



Health and Welfare Sector
Education and Training Authority

HWSETA

MONITORING AND EVALUATION REPORT

EVALUATING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE HWSETA LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME STRATEGY FOR THE UNEMPLOYED 2011/12 TO 2015/16

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The views expressed in this report are that of the Author and not that of the HWSETA.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
LIST OF ACRONYMS	7
1.1 INTRODUCTION	8
1.2 THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME	9
2. CHAPTER TWO: SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION STUDY.....	11
2.1 THE AIM OF THE EVALUATION	11
2.2 EVALUATION QUESTIONS.....	11
2.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	11
2.4 DATA SOURCES.....	11
2.5 EVALUATION APPROACH.....	12
CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
3.1 INTRODUCTION	13
3.2 YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT CONTEXT	13
3.3 ROLE OF EMPLOYERS IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT.....	14
3.4 EMPLOYABILITY	15
3.5 TRACER STUDIES.....	15
3.6 CONCLUSION	16
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	17
4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN.....	17
4.2 TARGET POPULATION AND SAMPLING	17
4.3 DATA COLLECTION.....	17
CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS	18
5.1 DATA ANALYSIS	18
5.2 EVALUATION LIMITATIONS	18
5.3 OUTLINE OF THE PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS.....	18
5.4 PROFILING OF THE OVERALL 2011/12 TO 2015/16 LEARNERSHIP DATABASE.....	19
5.4.1 PARTICIPATION BY SECTOR	19
5.4.3 PROVINCE.....	19
5.4.4 LEARNERS AGE GROUP, GENDER AND RACE GROUP	20
5.4.5 PROGRAMME QUALIFICATION.....	20
5.6. LEARNERSHIP EMPLOYMENT RATE ANALYSIS	21
5.7 LEVEL OF EMPLOYER COMPLIANCE TO THE MoA STRATEGY	23
5.8 MOA STRATEGY ADHERENCE CHALLENGES	23
5.9 THE EFFECT OF THE STRATEGY ON PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS	23
5.10 PROBABILITY OF THE NON-SUSTAINABILITY DUE TO THE STRATEGY	24
5.11 FINDINGS FROM THE EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS SUBMISSIONS.....	24
5.12 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	26
5.12.1 PROFILING AND TARGET POPULATION	26
5.12.2 CHALLENGES ON COMPLIANCE WITH MOA	27
5.12.3 THE PROBABILITY OF THE NON-SUSTAINABILITY OF THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME DUE TO THIS STRATEGY.	27
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LESSONS.....	27
6.1 CONCLUSIONS	27
6.2 RECOMMENDATION	28
6.3 LESSONS LEARNT	28
6.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY.....	28
7. REFERENCES.....	29

List of figures

Figure 1: Learnership Process Diagram Flow	10
Figure 2: Learnership participation in the health and welfare sector secondary data	19
Figure 3: Demographics- learner age, gender and race group - Secondary data	20
Figure 4 Overall employment in the health and welfare sector - Primary data	21
Figure 5: Employment by sector - Primary data	21
Figure 6: Employment rate per sector - Primary data	23
Figure 7: Employment status - Primary data	24
Figure 8: Demographics - employment type, age and race - Primary data – Learner contracts	25
Figure 9: Medical aid, Additional remuneration and Employment status - Primary data - Learner contracts.....	25
Figure 10: learners Income – Primary data – Learner contracts.....	26

Table of figures

Table 1: Demographics Learner province Secondary data	19
Table 2: List of top ten organisations- Secondary data	20
Table 3: Demographics- Province - Primary data	21
Table 4: Learnership programme – Primary data	22
Table 5: Learnership Programmes by employment - Primary data	22
Table 6: Employment by organisation - Primary data	22
Table 7: Employment by organisation size - Primary data	23
Table 8: Employment rate by employer and training provider - Primary data.....	24

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

During the NSDS III period, spanning from 2011/12 to 2015/16, the HWSETA put in place a strategy to facilitate the employment of unemployed learners funded to acquire a qualification through learnerships. This strategy was actioned as a condition for participating in the discretionary grant funded learnerships for the unemployed. Expressions of interest and Memorandums of Agreement (MoAs) have, through these years, actively sought for a commitment from employers that wanted to place unemployed learners in learnership positions in their organisations. All employers therefore who participated in learnerships for the unemployed committed themselves, through the HWSETA MoAs, to employ all unemployed learners placed in learnership positions in their organisations upon successful completion. In cases where employers could not employ these learners, the agreement was that they would find employment in sister organisations. The aim of this study, therefore, is to evaluate the performance of this strategy from 2011/12 to 2015/16. The study also sought to probe the challenges that may have impeded some employers from appointing these learners as employees in their organisations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The study pursued five objectives when evaluating the performance of the HWSETA learnership programme strategy. These involved:

- Measuring the employment rate of unemployed learners who completed learnerships funded by the HWSETA
- Measuring the level of compliance by employers who entered into an agreement with the HWSETA to place unemployed learners on learnership positions and upon completion, employ all learners as employees in their organisations, or facilitate employment in sister organisations.
- To probe for challenges that may have impeded some employers from employing learners upon successful completion of learnerships
- To investigate whether this strategy, actioned as a condition for the approval of discretionary grant funding for unemployed learnerships, does not negatively affect participation by employers;
- To investigate the probability of the non-sustainability of the learnership programme due to this strategy.

EVALUATION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The strategic evaluation approach was used to measure the performance of the unemployed learnership programme strategy. The research paradigm of the study was quantitative. A structured questionnaire was designed and administered through email to all the employers to complete and, attach employment contracts for all learners reported as employed. However, only twenty-eight employers submitted contracts' accounting for 422 learners. Descriptive statistics were utilised to respond to the objectives of the study.

DATA COLLECTION

The target population was composed of 104 employers. Over the five years, these employers trained 4001 unemployed learners who completed their learnerships. Of the 104 employers, 62 (60%) were from the health sector, and 42 (40%) were from the welfare sector. Of the 4001 unemployed learners, 3201 (80%) of the learners were trained in the health sector, and 800 (20%) of the learners were trained in the welfare sector. Only 37 (36%) employers responded to the questionnaire (survey) with 892 learners. Thirty-two employers were from the health sector, and these employers trained 608 unemployed learners whom constituted 68% of the sample. There were five employers from the welfare sector, with 284 unemployed learners contributing to 32% of the sample.

RESULTS

The evaluation has indicated that the learnership programme outcomes are not aligned with the MoA strategy. The learnership MoA section 11 indicates that 100% of the learners should be employed upon successful completion of the learnership based on the evaluation the data has indicated that overall the employment rate is at 65% as opposed to the stipulated 100%. The health and welfare sector were analysed separately as they vary in relation to organisation size, number of learners and absorption rate. The employment rate of learners who completed learnerships in the health sector was three thirds, with 57% of the health sector organisations employing 100% of the learners as stipulated in the MoA learnership strategy. The employment rate in the welfare sector was one third with 20% of the employers adhering to the learnership strategy.

The challenges reported by both the health and welfare sector included delayed certification, learners dropouts and unavailability of vacant positions. In addition, large size organisations had high rates of employment (over 40% of the organisations in the health sector had a company size of more than 150+ and 60% of the organisations in the welfare sector had an organisational size of 0-49), which could be a contributing factor to the capacity to employ. Moreover, less than a quarter of the organisations in the welfare sector indicated that they are no longer participating as an employer but as a training provider, due to the inability to secure employment upon learner completion. This indicates that this strategy can negatively affect future participation and programme sustainability for employers in the welfare sector. There is, however, an indication of sustainability in the health sector due to high employment rates of learners upon completion.

LESSON LEARNT AND CONCLUSION

The following lessons were derived from the evaluation: Firstly, we are operating at a 65% compliance rate as opposed to a 100% strategy compliance rate. The health sector seems to be leading in terms of compliance and capacity. Further enquiry is required on how the welfare sector can be supported. Secondly, monitoring needs to be strengthened. This suggests that the study's overall findings are critical at the programme and systemic level. At a programme level, the study has shown that employers' capacity to absorb unemployed learners are shaped by the internal dynamics of their respective workplaces such as their financial position, demand opportunities and company size. The structure of the learnership programmes also requires support at a systemic level. This study has shown the danger of homogenising ideas about skills development and learnerships, which does not take into account the variance between sectors nor their diverse structural challenges. Allais, Marock and Ngcwangu (2017) show that human resources development at a national level in South Africa requires a holistic approach, one which embraces all aspects of human development. This study shows that the welfare sector employers require additional support to absorb more learners and could provide critical experience to learners committed to a wider concept of human development.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

DHET	The Department of Higher Education and Training
HWSETA	Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority
MoA	Memorandum of Agreement
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
NSF	National Skills Fund
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SMS	Seta Management System
SQMR	Seta Quarterly Monitoring Report
SDF	Skills development facilitator
<i>PSET</i>	<i>Post School Education and Training</i>
WIL	Work Integrated Learning

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE EVALUATION STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) launched a White Paper on *Post School Education and Training (PSET)*, which identifies the youth unemployment problem as the main challenge to be addressed through building an integrated Post-School Education and Training system. The White Paper states that 'It is also important to expand other forms of on-the-job training, including learnerships and internships in non-artisan fields. The SETAs have a crucial role to play in facilitating such workplace learning partnerships between employers and educational institutions' (DHET, 2013: xvi). This evaluation study contributes to the discussion over the assessment and evaluation of the learnership programmes of SETAs and provides empirical evidence from the HWSETA's learnership programmes over the last five years of the SETA license under the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) III. The NDP (2011) argues that South Africa faces a severe skills shortage which, if not resolved could place heavy constraints on economic growth and significantly limit South Africa's potential to compete with other countries in the world or take advantage of growth opportunities provided by technological advancement which depends on skill.

