



TRADE UNION INVOLVEMENT IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: A SAFETY AND SECURITY SUBSECTOR REVIEW






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PEOPLE MUST LEARN MORE AND MORE THAT THE STRENGTH OF THIS COUNTRY IS THE DEMOCRATIC POWER OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT.

<MICHEAL FOOT>



My problem in calling for pressures on South Africa is to convince the youth to convince their governments and people that it is not the South African goods that are cheap, but the forced labor of the Africans.

Oliver Tambo

QuoteNova.net

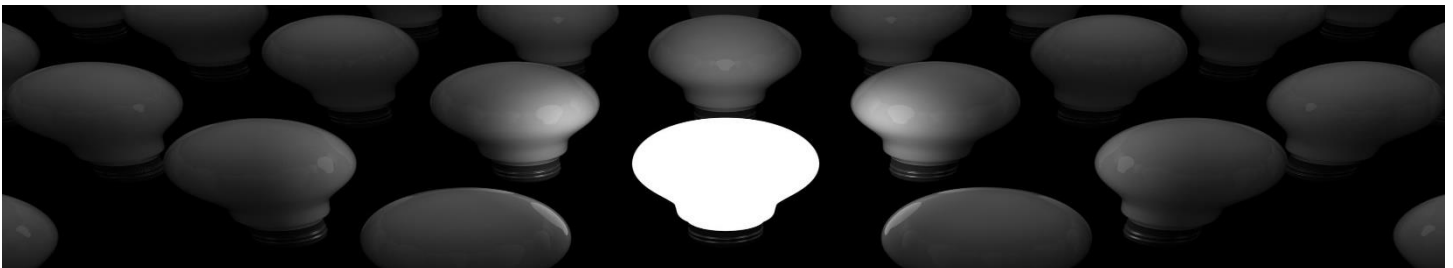
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Trade unions play an important role in supporting workplace learning in its different forms. They act as intermediaries between workers and employers (Bridgford, 2017). Given the contemporary interest in skills development, particularly in the light of high levels of youth unemployment. The rapid increase in the number of new initiatives (laws and regulations, reviews and reforms, strategies and projects) to address this issue it is important to understand the involvement of trade unions in skills development (Bridgford, 2017).

Problem Statement

There is a need for the establishment of suitable and affordable facilities for skills development so that workers at the lower end of the market can be helped to overcome the barriers of gender, ethnicity and race that hamper their mobility in terms of income and professional advancement.



Research Methodology

This research project was a secondary qualitative study that will be conducted as a desktop research project. A secondary research study requires the researcher to read recent scholarly works that have made contributions towards answering the research problem. This process will involve collecting data from either the originator or a distributor of primary research.

Findings of the Study

The study made the following findings:

- Skills development must challenge existing power relations in the workplace.
- Skills development should also take center stage in the transformation agenda, focusing on economic and societal needs.
- Employees ought to recognize the importance of skills development in transforming their lives through the creation of more platforms for discussion, debate and awareness.
- There is a need to challenge the current neo-liberal paradigm of our human resource development strategy (HRDS), to assert and improve employee perspective.
- Overcome the divide between mental and manual labour and address the imbalances of the past through Early Childhood Development (ECD), Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Adult Basic Education Training, career pathing and related strategies.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The process of skills transformation is lengthy and there is a need to continually balance different imperatives. The needs of the unemployed, new entrants and existing workers; the importance of offering short courses, which enable workers to receive recognition for their existing skills and knowledge.

There is a need for continued emphasis on building the capacity of the unions to engage in the system and to continually expand efforts to train and strengthen shop stewards' ability to engage about education and training issues in the workplace and to have mechanisms to elevate these issues such that they can be raised in key sector and national forums.



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1. CHAPTER ONE:

GENERAL ORIENTATION AND PROBLEM FORMULATION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Given the contemporary interest in skills development, particularly in the light of high levels of youth unemployment. The rapid increase in the number of new initiatives (laws and regulations, reviews and reforms, strategies and projects) to address this issue it is important to understand the involvement of trade unions in skills development (Bridgford, 2017).

Trade union positions on skills development are evolving. Trade unions play an important role in supporting workplace learning in its different forms. They act as intermediaries between workers and employers (Bridgford, 2017). They provide information to workers about learning opportunities. They carry out analyses of the learning needs of the workplace.

South African trade unions have a long and interesting history which dates to the 1980s. According to Buhlungu, (2006) trade unions could be regarded as the reflection of the country's racial disunity, because the earliest trade unions were mainly for white workers only. "During 1948 to 1991, trade unions played a significant role in developing economic and political resistance and were eventually one of the driving forces in realising the need for the transition to democracy" (Hassen, 2014: 55).

According to Hassen, (2014) trade unions have made major gains since 1994, which includes the significant "entrenchment of collective bargaining in different sectors and social dialogue forums, particularly the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) and improvements to labour legislation, which have changed many aspects of apartheid labour relations to democratic labour relations" (Hassen, 2014: 55). Despite these achievements of the trade unions, there has been much debate about the effectiveness of trade unions in representing their members (employees).

