47	160
Adequate communication between learners and trainers	16.25%	13	80
Communication between learners and trainees	42.50%	34	80
5. <i>Assessment of the Structure and Content of Programmes</i>	18.75%	60	320
Learnership programme environment is commendable and comfortable	25.00%	20	80
Learnership programmes well designed and understood	18.75%	15	80
Do not recommend participation in learnership programmes	21.25%	17	80
Willingness to participate in another learnership programme	10.00%	8	80
6. <i>Negative Factors Impacting on Learnerships</i>	40.00%	160	400
Added motivation required from management to maintain interest	50.00%	40	80
Stress created by learnership programme participation	35.00%	28	80
Stage challenges faced at the start of the learnership programmes	50.00%	40	80
Career development limited by learnership training	33.75%	27	80
Learnership programmes lead to difficulty in achieving job security	31.25%	25	80

Source: Akbar (2012:97-108)

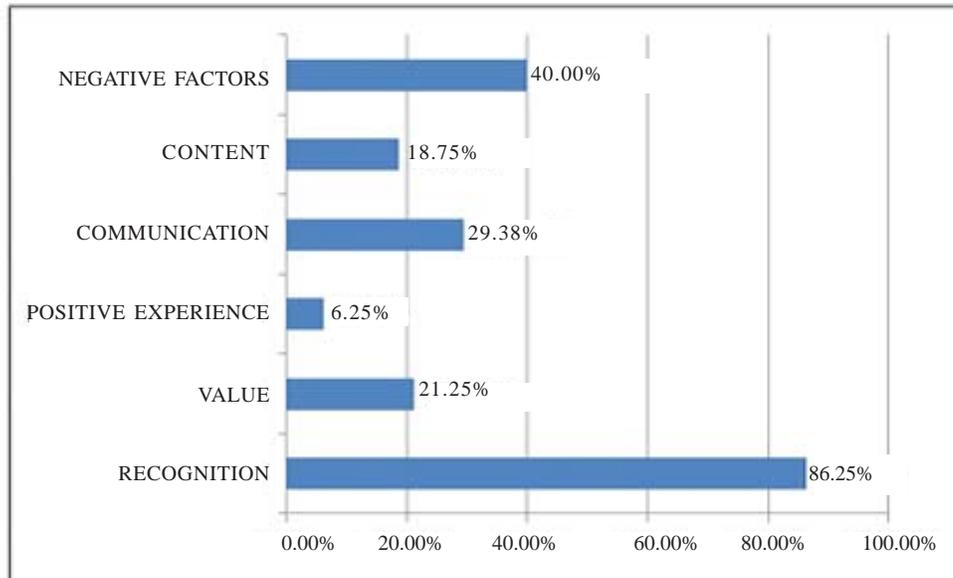


Fig. 1. Analysis of the factors that determine the success of this SETA programmes

Source: Adapted from the research of Akbar (2012:128-135)

ers) and laterally (among learners), formed part of the experience. Fifthly, only 18.75 percent of the respondents agree that the structure and content of these programs were conducive and inspired future participation in these programs. Finally, a large portion (on average 40%) of the respondents agreed that there were other extraneous negative factors associated with the learnership training that impacted the overall value of these programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The general concerns regarding the SETA learnerships and training are supported by the results of this survey, and the following recommendations need to be taken into consideration in order to improve the general value (relevance and effectiveness) of the programs.

Firstly, the organizers of the programs should consider structuring content in line with learner and industry needs. Secondly, employers and employees need to be surveyed on the functional and technical content of vocational needs and training. Then, improved communication between trainers and trainees needs to be promoted. Special sessions could be provided be-

tween trainers and trainees in small groups to promote openness and a more conducive environment for everyone to freely participate. Moreover, if use is made of service providers, they need to be evaluated by the trainees/employees following every day of attendance. Fifthly, care needs to be taken to include opportunities for role-play and simulation of 'real world' situations. In essence attendees/trainees need to feel that they are gaining valuable and appropriate skills and knowledge in the process. In addition, there needs to be daily evaluations that are non-threatening, but effective enough to ensure that participants gain value, and that the experience is generally viewed as positive and valuable to empower learners to improve their contribution in their formal work setting.

The following extraneous factors that negatively impact such programs also need to be minimized:

- More support and incentives to participate are required from management.
- Stress factors need to be explored at the start of the program, and participants need to be put at ease in terms of feeling comfortable and willing to fully participate (use of ice-breakers).

- c. General problems need to be addressed at the outset or start of the programs.
- d. The notion of 'limitation' on career choices needs to be explored. Perhaps the 'skill set' definition needs to be expanded during training.
- e. Finally, the real value of these learnerships should be assessed, as job security is a matter that should be prominent.

In summary, this research has shown a correlation with some of the concerns in the literature, and it is proposed that a follow-up survey is undertaken on a SETA-wide basis to check the overall reliability of these findings. In addition, the research could possibly be refined and a longitudinal study produced that would reflect on the overall trend and possible improvement in the impact of the learnership programs across all the SETA's.

NOTE

1. Person-organization Fit (P-O Fit) is defined by Kristof (1996) as "...the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when at least one entity provides what the other needs, and they share similar fundamental characteristics, or both". High value congruence is a large facet of person-organization fit, which implies a strong culture and shared values among co-workers. This can translate to increased levels of trust and a shared sense of corporate community (Boone and Den Hartog 2011:109-121).

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