Learnerships were introduced into the South African training system as an intervention to solve a number of problems experienced in the production of skills for the country. The list of these problems includes:

- A need to create a work-based learning pathway of education and training qualifications and, thereby, move away from an entirely institution-based learning mode. The creation of this pathway was particularly important in the past decade, as the school system was underperforming, with less than 50 per cent of students who wrote the senior certificate examination passing. The alternative form of education was a compensatory education with a practical aim.
- A need to aid artisan training, which took too long to complete for learners who were not able to access employment, due to partly completed credentials.
- A need to formalise the skills programmes required by the labour market that were not easily accommodated in FET colleges.
- The inadequacy of workshop facilities at FET colleges and the added need to include work experiences in the curriculum, to prepare learners better for the world of work.
- When learnerships were introduced into the system, they were premised on these underlying assumptions, which have always been faintly articulated (Lolwana and Ngcwangu, 2015:7).

The Health and Welfare SETA (HWSETA), as mandated by the Skills Development Act, is responsible for funding and facilitating education, training and skills development interventions to the workforce of the health and social development sectors. The ultimate goal of these interventions is to close the skills gap in the health and welfare sector by increasing employability for the unemployed and progression for those already employed. The HWSETA also carries a responsibility of evaluating the outcome of the education, training, and skills development interventions. To this end, HWSETA tracer study seeks to account for the funds expended in learning programmes and to draw lessons for policy and operational direction in the interventions identified.

According to Ngcwangu (2016:207), learnerships have been a central pillar of the government's delivery on skills development. They address both the challenges of unemployment and the transition from education to work for the youth. However, learnerships are also a subject of the wider critique of the failure of the skills system despite the huge numbers of learners who have gone through the learnership system since SETAs started in 2001. The learnerships system has also been plagued by accusations of poor quality and overreliance on private provision rather than state/public provision. The learnerships are divided between learnerships for the unemployed and the employed through coding of 18.1 (employed) and 18.2 (unemployed) according to Reddy, Borat, Powell, Visser & Arends (2016). The total number of workers and the unemployed people participating in SETA-supported programmes is low when considering the educational level of the labour force. Given that close to half of the employed do not have grade 12 (matric) certificates, workplaces should be offering general training to raise the education and skill level, as well as specialised training related to particular work tasks.

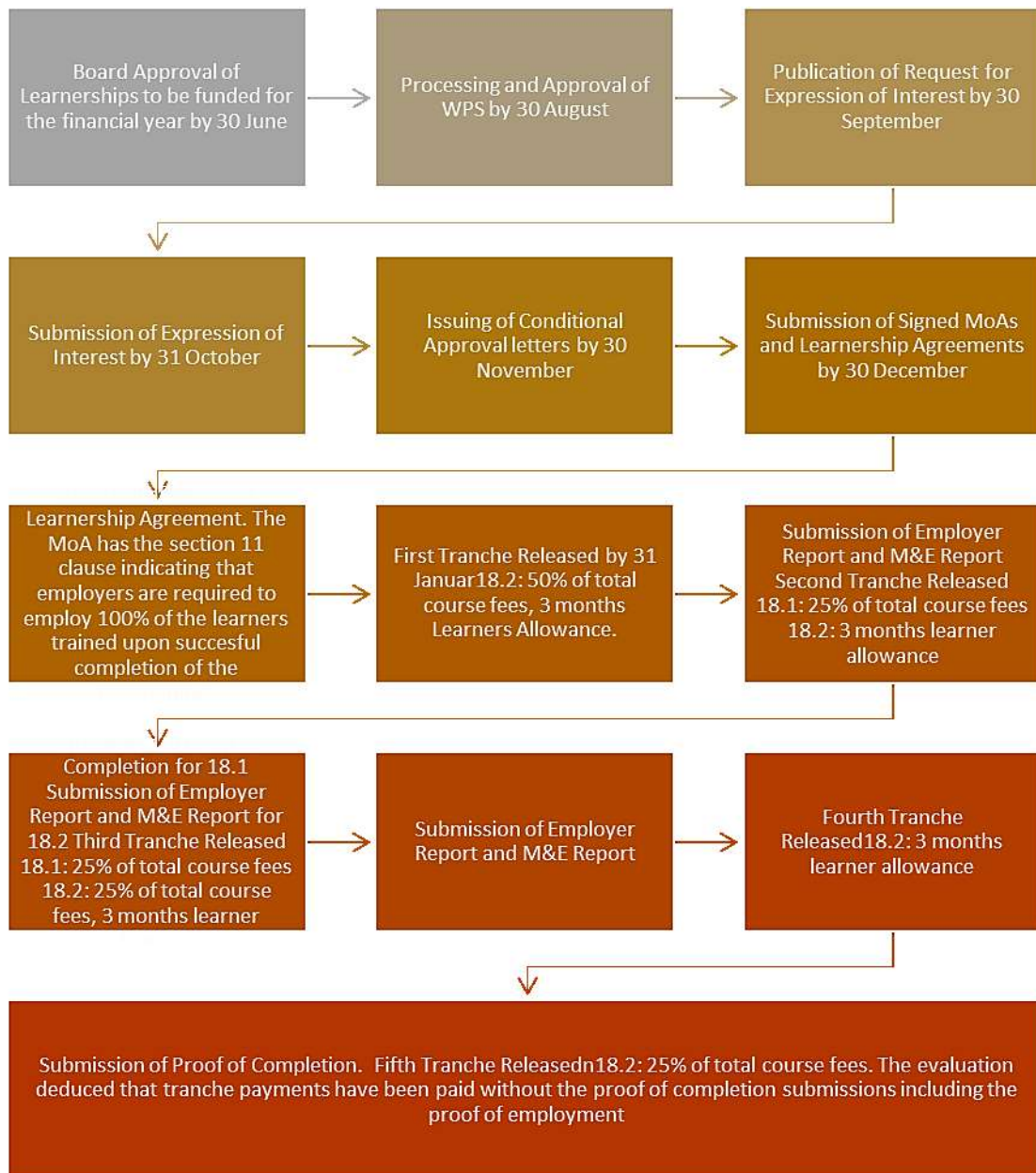
1.2 THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME

Overcoming skills deficits and unemployment is one of the major critical concerns in South Africa. The skills shortage, coupled with the lack of work experience, has immensely contributed to the high rate of unemployment (Griffin, 2003). Learnership programmes are one of the programmes established by the Skills Development Act, Act No. 97 of 1998 to address skills shortages, work-based learning and unemployment. The learnership programme is characterised by both theoretical and practical on the on-the-job-training leading to a recognised national occupational qualification (HWSETA-APP, 2017, Kruss *et al.* 2012, Davies, 2004 and Griffin, 2003).

“A Learnership is a vocational education and training programme. It combines theory and practice culminating in a qualification that is registered with the South African Qualifications Authority. A person who completes a Learnership will have a qualification that signifies occupational competence recognised throughout the country. To develop a skilled workforce, South Africa needs to build on learnerships as they equip employees with relevant skills to their trade. (HWSETA, APP, 2016-2017, 32)

The learnership programme is structured to facilitate employment and develop the learner's skills aligned to the labour-market requirements (Davies & Farquharson, 2006). Successful completion of a learnership translates into a nationally recognised academic qualification, combined with relevant workplace experience. This two-fold learning programme is, intended to accelerate learner's level of work preparedness and, thereby, increases learner's probabilities of acquiring employment, which may potentially result in improved learner's standard of living standards (National Skills Development Strategy, NSDS 01-001; Skills Development Act 97 of 1998). The HWSETA in collaboration with various employer organisations funds learnership programs with the aim of enhancing the acquisition of work-based experience and, amplified employability of learners in the labour market. This is in accordance with mission of the NSDSIII, which is “to increase access to high quality and relevant education and training and skills development opportunities, including workplace learning and experience, to enable effective participation in the economy and society by all South Africans and reduce inequalities (NSDSIII, 2010, 5). It is therefore important to evaluate the interventions that have been made, to ascertain the value of such interventions and the difference they have made towards achieving the policy goals stated in the NSDS III.

Figure 1: Learnership Process Diagram Flow



2. CHAPTER TWO: SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION STUDY

2.1 THE AIM OF THE EVALUATION

The study aimed to evaluate the performance of the learnership programme strategy for the unemployed 2011/12 to 2015/16

2.2 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- What is the employment rate of unemployed learners who completed learnerships funded by the HWSETA?
- What is the level of compliance by employers who entered into an agreement with the HWSETA to place unemployed learners on learnership positions and on completion, employ all learners as employees in their organisations, or facilitate employment in sister organisations?
- What are the challenges that may have impeded some employers from employing learners upon successful completion of learnerships?
- Does the strategy actioned as a condition for the approval of discretionary grant funding for unemployed learnerships negatively affect participation by employers;
- To investigate the probability of the non-sustainability of the learnership programme due to this strategy.

2.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study pursued five objectives when evaluating the performance of the strategy of the HWSETA for its learnership programme. These involved:

- Measuring the employment rate of unemployed learners who completed learnerships funded by the HWSETA.
- Measuring the level of compliance by employers who entered into an agreement with the HWSETA to place unemployed learners on learnership positions and on completion, employ all learners as employees in their organisations, or facilitate employment in sister organisations.
- To probe for challenges that may have impeded some employers from employing learners upon successful completion of learnerships.
- To investigate whether this strategy, actioned as a condition for the approval of discretionary grant funding for unemployed learnerships, does not negatively affect participation by employers.
- To investigate the probability of the non-sustainability of the learnership programme due to this strategy.