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Trade unions in developing countries have not achieved 'a secured income for the majority of their workers'. Thus, there is need for them to develop a wide support base which addresses the needs of many Trade Unions, including schemes which involve job creation and active involvement in human resource development (Jose 2002).

There is a need for the establishment of suitable and affordable facilities for skills development so that workers at the lower end of the market can be helped to overcome the barriers of gender, ethnicity and race that hamper

their mobility in terms of income and professional advancement. Moreover, such facilities can raise the supply price of labour, equip workers to respond to expanding economic opportunities and help them emerge as equal partners in the development of markets (Jose, 2002:14).

This study seeks to investigate the involvement of Trade Unions in skills development in the Safety and Security Sector. It is aimed at assessing if Trading Unions have an impactful contribution towards skills development in South Africa. This is because there is confusion amongst researchers about the effectiveness of trade unions in representing employees. For example, Walters, (2011) argues that trade unions which are meant to effectively represent their members have been restricted in doing so due to their increased focus on politics instead of their original duties and responsibilities.

As a result, there has been a rapid increase in the general perception that trade unions are not effective in their promotion of skills development. On the other hand, Bryson (2012) argues that trade unions are effective in representing employees, however the problem is that they are unable to pinpoint their success so that it can be translated into perceived benefits arising from the effectiveness of the trade union's actions, and that this could account for the increase in the above general perception. There are many other challenges which are experienced by trade unions, which makes contribute to the apparent lack of representation within skills development.

1.3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the study is to conduct a Safety and Security Sub-sector review.

To accomplish this purpose, the following objectives will be considered:

- To understand the contribution of trade unions to skills development involvement.
- To explore the challenges experienced by trade unions during skills development involvement.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following sub research/evaluation questions will be addressed in order to answer the main question of the study:

- How do trade unions contribute towards skills development?
- What benefits are delivered through trade union involvement in skills development systems?
- What are the challenges experienced by trade unions during skills development involvement?

1.5. DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are defined below to provide clarity:

1.5.1 Trade union:

Refers to “an association of employees whose principal purpose is to regulate relations between employees and employers, including any employers' organisations” (Section 213 of the LRA 66 of 1995).

1.5.2 Employee:

An employee refers to: “any person, excluding an independent contractor, who works for another person or for the State and who receives, or is entitled to receive, any remuneration; and any other person who in any manner assists in carrying on or conducting the business of an employer, and employed and employment have meanings corresponding to that of employee” (Section 213 of the LRA 66 of 1995: 119).

1.5.3. Skills development:

The terms skills development comprises of two nouns, namely “skills” and “development”. A skill refers to an expertise or talent which requires special training and knowledge. Moreover, skills are defined as an ability and capacity to acquire through deliberate, systematic and sustained effort to smoothly carryout complex activities such as job functions (Jones & Lavelle, 2019). Therefore, skills development is a set of skills required to complete job functions; occupations need a broad range of skills to contribute to the modern economy. In this study skills development refers to the skills required by trade unions for the sustainability of these types of enterprises in South Africa.

1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will provide a review of Trade Unions in the Safety and Security Sector. This study would contribute to understanding of Trade Union involvement in skills development. Furthermore, will assess the challenges experienced by Trade Unions in their contribution towards a skilled and capable workforce.

1.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The researcher ensured that human dignity was upheld by seeking informed consent from the research participants. This was done by reminding the participants of their rights to keep certain information about themselves confidential, while an agreement was used to limit or prohibit access to the private information. The researcher also ensured that, in this study, the research participants remained anonymous and that no names were used in this study except pseudonyms.

1.8. CHAPTERS BREAKDOWN

- **Chapter One: Introduction**

Provided the introduction and background to the research topic of this study. This included, the research problem, research questions, objectives and aims of the study. Furthermore, this chapter included the theoretical framework on which the study is based, definitions of terms to provide clarity, research methodology, scope and significance of the study, ethical consideration, and limitations of the study.

- **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This chapter provides the literature review; it starts by providing a brief definition of literature review and its importance in a study. It covers a brief definition of trade unions, it included the discussion of the South African trade unions, the role of trade unions, and their contribution towards skills development.

- **Chapter Three: Research Methodology**

This chapter provides the research methods used to conduct this study. This chapter provides the research design, research approach/paradigm, data analysis, research interview questions, methods used to ensure validity and reliability of the study.

- **Chapter Four: Presentation of Data**

This chapter provides the data which was collected in this study. This chapter further presents the key themes which were drawn from the research objectives.

- **Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

This chapter provides summary of all chapters of this study. It answers the research questions as set out in chapter one, it provides recommendations and recommendations for future studies. Lastly it provides conclusion based on the findings of the study.

1.9. SUMMARY

This chapter provided the introduction and background to the research topic of this study. It presented, the research problem, research questions, aims and objectives of the study. It presented the theoretical framework on which the study is based, definitions of terms to provide clarity, research methodology, scope and significance of the study, ethical consideration and limitations of the study. Lastly it presented the chapters breakdown of all chapters in this study.

2. CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The literature review provides the theoretical base for the research and helps the researcher to determine the nature of the research. “It also shows where the research fits into the existing body of knowledge, it outlines the gaps and highlights the flaws in previous studies. It shows, that the work is adding to the understanding and knowledge of the field” (Boote & Beile, 2005: 25). It helps to refocus, refine or even change the topic (Boote & Beile, 2005).

This chapter provides a literature review about the effectiveness of trade unions in representing employees. In order to create a context this chapter begins by providing a brief definition of trade unions, the trade unions movement in South Africa, the role of trade unions, and the contribution of trade unions towards skills development. Lastly, this chapter aims to provide an analysis of literature to the research questions set out in chapter one.

Given the contemporary interest in skills development, particularly in the light of high levels of youth unemployment, and the rapid increase in the number of new initiatives (laws and regulations, reviews and reforms, strategies and projects) to address this issue, the aim of the literature review is not to delve into the history of trade union involvement in skills development but to concentrate on the most recent period, so as to provide practical contemporary guidance for future trade union reflection and activity.

2.2. Trade Unions: A Global Perspective

Belgian law makes provision for trade union involvement in the design and implementation of apprenticeship training. Trade unions are represented on the Board of the Flemish Agency for Vocational Training, and its Practical Committee, which are responsible for the approval of all training plans and qualifications, the implementation of apprenticeship agreements, the quality of training in the workplace and the supervision of in-company mentors.

2.3. UNDERSTANDING TRADE UNIONS

A trade union can be regarded as an association of employees whose main aim is to regulate the employment relations between employees and employers as well as, employers' organisations (Section 213 of the LRA 66 of 195). Adler & Webster (2000) argue that trade unions refer to employees' associations which are formed or developed to improve the conditions of work and employees' income by collectively bargaining with organisations of employers, or employers.

Trade unions are those “organisations whose membership consists of workers and union leaders, who are united to define, promote and fight for the collective interests and rights of workers or a group of workers, especially in

relation to employers, but also in relation to the state and civil society” (Andrew, 2004: 1). They are the organisations that represent the employees at work, this refers to meeting with employers to resolve issues or problems on behalf of the employee (Von Holdt, 2003: 26). In other words, they are the voice of employees.

2.4. THE ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS

According to Adler & Webster, (2000) the main aim of trade unions is to protect the employees who are members of trade unions. They ensure that the workplace is safe for employees and that the employers do not place the employees’ health at risk through poor working conditions. They also provide legal protection to their members; they employ lawyers to ensure that employers treat their employees in accordance with the South African labour legislation (Adler & Webster, 2000).

Von Holdt (2003) indicates that the other aim of trade unions is to improve the employees’ salaries or wages and employment conditions by collective bargaining. Andrew (2004) argues that the “principal purpose of trade unions is to regulate relations between employers and employees, to take collective action to enforce the terms of collective bargaining, to raise all employees’ demands to their employers, and to help the employees in terms of settling their grievances and disciplinary matters” (Andrew, 2004: 66).

In the development of employee’s trade unions play an important role, they have contributed in improving the standard of living of their members by negotiating not only for decent wages, they also negotiate for better living conditions etc. It is assumed that it is through decent wages that the members’ standard of living is improved but all these can be obtained if trade unions are active in negotiating for better terms and conditions of work for workers. Trade unions have also negotiated for other important benefits such as housing allowances, pension fund, medical aid and other benefits (Mwilima, 2008).

Mwilima (2008) mentions ten objectives of trade unions which are as follows:

Objectives of Trade Unions (Mwilima, 2008)	
a)	To secure the improvement of employment conditions and payment rate for employees through negotiation with government and employers.
b)	To negotiate on behalf of employees whenever disputes arise.
c)	To unite all those employees who have a common interest.
d)	To maintain the agreed employment or working conditions, which include ensuring that all promises made such as any increase in wages, getting promotions and paid leave etc. are honoured.

e)	To provide any type of mechanism that should allow “trade union members to express any dissatisfaction about their job and to highlight any development at local level that might conflict with their job description and job specification” (Mwilima, 2008: 25).
f)	To minimise employees’ exploitation and protect them and strive to ensure that they have job security.
g)	To provide employees “with services such as information regarding car insurance schemes, pension rights” (Mwilima, 2008: 25) and advise their members regarding any areas of doubt concerning union directives.
h)	To represent or help employees in disciplinary hearings.
j)	Ensure that employees are not unfairly discriminated in employment.
k)	Ensure the health and safety of employees in a workplace (Mwilima, 2008).

2.5. An overview of the skills development system and Trade Unions

The post-1994 education and training environment was informed by the imperative to improve access to skills training and the importance of attaining recognition for the skills workers had acquired through work experience. The labour movement was central to the reshaping of the new legislation and as early as 1989, NUMSA established a research group comprising workers and union officials, to formulate recommendations on training. The proposals that the research group developed – and the focus on skills-based grading - were formally adopted by COSATU in July 1991.