2.4 DATA SOURCES

SECONDARY DATA SOURCES

Three secondary sources were used; *firstly*, the database of the Memorandum of Agreements (MoA) between HWSETA and the employer organisations that were part of the learnership program in the NSDS III period. *Secondly*, the SETA Quarterly Monitoring Report (SQMR), which is the official performance information-reporting database of HWSETA, was used as the data source of the study. Focusing primarily on learners who completed the learnership programme funded by the HWSETA in the 2011/12 to 2015/16 financial year. *Thirdly*, the SETA Management System (SMS) database consisting of learnership data from 2011/12 to 2015/16. The study used these three databases to ensure that the target population adheres to the aim of the study. The MoA database was utilised to confirm the organisations that have signed MoA with the HWSETA within the NSDSIII period. This database was then merged with the SQMR database and the SMS database for the detailed employer and learner profile. The final merged file consisted of 104 organisations and 4001 learners. The 104 employers are therefore the target population of the evaluation resulting from the merged databases.

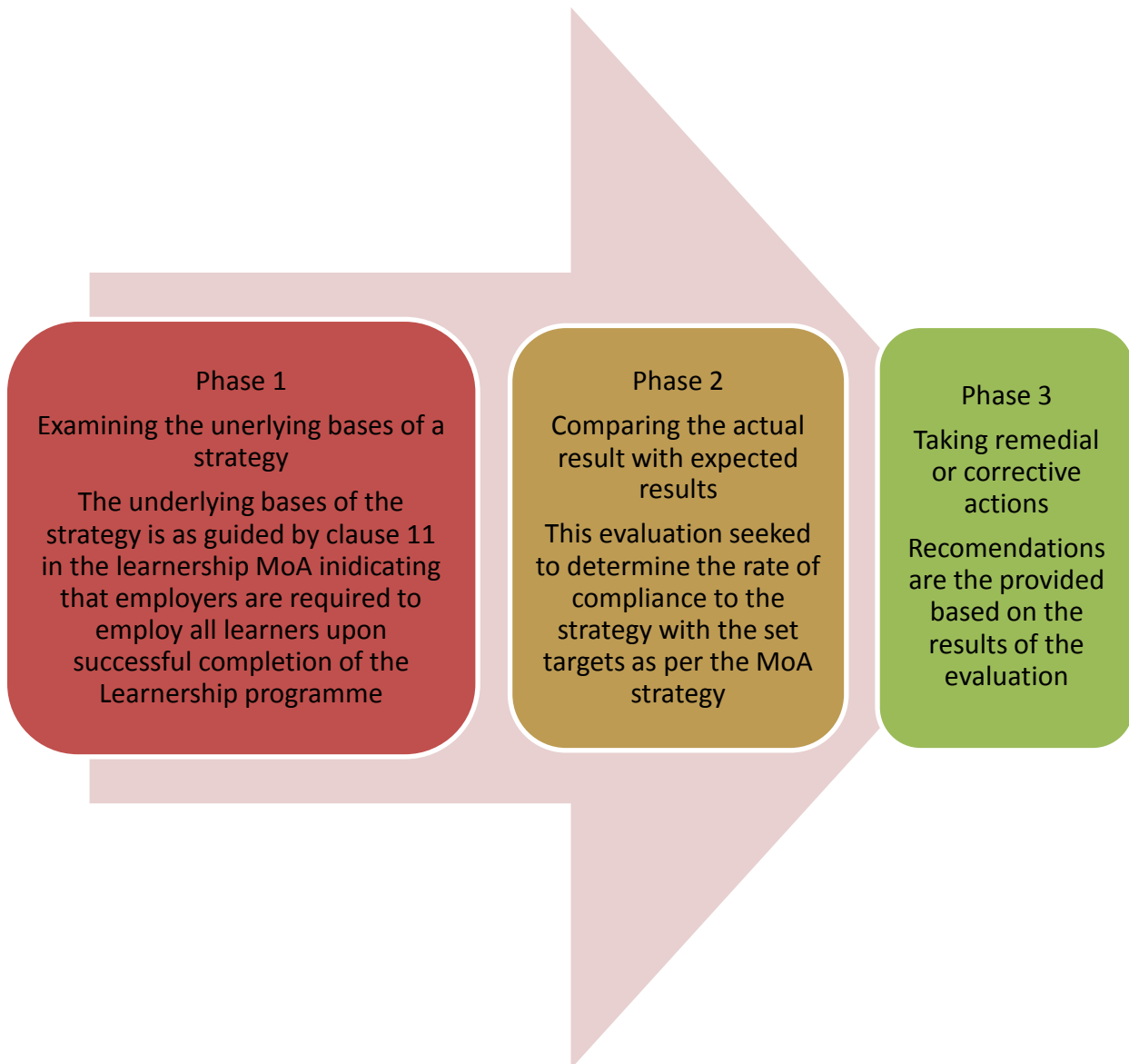
PRIMARY DATA RESOURCES

Primary data in the form of quantitative questionnaire was received from 37 employer organisations that participated in the learnership program during the NSDS III period with a record of signed MoA's. Recruitment letters were sent to all the 104 employers, the monitoring and evaluation team then followed up with the evaluation questionnaire, the employers were given four weeks to complete the questionnaires and send proof of employment in the form of contracts in a case where a learner has been provided with employment and describe any challenges encountered. Telephone follow-ups and email reminders were sent to employers to remind them to complete the survey.

2.5 EVALUATION APPROACH

The strategic evaluation approach was used to inform the evaluation. Strategic Evaluation is defined as the process of determining the effectiveness of a given strategy in achieving the organisational objectives and taking corrective action where applicable (Nikhil and Com, 1997). The strategic approach followed the steps outlined in figure 2 below.

Figure 2: The strategic evaluation process



3.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review is essentially about delimitation and selecting out of a large body of literature those sources, which are relevant to answering the research questions of a study. This literature review provides a cursory look at discourses that influence the research on learnerships and their evaluation. While the issues are varied, this literature review focusses on four main areas; (1) the youth unemployment context (2) the role of employers in skills development, (3) the notion of employability; and (4) tracer studies. These four areas are illustrative of the contested nature of the programmes aimed at facilitating the struggle from education to work.

3.2 YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT CONTEXT

The question of youth development in South Africa is one of the most pressing development challenges facing South Africa in the present era. According to Statistics South Africa's Profile of Youth report: 2009-2014 (2016) in 2014 young people aged 15–34 years made up approximately three quarters (3,4 million) of the unemployed. This situation is likely to worsen, as the economy has not been able to generate sufficient numbers of employment opportunities to make a significant dent on the high levels of unemployment amongst the youth. The state has attempted to introduce a range of policy ideas to respond to the youth unemployment crisis, which ranges from tax incentives for youth employment and youth service initiatives aimed at incorporating the youth in government programmes through short-term employment opportunities or internships. The success of the measures adopted by the state at a national level has been uneven and mediated by ideological contestations over the underlying ideas of the programmes identified. The youth wage subsidy idea is one such example of a project that was conceptualised to aid youth employment but was met with strong criticism from organised youth formations and progressive social movements as being too accommodative of the interests of big business.

The state has made other attempts such as internships, learnerships and youth service programmes to alleviate the crisis of youth unemployment by widening the options of facilitating the education to work transition for young people. These responses by the state have been conceptualised within an assumption of a labour market that will generate the necessary employment opportunities for the youth and that participation by the youth in state-led projects will improve the state's capacity to respond to the youth unemployment crisis. While these initiatives have made changes in some young people's lives, they have not been at a scale to make significant changes given the enormity of the crisis. In recent times, the state interventions have ranged from programmes such as the Youth Employment Strategy (YES), which aims to increase internship opportunities for graduates in the private sector to programmes such as the Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) programme of the National Department of Higher Education (DHET).

Four overarching explanations of the failures in state and private sector initiatives prevail in the discourse of youth unemployment in South Africa:

- (1) The deepening capitalist crisis in the 'real economy' has seen changes in production methods and work organisation which is leading to the introduction of new technologies which are resulting in job losses, therefore, militating against youth employment;
- (2) Lack of coordination across state departments results in a lack of clarity on the implementation of youth employment and youth development policies
- (3) Weaknesses in the organised civil society formations in articulating a coherent message on youth unemployment
- (4) The education and training system is not adequately preparing the youth for the 'demands' of the labour market

All these explanations are contested as they are premised on pre-existing assumptions about the nature of the youth unemployment crisis and in many instances have tended to blame the youth as individuals for being unable to meet requirements of the labour market and private sector employers. The other areas of contestation are that the well-intentioned programmes such as learnerships, vocational courses and internship have tended to postpone the youth unemployment crisis rather than provide a long-term solution to it. Some scholars have argued that these programmes have tended to 'warehouse' the youth by keeping them in perpetual training without providing sustainable solutions to the crisis (Hamilton and Baatjies, 2012). State policy has also overlooked the character of changes in the labour market structure of South Africa.

According to (Hlatshwayo, 2017). State policies such as the National Youth Policy (NYP) are still premised on assumptions of structured pathways into employment whereas in reality new forms of employment characterised by casualisation, precarity and outsourcing have become key determinants of the nature of work in the labour market.

3.3 ROLE OF EMPLOYERS IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

One of the most overlooked issues in the skills development field is the centrality of the role of employers and how employers respond to skills development policies. Business takes an active role in influencing policy and usually does so by combining its economic hegemony with the deployment of intellectual resources or lobby groups to support its cause. It deploys a variety of mechanisms, some of which range from NGO funded initiatives to representation on social dialogue structures to the advancement of its cause through the articulation of its position as the provider of employment to a bigger number of people. With regards to skills, the business also supports corporate social responsibility type initiatives which demonstrate practically its commitment to socio-economic development.

The NSDS III strategy highlights the need for employers to open up their workplaces for more training, particularly for those students that need the workplace component in order to complete their studies. The view of some business representatives is that the framing of these initiatives by the government at times is not targeted at the interests or needs of business but to broader societal developments in the interest of the nation. Deport (2013) goes as far as saying; 'There are numerous organisations that are not only choosing to ignore skills development altogether but are also inadequately implementing skills development in the workplace and, at times, even misusing the levy-grant system' (Deport, 2013:174).

The prevalent approach amongst employers is that the schooling system and university are failing to produce qualified or suitable candidates for employment, although despite these challenges employers still employ these supposedly incompetent graduates. So the refrain that poor quality will affect performance continues to shape the way in which employers approach the skills development issue (Ngcwangu, 2016). Employer's perceptions of skills needs in their industries are captured through annual workplace skills plans and annual training reports — both the NSDS III and the White Paper on Post School Education and Training (PSET) advocate for the making of all workplaces to be learning spaces. The shifts since 2009 to providing a stronger role for the state and acceleration of improvement in supply through the public institutions have ensured that the previous private provider led approach is slowly reformed to a stronger state-regulated process. Other changes in the NSDS III were related to grant regulation reforms (reduction of the mandatory grant), more funding for full academic qualifications, strengthening of artisanal training and pressure on employers to make workplaces available for training purposes.

3.4 EMPLOYABILITY

According to McQuaid and Lindsay (2005, 197) employability is associated with possessing abilities, and having the self-confidence, to take ones first steps out of education, whether that be into the scholarly world or the more extensive world of work. They are further associated with the expectancy to work within a labour market, then advance, create and be prosperous within ones chosen a path, or they could break into additional opportunities to fulfil one's potential in other endeavours.

Although employability can be a difficult idea to interpret, as it is an idea that is multidimensional; McQuaid and Lindsay still attempt to delineate the concept by borrowing the ideas of Gaizer who explains employability as a concept that clinches on both labour supply and labour demand within a particular area. McQuaid and Lindsay (2005: 201) mention that Gazier's seven interpretations of the idea of employability can be characterised as dichotomic employability, socio-medical employability, manpower policy employability, flow employability, labour market performance employability, initiative employability, and interactive employability. Other interpretations of employability can be divided into supply and demand side definitions. Wedekind (2014:60) indicates that the supply side is the presiding approach; the emphasis is on the individual and the set that individual can offer the employment equation. On the demand side, there are various social and economic policies and conventions that make employability possible (Wedekind 2014:60).

Another dimension, which is raised by Pramanik (2011:151), is that many governments are concerned with the supply side of employability as opposed to the demand side of employment. We can link this idea to what (Simpson 2013:2) characterises as structural employment which can be defined as when the abilities of the unemployed workers are not well fitted for the jobs available. Their training may be insufficient; their skills may have turned out to be obsolete or may not be suited for the developing industries. The definition incorporates the loss of jobs that happens when employers renovate their production processes, subsequently eliminating the requirement for a significant number of the types of workers or when economic disaster changes the requirement for specific workers. It is against this backdrop that we now briefly discuss the contribution of the methodology of tracer studies, which are useful to gather information on the post – programme activities of participants in a variety of learning and training initiatives.

3.5 TRACER STUDIES

In South Africa, the field of tracer studies prioritises University graduate destination studies (Bhorat, Mayet & Visser 2012; Kraak 2015; Case, Marshall, McKenna & Mogashana 2015). These studies focus on the availability of employment for graduates particularly based on demographic categories and socioeconomic status. In the context of skills development and vocational training, tracer studies arose within a context of the new human resources development system of democratic South Africa the 1998 Skills Development Act and amended in 2008 (RS 1998). The establishment of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) represent the key vehicles for responding to the skills deficit in the country. The SETAs are expected as part of their mandate to identify and respond to skills deficits within their economic sectors. As the driving force behind various National Skills Development Strategies (NSDS), they locate skills development needs against a backdrop of national skills development imperatives (Akoojee and Brown, 2009:271).

Tracer studies are similar to 'follow up' studies as they are based on following through on participants on a particular programme or educational project to find out how participation in the project has changed their lives. According to Cohen (2004:17), tracer studies are not a new methodology; they are an approach that can be used to find out more about a programme and its participants. A tracer study is a relatively short exercise that can be inexpensive compared to many other kinds of research. It is also easy to understand and easy to explain to all the participants. Like all research, such a study cannot prove that any outcomes found were a direct result of the programme; it can only support an assumption. A tracer study can, however, indicate trends and directions that can affect programming and policy. Tracer studies are an important analytical tool as their results indicate the extent of success or failure of a programme intervention.

The importance of tracer studies for institutional planners in educational institutions like SETAs is that they can inform future planning and influence the allocation of resources. In some instances, the tracer studies become part of monitoring and evaluation. Tracer studies have tended to focus more on output, outcome and impact variables. However, Macchi *et al.* (2009) argue that tracer studies should not be restricted to focus exclusively on the output, outcome and impact variables of programmes. Where questions of cost-efficiency and quality control are also of interest, input and process variables need equal consideration.

3.6 CONCLUSION

This section has provided a cursory look at the literature, which shapes the broad field of learnerships, the transition from education to work and the methodological debates that shape these discussions. The state has invested in large research projects such as the Labour Market Intelligence Partnerships (LMIP) to provide quantitative and qualitative research on the skills development initiatives within the economy and society broadly. This evaluation study makes a small contribution towards those efforts.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to (Babbie & Mouton, 2010) quantitative research relates to subject matters encompassing the quantification of a construction. A quantitative researcher believes that the most feasible, or the most exceptional way of scaling the properties of something known is through quantitative measurement, this means giving numbers to the observed qualities of things. In some spheres, this is understood as variable analysis (2010:49). Based on the research approach used, which is the strategic evaluation approach. Descriptive research was used as a basis for the research design. The purpose of descriptive research is to become more familiar with phenomena, to gain new insight. In descriptive research, researchers do not have direct control over independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred (Gliner, 2017).

4.2 TARGET POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The evaluation-targeted population was guided by the aim and objectives of the evaluation. The evaluation aimed to evaluate the performance of the learnership programme strategy for the unemployed during the 2011/12 to 2015/16 period. Several steps were undertaken to reach the targeted sample. The targeted sample is defined as the employers with signed MoA's and who participated on the learnership programme during the NSDSIII period. The evaluation purposely focused on the employers whom participated on the learnership programme during the NSDSIII period with a contractual MoA with the HWSETA specifying clause 11, which indicates that employers are required to employ all the learners upon successful completion of the learnership programme.

Steps were undertaken towards deriving the target population

A database comprising of the list of 287 employers with signed Memorandum of Agreements with the HWSETA during the NSDSIII 2011/12 to 2015/16 merged with the learner database from the SQMR and SMS database. The MoA database and the learner database was merged, as the MoA database does not have employer contact details and database of learners who participated in the learnership programme. The 287 MoA employers were merged with the SQMR learner database, which, comprised of 155 employers and 5185 learners. The outcome of the merge was 104 employers and 4001 learners that merged and were in both the MoA database and the learner database.

The study does not include all the employers who participated in the learnership programme during the NSDSIII period, but only the employers that resembled the specified stipulated criteria. Therefore as per the above, the target population identified for the evaluation is 104 employers and 4001 learners. One hundred four employers were invited to participate in the study however only 37 employers with 892 trained learners took part in the study.

4.3 DATA COLLECTION

A quantitative data collection tool was utilised in the form of employer self-administered questionnaires for primary data collection. The questionnaire consisted of nine questions with a combination of both closed and open-ended questions. The data collection tool aimed to assess the number of employed learners through the learnership program and establish challenges that may have impeded employment where applicable. The employers were not asked about the learner's demographics and qualification descriptions as this information was already available on the database and included on the excel spreadsheet with the evaluation questions to be completed by the employer contact person or SDF. The self-administered questionnaires were sent via email, followed by telephone follow-ups throughout the duration of the data collection phase. Some SDF's could not be reached telephonically. As a result, there were no follow-ups for some of the organisations.

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

5.1 DATA ANALYSIS

Data was compiled from the different employers and captured verbatim by the database administrator and evaluator. The monitoring and evaluation officer verified 20% of the data for quality purposes. The data was captured on an excel spreadsheet and analysed using descriptive statistics. Data analysis and presentation focused on demographic information, employment status, type of employment and programme challenges. The unit of analysis was at the employer level.

5.2 EVALUATION LIMITATIONS

Several limitations were identified in the study, all the hundred and four organisations were provided with an equal chance and sufficient time to complete the survey and extensions were granted when requested, in case of no response, email reminders were sent and telephone follow-ups to encourage participation. Organisations contacted dated from 2011 and, some of the employers have not been participating in the learnership program for several years. As a result, the contact details, employer contact person and SDF details were not recent thus resulting in the low participation rate whereby some of the contact persons have resigned from the companies and the current employers did not have sufficient information to complete the questionnaire.

Despite the noted limitations it is, however, worthwhile to note that the findings are still crucial in indicating the employment rate and challenges experienced by the thirty seven organisations that participated and the implication thereof. The results are not generalizable due to sampling limitation and inclusion, however; they are indicative of the learnership programme, employment trends and challenges. Furthermore, for data validity purposes, data triangulation was applied, primary data was collected in the form of a self-administered questionnaire, and the employers were also asked to provide an additional source to verify the responses in the form of learner contracts to provide a substantial indication of learner employment. As a result, due to the contracts, we can confidently affirm that the responses received from employers are a true reflection of the learnership outcome. The evaluation used additional sources of information to get more insight and minimise the rate of data insufficiencies found in one-source data as compared to multiple sources confirming the same data. This method was adopted to identify any inconsistencies in the datasets and to allow the evaluation to conclude evidence outcomes.