The research and engagement process within the labour movement, both in South Africa and with unions globally and in particular in Australia¹⁰⁸, ensured that the unions played a driving role in skills development in the South African context. Much early policy conceptualisation took into account the demands of the labour movement including the imperative for redress, mobility, progression in the labour market as well as access to lifelong learning. This in turn resulted in the development of a framework for skills development that included: a national training levy, Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), RPL and the development of national standards for skills across the economy.

With these underpinning principles embedded into the draft legislation, the Skills Development Act (SDA) was passed, following negotiations within NEDLAC, on 20 October 1998. The Skills Development Levy Act (SDLA) was then passed a year later. These pieces of legislation established the new regulatory framework for promoting and developing skills in the economy. The SDA enacted the SETA system, identified learnerships¹⁰⁹ as the key mechanism for ensuring that both the unemployed and employed had access to education and training and

outlined the basis for the expansion of employment services. Most of the provisions of the SDA came into effect in September 1999 while the key vehicle for implementation - the SETAs -were introduced in March 2000.

The SDLA outlined the requirements for the levy/grant system. It indicated that employers would pay 1% of payroll to fund nationally recognized education and training. Of this 1% of payroll it was intended that 80% would fund priority training for the workplace (through the SETAs) and 20% would fund national training priorities (through the National Skills Fund - NSF). The SDA was the subject of amendments in 2008 and further refinements in 2011. The key amendments in 2008 related to the legal and governance status of the NSF; the composition of the National Skills Authority (NSA); making provision for apprenticeships and improving the quality and quantity of artisans and providing for the establishment of the Quality Council for Trade and Occupations (QCTO) 110.

A very significant change to the Skills Development Levy grant regulations was made in 2012 (Regulation 20 of 2012), which sought to reduce the mandatory grant that employers could claim for the Workplace Skills Plan (WSP) and the Annual Training Report (ATR) from 50% to 20%. The remaining 80% was to be allocated as follows: 10% to be used for Seta administration; 0,5% should go to the QCTO and 49.5% for discretionary grants. These regulations were the currently the subject of litigation: the employer organisation, BUSA, took the Minister for Higher Education and Training to the Labour Court in 2015.

The employers key concern relates to the process that was followed to reduce the mandatory skills grant payable to employers from 50% to 20% and introduce the requirement that SETAs should pay over all unspent funds to the NSF (which would mean that the funds could be used for national skills initiatives that do not necessarily relate to workplace training). The Labour Court handed down its judgement in August 2015 and found that the Minister had failed to consult the NSA as required by law.

The court also ruled that the minister had acted irrationally by reducing the mandatory grant to employers as set out in the SDA and that he had exceeded his powers by prescribing that surplus SETA funds be moved to the NSF¹¹¹. In view of the judgement handed down, the SETAs had six months in which to revert back to the original position (March 2016). The Minister initially took steps to appeal against the Labour Court decision, but in the end this avenue was not pursued although no clear indication has been given as to what will in fact take place and interestingly the position of business on this matter is not unified as Business Leadership SA (BLSA) has suggested that they are comfortable with these changes. Another key piece of legislation promulgated post 1994, relating to education and training, introduced the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), which established the National Qualification Framework (NQF).

The functions of SAQA and the ambit of its authority, was set out in Section 13 of the National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008. This created the basis for the development of qualifications, in 12 fields of learning, which would span the economy: this with the intention that the qualifications go beyond trade qualifications to qualifications required at different levels of the system and across industries/sectors as required by a the economy. This was subsequently changed following amendments to the SDA in 2008, as highlighted above, and

the NQF now has three sub-frameworks: UMALUSI (schooling), QCTO (trade and occupational) and the HEQF (higher education).

Each of these structures have established a sub-framework for qualifications and mechanisms to generate and quality assure these qualifications. The above-mentioned legislation focused on understanding demand and creating mechanisms to steer supply. However, it did not focus on ways to build the capacity of providers though it proposed learnerships as a way to enable individuals to acquire entry level and intermediate level qualifications and produce skills for a “more modern economy”. These learnerships were seen as an alternative to apprenticeships, where numbers were declining, and perhaps reflected the declining power of traditional craft unions (which were predominantly white) and the rising power of black industrial unions whose initial priority was not the training of skilled artisans as their power base was among semi-skilled workers.

2.6. The Criticism of the South African Trade Unions Movement

Webster & Buhlungu (2007) argue that, just like many other trade unions in Africa, the South African trade unions movement has played an important role in fighting for the improved employment conditions of employees. Trade unions also played an integral role during the apartheid era in fighting for the liberation of South Africa. They have also played a crucial part by intervening in addressing the challenges facing the South African labour market especially in reducing the high rate of unemployment (Webster & Buhlungu, 2007). Despite this effort, the South African trade unions movement have been criticised by many people, regarding it as ineffective in representing employees.