5.3 OUTLINE OF THE PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

This section presents the profile of the organisation that participated in the study and the findings drawn from the primary data collection and the additional findings from the contracts serving as supporting evidence to the primary data collections. The presentation of findings will follow the processes stipulated below.

Firstly, profiling of the overall 2011/12 to 2015/16 learnership database

Secondly, the presentation of the primary data collection findings, the presentation of the primary data collection finding will be aligned to the objective of the study as follows;

- Analysis of the employment rate of 18.2 learners who completed learnerships funded by the HWSETA
- Analysis of the level of compliance by employers who entered into an agreement with the HWSETA to place unemployed learners on learnership positions and on completion,
- Employ all learners as employees in their organisations, or facilitate employment in sister organisations.
- Analysis of the challenges that may have impeded some employers from employing learners upon successful completion of learnerships

- Assessment of whether this strategy, actioned as a condition for the approval of discretionary grant funding for unemployed learnerships, does not negatively affect participation by employers;
 - Assessment of the probability of the non-sustainability of the learnership programme due to this strategy.
- Fourth, further analysis of the information from employment evident in the form of employment contracts to identify the type of employment secured.

5.4 PROFILING OF THE OVERALL 2011/12 to 2015/16 LEARNERSHIP DATABASE

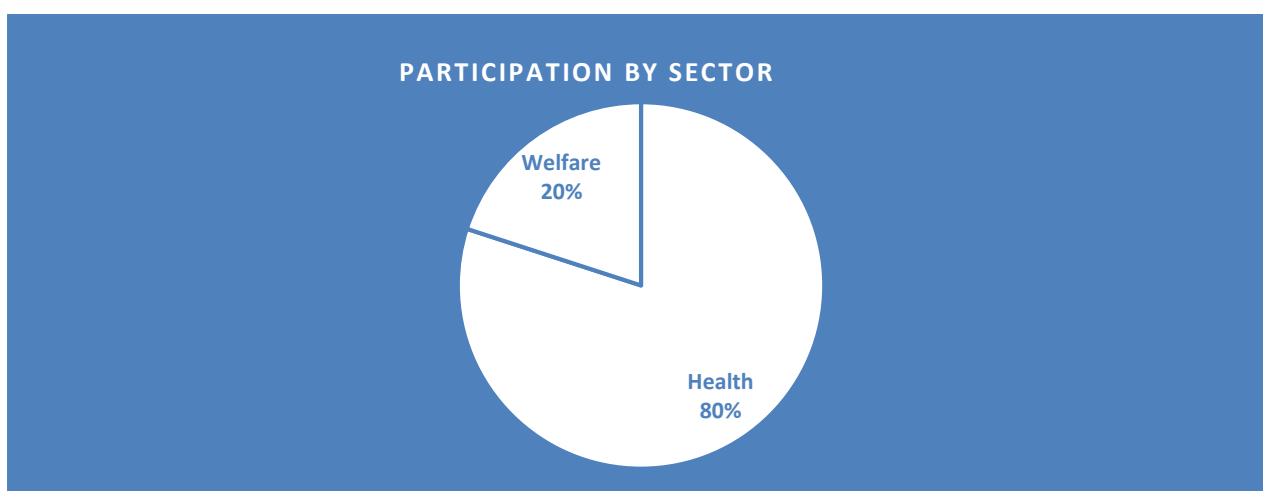
The following analysis is based on the target population of 104 employers and 4001 learners that participated on the learnership programme from 2011/12 to 2015/16 — sector, learners’ province, race, gender, age and programme description.

5.4.1 PARTICIPATION BY SECTOR

The following figures are based on the overall target population of 104 employers and 4001 learners from the secondary database analysis.

Participation from the health sector is 80% having trained 3201 learners over the period while the welfare sector trained 800 over the period and hence from figure five below it can be deduced that the health sector has considerably higher participation as compared to the welfare sector.

Figure 2: Learnership participation in the health and welfare sector secondary data



5.4.3 PROVINCE

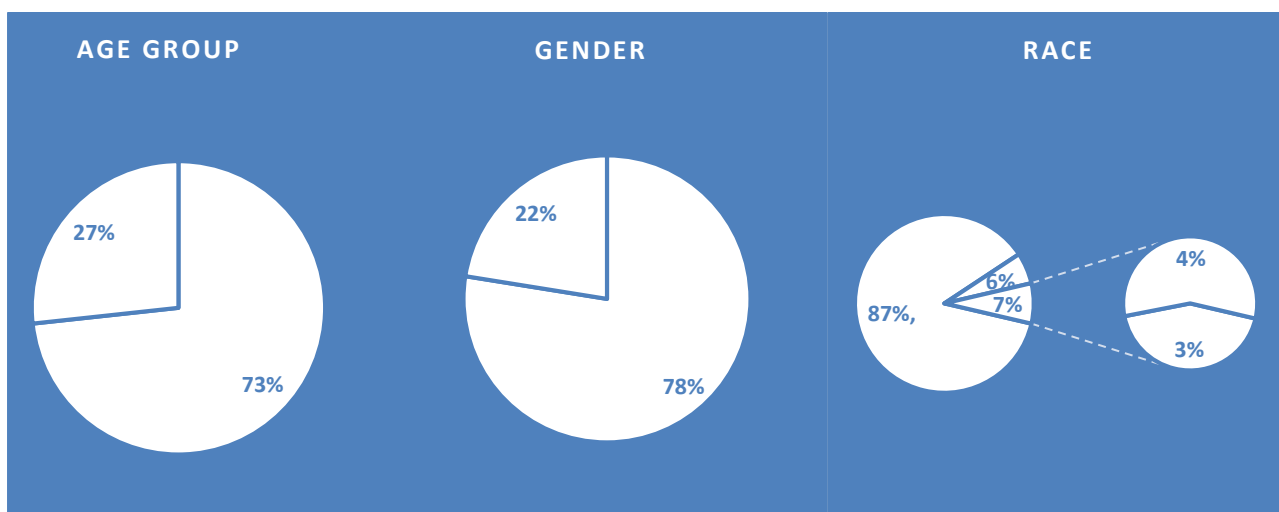
The learnership programs funds learners across the country, the data from the table two below indicate that the top three learner provinces were Gauteng, Limpopo and Kwa-Zulu Natal with over 50% of the learners during the five-year financial period.

Table 1: Demographics Learner province Secondary data

Province	GP	LP	KZN	EC	WC	MP	NW	FS	NC
Percentage	24%	22%	18%	14%	8%	5%	5%	4%	0%
Frequency	972	890	716	564	310	195	181	155	18

5.4.4 LEARNERS AGE GROUP, GENDER AND RACE GROUP

Figure 3: Demographics- learner age, gender and race group - Secondary data



The learners on the learnership programme were mostly below the age of 35 accounting for over 70% as the learnership targets mostly the youth. The learners are predominantly female, and over 80% of the group was black as demonstrated in figure 6 above this is in alignment with the HWSETA APP specifications.

5.4.5 PROGRAMME QUALIFICATION

Table three below shows the top ten qualifications from the database, pharmacist assistant followed by the public awareness promotion and social auxiliary work are the top three funded learnerships from the top ten learnership qualifications.

Table 2: List of top ten organisations- Secondary data

Qualification	Percentage	Frequency
NC: Pharmacist Assistant (Basic)	739	18%
FETC: Public Awareness Promotion of Dread Disease and HIV\AIDS	669	17%
FETC: Social Auxiliary Work	640	16%
FETC: Pharmacist Assistance (Post Basic)	435	11%
FETC: Phlebotomy Techniques	359	9%
FETC: General Nursing: Enrolled	354	9%
ND: Diagnostic Radiography	252	6%
ND: General Nursing: Bridging	252	6%
FETC: General Nursing: Auxiliary	163	4%
FETC: Child and Youth Care Work	75	2%
Other qualifications	63	2%
Total	4001	100%

5.6. LEARNERSHIP EMPLOYMENT RATE ANALYSIS

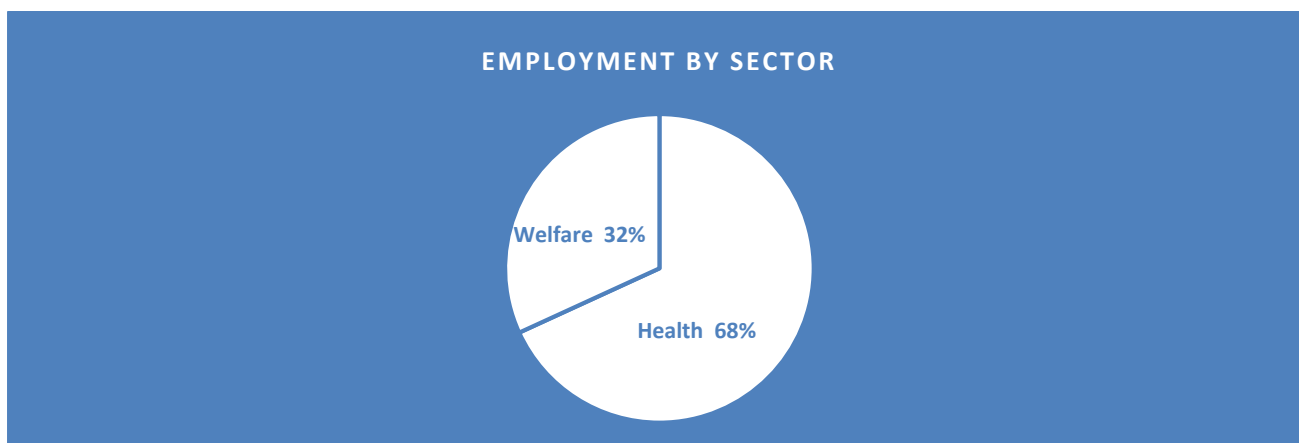
The following analysis is based on the primary data collection with 37 learnership employers and 892 learners funded by the HWSETA during the NSDSIII period. The learnership programme provides learners with nationally recognised qualification and work-based experience with an anticipated future outcome of employment in the host organisation or elsewhere. The learners are spread across nine provinces with the highest number of learners in the Gauteng province as indicated below.