According to Buhlungu, (2010) while most trade unions have managed to increase their membership their power has declined. COSATU has experienced a remarkable membership growth, “but there are some weaknesses in the trade unions movement. The expanded representational and political role of the federation has, perhaps accidentally, produced some counter-productive forces that have led to the decline of organisational power” (Buhlungu, 2010: 30). Buhlungu (2010) contends that democratic rupture is one of these, whereby the important leaders of the trade unions are alienated from the members of their trade unions.

Their outlook changes because they begin to act and think like the power elite members that the movement is attempting to displace, bureaucrats, politicians, business people as well as the other layers of the middle class (Buhlungu, 2010). The democratic transition in South Africa, has generated the conditions that favour “the emergence of trade union leaders who believe that if they are undertaking the representational and political role of their federations and unions they should be regarded as reasonable and respectable by their interlocutors in the state and business” (Pillay, 2010: 26).

As a result, they tend to spend longer hours in meetings with state bureaucrats and employers than they do with members of their trade unions (Pillay, 2010). Pillay (2010) avers that the role of being a leader of a trade union has become inscribed with powers and privileges, “hence the often-acrimonious leadership contests for power and resources that have occurred within the unions in recent years” (Pillay, 2010: 26). Furthermore, being

representatives of the federation means more than just conveying the views and mandates of trade unions, it also gives them the opportunity to networks to profile oneself and to have access to new opportunities and to have access to benefits or perks such as paid time off work, to drive hired cars, and air travel etc. (Pillay, 2010).

The representational and political role of unions and their federations have an “effect of widening the horizons of their members, especially the leaders, from the shop stewards upwards in terms of the available opportunities for upward social mobility. It is not like in the past, where the best shop-steward was expected to aspire to become a supervisor on the shop-floor” (Ruggunan, 2008: 33). Today there is a range of options such as becoming a member of provincial or national parliament, a local government councillor and many other career possibilities (Ruggunan, 2008).

These options have, since 1994, presented COSATU and its affiliated unions with serious challenges because the generations of activists and leaders have continued to search for better or more exciting jobs elsewhere. Often these leaders and activists develop the new networks and contracts while performing their representational roles, and through this their capabilities and skills are noticed by others (Ruggunan, 2008). Buhlungu (2010) argues that it is not a surprise that trade union activists or leaders mostly tend to find employment in the organisations that they have the most interaction and contact with while working for the unions. “The dramatic increase in opportunities for the upward mobility of union officials, leaders and members has a generally de-radicalising effect on trade unions” (Cebekhulu, 2013: 15).

It is not like in the past, when business and government organisations were considered by radical unionists as part of the putative enemy, today these organisations are considered as coveted and legitimate avenues for upward mobility (Cebekhulu, 2013). According to Buhlungu, (2010) in recent years, research indicates that the members of COSATU are satisfied with the general policy and direction which has been taken by their leaders, there are strong indications that trade union members participation in union activities such as general meetings and union rallies has declined (Buhlungu, 2010). This indicates that the membership of unions has become “increasingly motivated by the sort of instrumental pragmatism, where support for the union is driven more by material benefits that members can extract from the union than by a genuine support for the policy positions that the union espouses” (Buhlungu, 2010: 120).

2.7. Challenges experienced by Trade Unions when fulfilling their Roles.

In terms of looking at the challenges experienced by trade unions in fulfilling their roles, Waghorne (2010) argues that, in the past 20 years, the major challenge and change that has been experienced by trade unions is privatisation. Privatisation has affected employees, especially public sector employees. Under privatisation, some parts of local government services and nationalised industries were contracted out or sold off as separate entities. This has resulted in many employees working for a new and different employer. In such situations, an effective trade union is needed to work with the new employer to ensure that employees are not affected by the departure of the old employer (Waghorne, 2010).

“The change of organisation ownership from public to private sector can bring too many changes in the approach as to how the organisation is run. Private organisations look for opportunities to save money by cutting costs and pursuing profit” (Waghorne, 2010: 564). One of the key functions of a trade union is to ensure that the new employer honours and respects the existing employees’ contracts, including terms and conditions of employment, payments, pension rights, holiday entitlements and maternity leave (Waghorne, 2010).

This is a challenge for trade unions as it is difficult to maintain. Some employers in the private sector are less willing to find common ground and are less approachable than others (Waghorne, 2010). With shareholders and profits in their minds, “they can be tempted to look for ways to cut earnings, lengthen working hours, shed jobs, abandon pension and sickness benefits, and lower safety standards to the legal minimum etc” (Waghorne, 2010: 564). It is a challenge for trade unions to influence private sector employers to resist such temptations (Waghorne, 2010).

The other challenge that is experienced by trade unions when fulfilling their roles is losing their ability to function properly. Gumede (2012) argues that trade unions are losing their ability to function properly and effectively because of the unfavourable economic and labour market conditions that have created the daunting challenges for the labour unions movement which are deeply rooted in the public sector and in the African National Congress (ANC). Gumede (2012) asserts that the government policies which are failing to alleviate the high unemployment rate have made it difficult for trade unions to keep on supporting and justifying the policies of the ANC. Gumede (2012) adds that the onset of loss of trade union members is a result of the conflict within COSATU.