Table 3: Demographics- Province - Primary data

Province	GP	KZN	LP	EC	NW	FS	WC	MP	NC	Total
Frequency	360	141	136	66	64	52	50	16	7	892
Percentage	40%	16%	15%	7%	7%	6%	6%	2%	1%	100%

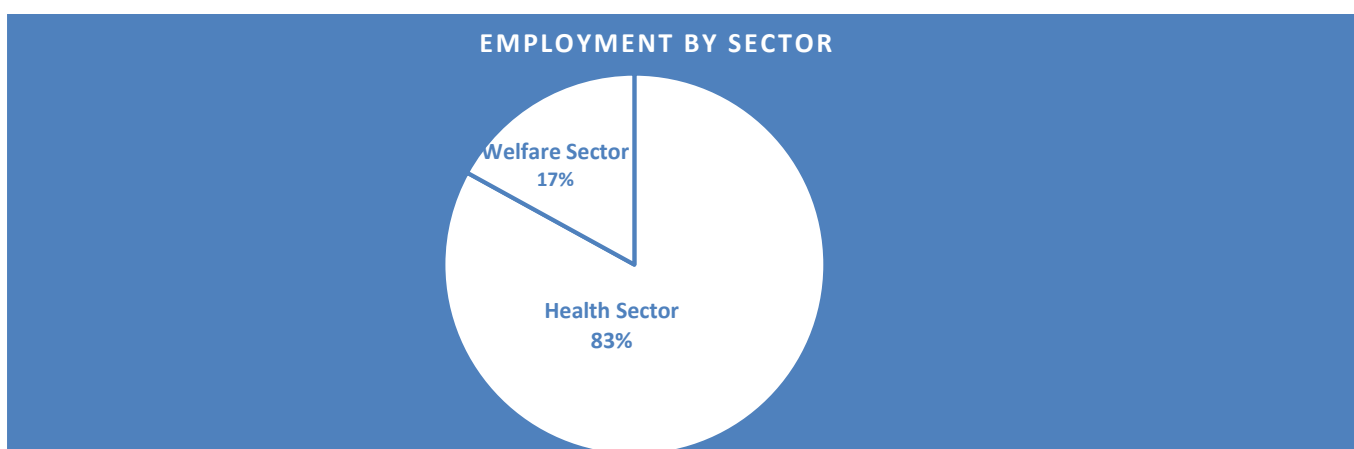
Employment is a critical outcome for the learnership programme the analysis below indicates the employment rate; the data indicated that 580 (65%) of the students were employed while 35% of the students were reported to be unemployed and seeking employment, studying or volunteering.

Figure 4 Overall employment in the health and welfare sector - Primary data



The sample comprises of 32 organisations in the health sector with 608 learners, which is 68% while the welfare sector had five organisations with 284 learners making up 32% of the sample. Furthermore, as can be seen in figure five below employers from the health sector, employed 83% (505) of the learners.

Figure 5: Employment by sector - Primary data



The data top three qualification in the data was social auxiliary work, followed by the Phlebotomy techniques learnership and the general nursing learnership programmes.

Table 4: Learnership programme – Primary data

Learnership programme description	Frequency	Percentage
FETC: Social Auxiliary Work	240	27%
FETC: Phlebotomy Techniques Learnership	225	25%
FETC: General Nursing: Enrolled	84	9%
FETC: Pharmacist Assistant Learnership (Post Basic)	71	8%
NC: Pharmacist Assistant (Basic)	70	8%
FETC: General Nursing: Auxiliary	61	7%
FETC: Child and Youth Care Work	44	5%
FETC: Public Awareness Promotion of Dread Disease and HIV\AIDS	37	4%
ND: General Nursing: Bridging	35	4%
ND: Diagnostic Radiography	26	3%
Grand Total	892	100%

Furthermore, with regard to employment by the programme, the results indicated that the top three qualifications resulting in higher employment rates are the Phlebotomy techniques, pharmacist assistant and general nursing enrolled. Also, the social auxiliary work qualification is on the top three qualifications on the sample and population, however, it's not on the top three for employment.

Table 5: Learnership Programmes by employment - Primary data

Programme Description	Frequency	Percentage
FETC: Phlebotomy Techniques Learnership	146	25%
NC: Pharmacist Assistant (Basic)	65	11%
FETC: General Nursing: Enrolled	64	11%
FETC: Social Auxiliary Work	61	10%
FETC: Phlebotomy Techniques	59	10%
FETC: Pharmacist Assistant Learnership (Post Basic)	58	10%
FETC: General Nursing: Auxiliary	55	9%
ND: General Nursing: Bridging	31	5%
FETC: Pharmacist Assistance	13	2%
ND: Diagnostic Radiography	14	2%

Moreover, the results further indicated that the top three organisations providing employment are in the health sector as indicated in table 9 below.

Table 6: Employment by organisation - Primary data

Programme description	Frequency	Percentage
Organisation 1 - Health sector	141	24%
Organisation 2 - Health sector	73	13%
Organisation 3 - Health sector	71	12%
Organisation 4 - Health sector	59	10%
Organisation 5 - Health sector	45	8%
Organisation 6 - Health sector	35	6%
Organisation 1 - Welfare sector	30	5%
Organisation 7 - Health sector	24	4%
Organisation 2 - Welfare sector	19	3%
Organisation 3 - Welfare sector	14	2%
Other organisations (Health and Welfare)	68	12%
Grand Total	579	100%

In addition to the employer and sector, the company size seemed to influence the employment rate. As per the table below, 21 organisations were in the health sector, employed most learners, and had an organisational size between 50-149 and 150+.

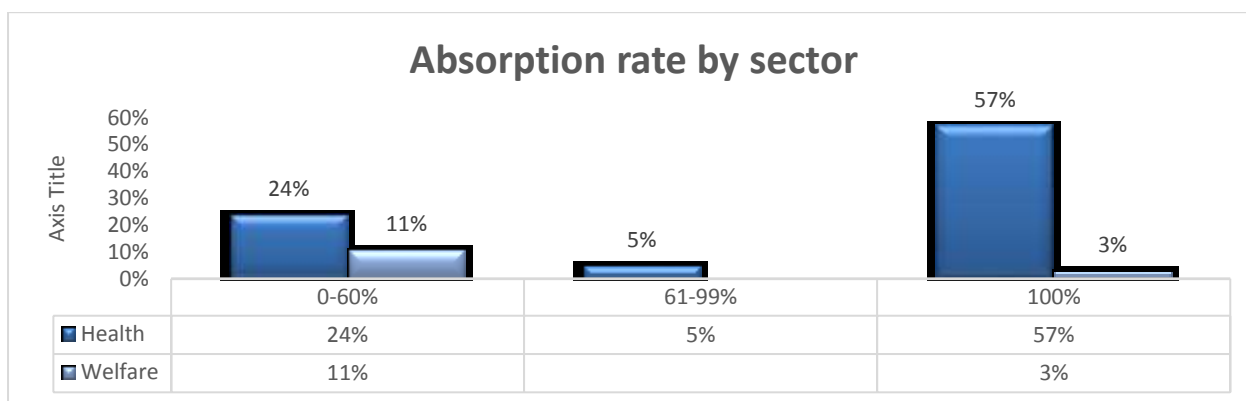
Table 7: Employment by organisation size - Primary data

Sector	0-49	50-149	150+	Number of learners employed
Health	13	14	6	579
Welfare	4	1	0	74

5.7 LEVEL OF EMPLOYER COMPLIANCE TO THE MoA STRATEGY

The number of employers that were able to employ 100% of the learners trained was used to assess the level of employer compliance to the MoA strategy. As per figure 17, 53% (21) organisations in the health sector were able to employ 100% of the learners upon successful completion of the programme. The compliance to the strategy is minimal as per the graph below, especially in the welfare sector.