2.7.1. Regulation of jobs

According to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 1995, employment rights must be protected and enhanced. The act gives unions the mandate to ensure that workers rights are thus not violated. While both the union and employer have the responsibility of ensuring that this act is fulfilled, the trade union is responsible for the advancement of economic development and social justice.

2.7.2. Job Security

Trade unions are empowered through the Labour Regulation Act-(No.66) 1995. For this reason, therefore, trade unions can represent their members against unfair dismissal at work, change of terms and conditions, and retrenchment among other things.

2.7.3. Employment Equity

The unions are also charged with the responsibility of ensuring that employment equity is maintained. They are empowered by the Employment Equity Act (Act 55) 1998 which guards against all forms of unfair discrimination regardless of grounds. Workers should not be discriminated racially, gender-wise or even because of sickness.

2.7.4. Health And Safety

Just as all the other roles are governed by Acts of Parliament, the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) (Act 85) of 1993 guides on this subject. While employers are majorly responsible for offering safety and security to their workers, trade unions can sometimes negotiate for a deal that favours workers.

2.7.5. Skill Development

Trade unions oversee the general development of members by ensuring that employers invest in workers skill development. The unions follow up on physical, moral, and intellectual development. This role is determined by the Skill Development Act 1997 (Act 97).

2.8. SUMMARY

This chapter provided the literature review, it started by providing a brief definition of literature review and its importance in a study. It provided the definition of trade union, the brief discussion of trade unions movement in South Africa in their contribution towards skills development.

3. CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Creswell, (2012) research methodology refers to the strategy that is used to collect data and information when conducting a study. This includes the identification of the research methods. This chapter provides detailed information on how this study was conducted. The research methodology and design identify the process that is used to collect data and information to answer the research questions.

Descriptive research design was used in this study. According to Polit & Hungler (2013) descriptive research design “describes what exists and can help to uncover the new meaning and facts. Its purpose is to describe, observe and document aspects of a situation as it naturally occurs” (Polit & Hungler, 2013: 23). It involves data collection that will provide description or an account of individual groups or situations. The instruments that are used to collect data in descriptive research design include: observation (checklist, etc.), questionnaires, and interviews (Polit & Hungler, 2013). The researcher chose to use descriptive research design, “because this design depicts the participants in an accurate way. It describes the people who take part in the study” (Polit & Hungler, 2013: 23).

Polit & Hungler (2013) argues that “there are three ways a researcher can go about doing a descriptive research project and they are: Observational, defined as a method of viewing and recording the participants. Case study, defined as an in-depth study of an individual or group of individuals and survey, defined as a brief interview or discussion with an individual about a specific topic” (Polit & Hungler, 2013: 23). The researcher chose to use descriptive research design, because one of the above mentioned three ways is matching with what the researcher did in this study and that way is survey.

In this study the researcher collected data through brief interviews or discussions with participants about the contribution of trade unions in skills development. “Descriptive research is an innovative tool for researchers. It presents an opportunity to use both quantitative and qualitative data to reconstruct the “what is of a topic” (Polit & Hungler, 2013: 23). This means that it allows the use of both quantitative and qualitative data (mixed methods) of collecting data in a single study.

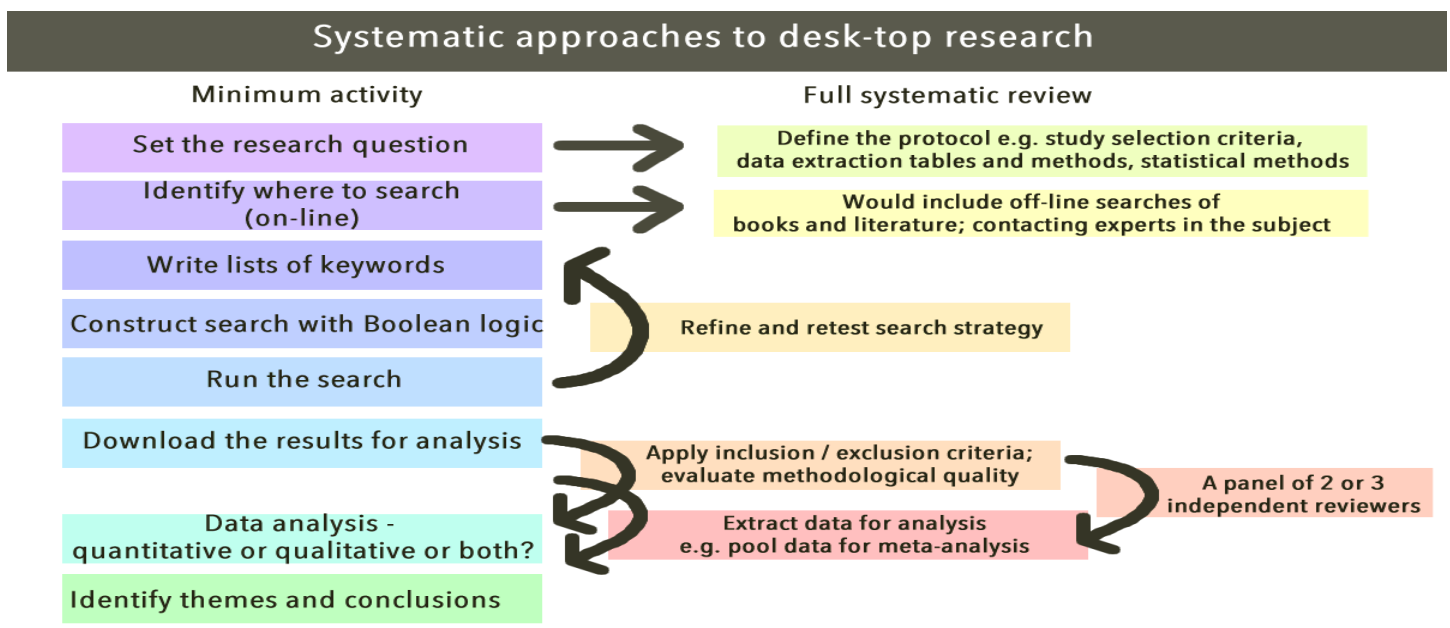
3.2. RESEARCH APPROACH/PARADIGM

Creswell (2012) indicates that there are three types of research approaches namely: mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative research approaches. According to Creswell (2012) qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. It is empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers (Creswell, 2012).

Creswell (2012) argue that quantitative research gathers data in a numerical form which can be put into categories, or in rank order, or measured in units of measurement. This type of data can be used to construct graphs and tables of raw data. Quantitative researchers aim to establish general laws of behaviour and phenomenon across different settings or contexts. This type of research is used to test a theory and ultimately support or reject it (Creswell, 2012).

Wesely (2011) claims that, “the advantage of using mixed methods research design is the possibility of triangulation, for example using several means in a single study (such as data sources, researchers and methods) to examine the same research problem” (Wesely, 2011: 161). “Triangulation allows the researcher to identify aspects of the research problem more accurately by approaching it from different viewpoints using different techniques and methods” (Wesely, 2011: 161). In this study triangulation was achieved by using both open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires. The successful triangulation requires the “careful analysis of information which is provided by each research methods, including its weaknesses and strengths” (Wesely, 2011: 161).

This research project was a secondary qualitative study that will be conducted as a desktop research project. A secondary research study requires the researcher to read recent scholarly works that have made contributions towards answering the research problem³¹. This process will involve collecting data from either the originator or a distributor of primary research. In other words, accessing information already gathered. In most cases this means finding information from third-party sources such as research reports, websites, magazine articles, and other sources. See table below:



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3.3. DATA ANALYSIS

This research project consisted of various perspectives that have been defined and researched by other scholars. This research project used an unstructured analysis, through logical reasoning, comparative analysis and synthesis of the facts gathered from the literature collected. Data was gathered and identified to answer the objectives of this study, the following steps were undertaken to evaluate the appropriateness of the data gathered:

- What was the purpose of this study?
- Who was responsible for collecting the primary information?
- What information was initially collected?
- When was the information collected?
- How was the information obtained?
- How consistent is the information obtained from one source with information available from other sources?

This evaluative process was used to ensure the congruency and quality of the gathered information.

3.4. METHODS USED TO ENSURE VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

3.4.1. Validity

Aguado (2009) states that measuring validity refers to the process whereby the researcher checks “how well the operational and conceptual definitions fit together with each other and is the extent to which an investigation or test measures what it claims to measure” (Aguado, 2009: 255). Validity is very important because it confirms the truthfulness of the study. The following are the important issues that should be considered to ensure the validity of results: it is important to consider the system that was used to draw the sample and instruments that were used in a study.

It is also important to consider the environmental issues in “which the study was conducted and full understanding of the research approach to support the study” (Aguado, 2009: 255). Validity for this study is maintained through the following: Selecting models/frameworks and theories which are related to the research topic, and objectives and questions used as the guideline.

3.4.2. Reliability

Reliability just like validity is the “way of assessing the quality of the measurement procedure used to collect data in a dissertation” (Aguado, 2009: 259). It is the “extent to which the measuring instrument gives the same results when used repetitively” (Aguado, 2009: 259). The open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires were developed in a standard format in such a way that they

3.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research ethics are a diverse set of values, norms and institutional regulations, that constitute and regulate scientific activity, these ethics can be used to conduct good research practices. Hence, it is important for any research project to undergo ethical evaluation. This is to ensure that the research meets good ethical standards, these standards are mediated to ensure that the researcher can balance “supporting freedom of scientific enquiry” or the “protection of welfare of participants”.

3.6. Summary

This chapter provided the research methods that were used to conduct this study. This study provided the research design, research approach/paradigm, data analysis techniques, methods used to ensure validity and reliability of the study. The next chapter presents data which was collected in this study.

4. CHAPTER FOUR:

INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings from literature have revealed some important ideas and strategies that can be employed by SETAs to support the contribution of Trade Unions to skills development. This process will assist the cooperatives members to achieve the intended objectives of their organisations.