Figure 6: Employment rate per sector - Primary data



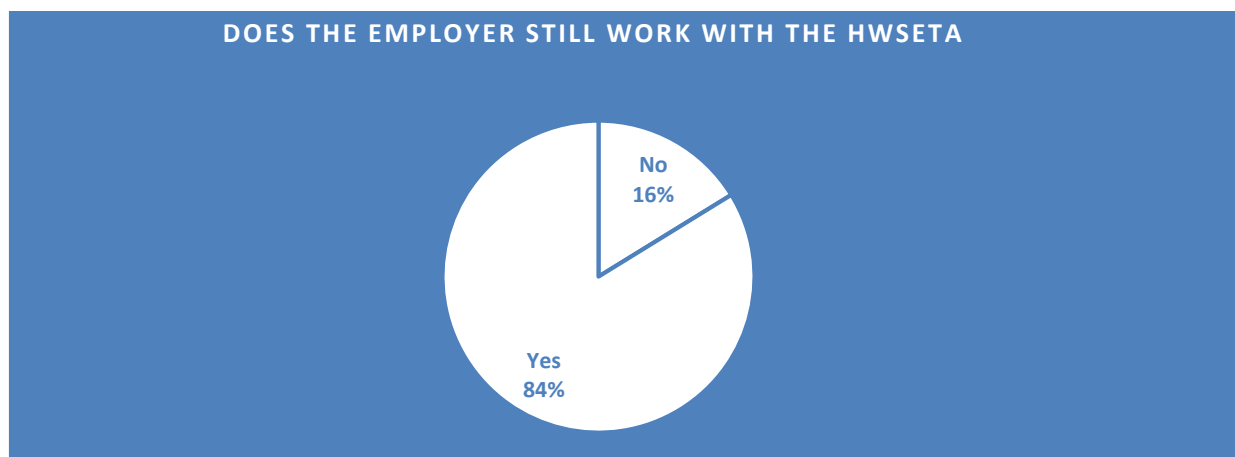
5.8 MOA STRATEGY ADHERENCE CHALLENGES

The challenges indicated by employers in the health sector who could not employ all learners who completed learnership included in general, 9% (3) of employers indicated delayed certification, another 9% (3) of employers indicated learners drop-outs, and 1 of the employers reported learner dismissal. Employers indicated that due to the above-mentioned challenges they were unable to absorb all the learners and thus unable to comply with the strategy. The employment rate of learners who completed learnerships in the welfare sector was 26% (70). In terms of the rate of compliance to the MoA by employers, 20% (1) of the employers reported being able to employ all learners who completed learnerships. The challenges indicated by employers in the welfare sector who could not employ all learners who completed the learnership included in general, 60% (3) of employers indicated unavailability of vacant positions upon learner completion, 40% (2) of employers indicated delayed certification, and 40% (2) of employers indicated learners dropouts.

5.9 THE EFFECT OF THE STRATEGY ON PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS

It is not clear as to whether the strategy negatively affects employer participation in the learnership programme. However, the charts below indicate that 16% (6) organisations indicated that they are no longer participating in the learnership programme. The welfare sector reported having challenges with securing employment for the learners and if the strategy enforced it may affect their participation in future and some organisation dating back from 2011/12 have indicated that there are no longer participating as an employer but as a training provider due to inability to comply with the strategy.

Figure 7: Employment status - Primary data



The data also indicated that the employer organisations turned to employ more learners in comparison to training providers as indicated in the table below. The training providers did not submit proof of employment as learners were reported to have been employed in other organisations. The strategy can potentially affect participation in the welfare sector and training institutions participating in the programme. One of the training institutions in the welfare sector last participated in the 2014/15 financial year due to the inability to secure employment for the learners.

Table 8: Employment rate by employer and training provider - Primary data

Employment rate	Number of Employers	Number of Training Provider
0-49%	9	2
50-99%	3	1
100%	21	1
Grand Total	33	4

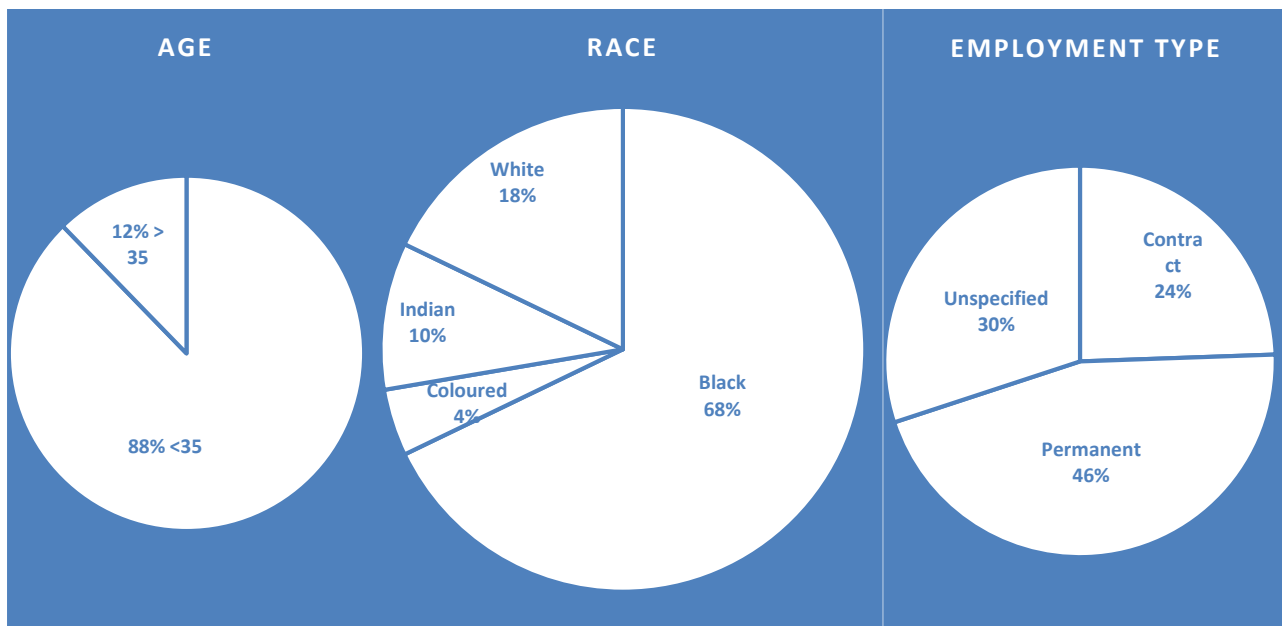
5.10 PROBABILITY OF THE NON-SUSTAINABILITY DUE TO THE STRATEGY

The data has indicated that 57% of the health sector organisations were able to employ 100% of the learners who participated in the programme and successfully completed. Overall employment was 83% from the health sector. Hence the programme has positive outcomes and can be sustainable particularly in the health sector further attention needs to focus on the welfare sector in terms of how the HWSETA can best support and work with the welfare sector. Furthermore, 20% (1) employer indicated that they are no longer participating as an employer but a training provider due to the inability to secure employment upon learner completion. This indicates that this strategy can negatively affect future participation and programme sustainability for employers in the welfare sector. This poses a potential risk for future participation. There is, however, an indication of sustainability in the health sector due to high employment rates.

5.11 FINDINGS FROM THE EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS SUBMISSIONS

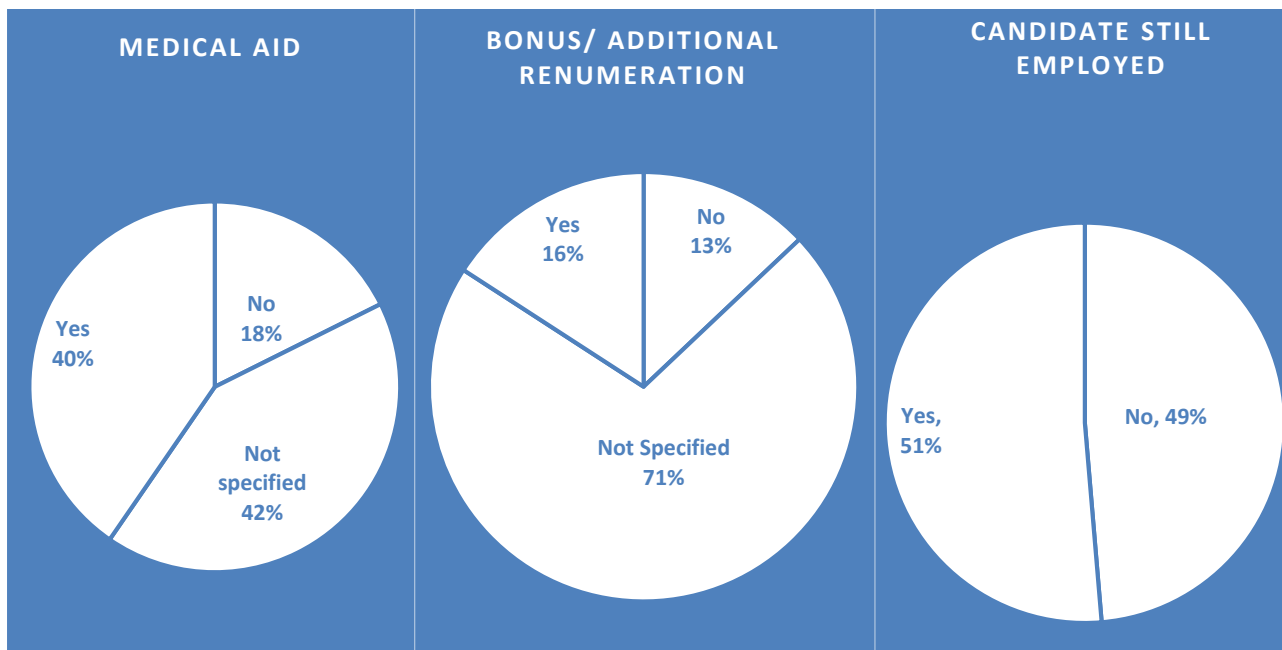
The findings below are based on the data analysis from the contracts submitted by some of the employers who participated in the primary data collection. The contracts submitted vary regarding the content and information provided as different organisations utilise different contracts relevant to the type of employment provided. The analysis will focus on the common themes for the 28 organisations who submitted contracts for 422 learners, which is 48% of the primary data sample. The contracts served as supporting evidence and provided insights about the type of employment acquired by the learners. The contract data indicated that the youth below the age of 35 were more like to secure employment, 68% of the learners employed were African followed by 18% who were white learners. With regard to employment type, 46% of the participants were in permanent positions.

Figure 8: Demographics - employment type, age and race - Primary data – Learner contracts



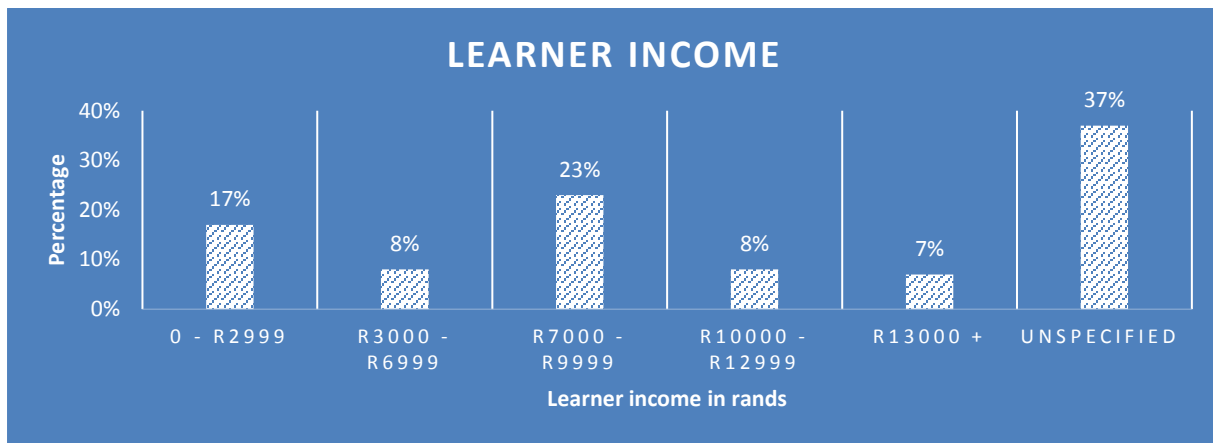
The employment contracts submitted indicated that 42% of the learners had the medical aid benefit, 71% had a possible annual bonus or 13th cheque or additional remuneration. More than 50% indicated that the learners are still employed in their organisation dating back from 2011 this indicates that employment offered is also sustainable in the long term. Some contracts did not specify this information and hence where there was no specification the response was coded as not specified.

Figure 9: Medical aid, Additional remuneration and Employment status - Primary data - Learner contracts



Several organisation opted to exclude the salary/ income value from the contract as they felt it was confidential information and hence 37% (167) participant’s salaries were recorded as unspecified in the data. The highest salary reported was at R7000 – R9999 at 23% by 101 learners. It was also quite a concern that 17% reported earning a salary below R3000 however; it is worth noting that different occupations have varying salary scales.

Figure 10: learners Income – Primary data – Learner contracts



5.12 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.12.1 PROFILING AND TARGET POPULATION

The main aim of the study was to assess the performance of the learnership MoA strategy as well as to determine any challenges to the strategy. As a result, several databases were merged to have a database comprising of employers with signed MoA with the HWSETA who also have a record of participating in the learnership program. The data merge indicated that the MoA database was not consistent with the learner database, as some of the employers on the learner database could not be traced back to the MoA list. The target population was based on a total of 104 employers and 4001 learners. The primary data was based on feedback from 37 organisations who trained 893 learners. Of the 37 organisations, only 28 employers provided employment contracts as evidence of employment for 422 learners.

Analysis of the employment rate of 18.2 learners who completed learnerships was funded by the HWSETA. The evaluation has indicated that the learnership programme outcomes are not aligned with the MoA specification. The learnership MoA section 11 indicates that 100% of the learners need to be employed upon successful completion of the learnership based on the evaluation the data has indicated that overall the employment rate is at 64% as opposed to the stipulated 100%. The evaluation looked into the level of compliance by employers who entered into the learnership agreement with the HWSETA to place unemployed learners into learnership programmes and on completion employ all learners as employees in their organisations, or facilitate employment in other organisations. The level of compliance for both the health and welfare sector is at 57% as opposed to the stipulated 100%. The learnership data furthermore assessed the level of compliance in the health and welfare sector. The results indicated that in the health sector 21 (66%) organisations from a total of 32 employers in the health sector managed to employ 100% of their learners upon successful completion of the programme. This indicates that there is some level of compliance with the strategy and that the strategy has some effectiveness in facilitating employment. The response rate was low from the welfare sector as only five organisations participated and of the five organisation, one (20%)

organisation indicated that they had a 100% employment rate, the organisation, however, did not send the contracts as proof of employment and the feedback was based on the self-administered questionnaires.

5.12.2 CHALLENGES ON COMPLIANCE WITH MOA

The results indicated that certain organisations were not complying with the MoA specifications and the reasons provided for lack of compliance centred around lack of available post at the time of completion and delayed certification. Timely certification is crucial, as certain qualifications require certification and registration with relevant council before an individual can operate in their chosen field of study and hence there needs to be a strategy put in place to ensure that learners' certification is not delayed and thus leading to lack of employment and registration with the relevant councils.

The evaluation further looked into the effect of the strategy on the participating organisations; the results indicated that there had been a reduction in the number of employers in the learnership programme due to their inability or lack of capacity to employ learners. The strategy negatively affects a significant number of organisations in the welfare sector, which has lower employment rates as opposed to organisations in the health sector.

5.12.3 THE PROBABILITY OF THE NON-SUSTAINABILITY OF THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME DUE TO THIS STRATEGY.

The targeted rate for employment upon successful completion of the programme is 100% as per the learnership MoA; the results indicate that the organisation is not performing as per the stipulated MoA standards. However, it is worth noting that there is an indication of employment and a certain percentage of learners acquire employment, which is a recommendable milestone. The HWSETA perhaps should look into ways of supporting the welfare sector and further research factors impeding employment beyond their capacities such as the type of programme offered, NQF level etc. and ways in which the programme can be improved for the candidates to be more marketable and exposed to the labour market and available opportunities.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LESSONS

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation aimed to determine the performance of the learnership strategy for the unemployed. The findings have indicated that the performance is average and not aligned with the strategy. The overall performance is at 65% as opposed to 100% employment as specified in the strategy furthermore only 50% of the organisations were complying with the 100% employment rate. The results demonstrate that it is adherence and some level of outcomes have been achieved over the years however improvement is necessary for achieving the desired goals. The evaluation has also discovered that even though employers may desire to employ candidates, they are certain structural, financial, capacity and technical challenges that may impact employment.

The challenges need to be further evaluated and reviewed by the HWSETA in collaboration with the organisation to determine ways in which the programme can be improved. It is crucial to note that the programme is tripartite cooperation between the HWSETA, organisations and learners hence the three parties have a responsibility towards the success of the programme. One of the identified issues were lack of certification which needs to be addressed by the HWSETA, the second was lack of employment in the welfare sector, which needs to be addressed by the HWSETA and the participating organisation to better support the welfare sector and understand the challenges faced by the sector. In conclusion, the results have indicated that the project has positive outcomes with the probability of sustainability.

6.2 RECOMMENDATION

Firstly, the evaluation recommends further research and evaluation to determine and evaluate the challenges affecting employment at an in-depth level and formulate strategies to counter effect the challenges. The current evaluation did not fully address the challenges due to the tool limitation using a quantitative questionnaire a more in-depth qualitative discussion is recommended to establish this further. Awareness of these challenges will facilitate the strengthening of the strategy of the learnership programme for the unemployed to secure higher rate employment. Secondly, the evaluation recommends for regular monitoring and evaluation on a quarterly basis. Some of the SDFs and employers could not be accessed as the evaluation followed employers from 2011 and found that some of the employers and relevant contact persons were no longer working on the project and hence were unable to participate in the study. This could be countereffected through regular monitoring

Thirdly, the Learnership process and MoA indicates that the final trance should be released upon reception of the final report and supporting evidence, which should include the proof of employment where applicable or reason for lack of unemployment and challenges experienced. The evaluation recommends that the project management team facilitated this process in collaboration with the RIME as stipulated in the action plan and discussed with the project manager. Lastly, It is crucial to note that the programme is tripartite cooperation between the HWSETA, organisations and learners hence the three parties have a responsibility towards the success of the programme. The HWSETA plays a role of funding the programme as well as monitoring and evaluation of the project activities, while the organisation have a role of facilitating the programme, training the learners and providing employment upon completion of the programme. The learners have a responsibility of successfully completing the programme. The employers have a responsibility to employ learners upon successful completion and in a case of lack of employment, for the learner's benefit and programme sustainability, the HWSETA as the collaborating partner can perhaps through further evaluation, strategy review develop ways of assisting the organisations particularly with the welfare sector.

6.3 LESSONS LEARNT

The following lesson were derived from the evaluation. Firstly, we are operating at a 65% compliance rate as opposed to a 100% compliance rate anticipated. The health sector seems to be leading in terms of compliance and support, and further enquiry is required in terms of how the welfare sector can be supported. Secondly, the monitoring needs to be strengthened; the evaluation indicated there had been minimum monitoring of the performance of the strategy. Regular monitoring and evaluation are therefore necessary to better measure the compliance rate, address challenges promptly, and support the participating organisations.

6.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

One of the most pressing socio-economic challenges confronting South Africa in the contemporary era is the creation of sustainable employment, especially for the youth. This suggests that the study's overall findings are critical at two main levels, (1) programme level and (2) systemic level. At a programme level, the study has shown that employers' capacity to absorb unemployed learners are shaped by the internal dynamics of their respective workplaces such as their financial position, demand opportunities, company size and workplace culture. The structure of the learnership programmes require. At a systemic level, this study has shown the danger of homogenising ideas about skills development and learnerships, which does not take into account the variance between sectors nor their diverse structural challenges. Allais, Marock and Ngcwangu (2017) show that human resources development at a national level in South Africa requires a holistic approach, one which embraces all aspects of human development. 'Of course, it is the case that health, early childcare and so on – almost all social policies – can contribute to the skills of the workforce' (Allais *et al.*, *ibid*:10). This study shows that the welfare sector employers require additional support to absorb more learners and could provide critical experience to learners committed to a wider concept of human development.

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