The study made the following key findings:

1. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT MUST CHALLENGE EXISTING POWER RELATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE.

2. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT SHOULD ALSO TAKE CENTER STAGE IN THE TRANSFORMATION AGENDA, FOCUSING ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIETAL NEEDS.

3. EMPLOYEES OUGHT TO RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN TRANSFORMING THEIR LIVES THROUGH THE CREATION OF MORE PLATFORMS FOR DISCUSSION, DEBATE AND AWARENESS.

4. THERE IS A NEED TO CHALLENGE THE CURRENT NEO-LIBERAL PARADIGM OF OUR HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (HRDS), TO ASSERT AND IMPROVE EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE.

5. OVERCOME THE DIVIDE BETWEEN MENTAL AND MANUAL LABOUR AND ADDRESS THE IMBALANCES OF THE PAST THROUGH EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD), RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL), ADULT BASIC EDUCATION TRAINING, CAREER PATHING AND RELATED

This study found that quality education and training and the recognition of skills of black workers by employers, addressing the Apartheid wage gap, and improving the mobility of workers and ultimately their quality of life. It also sets out to improve productivity and competitiveness of firms, promote self-employment, and improve delivery of government services.

Further, the intention was to increase investment in education and improve the return on that investment. This was to be achieved through turning workplaces into learning spaces, providing opportunities for workers to acquire new skills and for new job entrants.

The NSDP, which illustrates the growing emphasis on the SETAs and the NSF meeting the needs of unemployed people and first-time entrants to the labour market and on the capacity development of providers through lecturer and trainer development. This did not negate the need for funding of priority programmes for employees in each sector.

This was given further expression in the National Skills Accord on 13 July 2011, which committed all social partners (including government, business and labour) to combine “efforts in order to strengthen skills development as a crucial pillar of the New Growth path (NGP).” The accord committed the parties, amongst others, to train artisans and other scarce skills, facilitate the placement of FET graduates into workplace learning, build the quality of skills planning and focus on SETA performance.

This was further bolstered by the adoption of the National Youth Accord focusing on addressing youth unemployment and outlined the role of social partners in this regard. In 2013, these objectives and strategy were further refined, and the White Paper on Post-school Education and Training located these objectives and strategies within a broader vision.

The objectives of this study were given further expression at a sector level where the unions engaged in the different SETAs, through representation on the board and making submissions about programmes that should be prioritised. Specifically, labour was able to contribute to the development of SSPs (Sector Skills Plans) outlined the priorities for the sector and the programmes that will be implemented to address these priorities.

4.2. SUMMARY

The collected data was analysed, and the findings were categorised in relation to the objectives of this study. The next section will present the conclusion to, and the recommendations based on this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: RECCOMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conclusion to, and recommendations based on this study by focusing on the categorisation and verification of the study the objectives. The founding objectives that guided the findings of this study are briefly revisited below in re. Recommendations pertaining to the study objectives are offered, followed by suggestions for future research. These suggestions stemmed from the findings of this study.

5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) A fundamental underlying principle of the skills development system was that stakeholders (labour and employers) should be involved in the design and implementation of the system. However it was found that the design of the system has resulted in a plethora of forums at a national, sectoral and enterprise level (as discussed). This has meant that it became almost impossible for the unions to ensure effective representation in all of these forums both because of demands that it places on their resources and because of the time that it takes to prepare representatives for the discussions that are taking place in these forums.
- b) Further, with the wider challenges facing the union movement, unions are increasingly focused on maintaining members and wider power struggles and are less interested in the broader issues facing workers in the workplace beyond those that are in the immediate bargaining forums. As negotiations about education and training takes place in separate forums from those in which collective bargaining about wages are implemented: it has therefore become increasingly marginalised from the overall work of the union.
- c) The process of skills transformation is lengthy and there is a need to continually balance different imperatives. The needs of the unemployed, new entrants and existing workers; the importance of offering short courses, which enable workers to receive recognition for their existing skills and knowledge whilst ensuring that individuals attain qualifications that enable them to progress.
- d) Finally, there is a need for continued emphasis on building the capacity of the unions to engage in the system and to continually expand efforts to train and strengthen shop stewards ability to engage about education and training issues in the workplace and to have mechanisms to elevate these issues such that they can be raised in key sector and national forums. This needs to be coupled with efforts to strengthen forums within the unions that ensures the on-going development of strategic positions and the sharing of learning from these experiences. This needs to build solidarity across unions and across federations.

5.3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study has highlighted progress made in the implementation of the skills development and has also spoken to the challenges in this regard. Labour emphasizes the challenges with respect to ensuring empowerment and indicates a concern about the shift to a focus on growth and productivity. Research though suggests that there are also challenges in this regard and that, “despite high levels of investment in skills development over the last decade, there continues to be a strong argument that South Africa suffers certain challenges with respect to the supply of skills as well as an absence of an alignment between national growth imperatives and skills development activities.

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