



# **SASSETA TRACER STUDY PROJECT:**

**Tracer Study of learners who have completed Workplace Based Learning  
(WBL) funded by SASSETA during the 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 financial  
periods**

## **FINAL REPORT**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	3
2.1. INTRODUCTION.....	4
2.2. INTRODUCTION TO TRACER STUDIES.....	6
1. OBJECTIVES OF THE TRACER STUDY.....	8
2. TRACER STUDY DESIGN.....	8
4.1. Target Population .....	8
4.2. Time after graduation.....	9
4.3. Survey sample size.....	9
5. FINDINGS.....	10
6. CONCLUSION .....	1
1.12.1. Selecting Suitable Learners for the Programme .....	1
1.12.2. Assessments .....	2
1.12.3. Mentor Support .....	2

## **TRACER STUDY OF LEARNERS WHO COMPLETED WBL PROGRAMMES FUNDED BY SASSETA FROM 2015/16 to 2017/18**

### **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

CATI	Computer-Assisted Telephonic Interview
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoL	Department of Labour
ETF	European Training Foundation
FET	Further Education and Training
HE	Higher Education
LMIP	Labour Market Intelligence Partnership
NDP	National Development Plan
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
NSF	National Skills Fund
PoPI Act	Protection of Personal Information Act
PSET	Post-Secondary Education and Training
QLFS	Quarterly Labour Force Survey
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SASAS	South African Social Attitudes Survey
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
WBL	Work-Based Learning
WIL	Work-Integrated Learning
WPBL	Workplace-Based Learning
WPL	Workplace Learning

## **TRACER STUDY OF LEARNERS WHO COMPLETED WBL PROGRAMMES FUNDED BY SASSETA FROM 2015/16 to 2017/18**

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

Work-based learning (WBL) is a subset of experience-based learning which refers to learning that occurs through undertaking real work, through the production of real work outputs, whether this work is paid or unpaid. With the increased national focus on higher education funding by government and graduate employability as a solution to the high unemployment rate South Africa is facing, many higher education institutions, Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions included, are conducting empirical researches to measure the extent of and change related to the learning interventions they offer and the consequential employability of their by-products – the graduates.

Work based learning tracer studies are being considered a suitable technique for these empirical researches, some of them even sanctioned by governments and national agencies, such as the South African government's Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), under whose mandate higher education and training falls. Some of the tracer studies sanctioned by DHET include those on learners who have completed WBL programmes that are funded by SETAs and these must be conducted in the period 2018/2019 through to 2020/21 (DHET, 2018). In different contexts, WBL tracer studies may be known by other names, including workplace-based learning programmes (WBLP) surveys, work integrated learning (WIL) surveys, or experiential learning tracer studies. Although these studies may differ in subtle ways, they all utilise the same strategy of using higher education cohorts as a source of educational evaluation and for information about employment behaviour post-graduation.

In this study, the term “work based learning” is assumed to include all these studies taking place after graduation which focus on employment destinations and related dynamics, rather than “exit” studies and similar evaluation-only surveys.

Similar to other education and training environments, in the SETAs landscape, work based learning tracer studies have the potential to provide information regarding typical career trajectories, employment impact, as well as study programme relevance, based on the reflections and evaluations

of the educational experiences and employment activities of graduates of SETA funded programmes. Several SETAs and other higher education institutions have in the last ten years conducted WBL tracer studies, Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority (SASSETA) included, and these studies typically “aim to determine whether or not a programme is achieving its mission and assist in demonstrating the programme’s outcomes. According to the terms of reference or scope of work for this study as issued by SASSETA, this study should demonstrate:

- Employment status (i.e. employed, self-employed and unemployed).
- Employment rates.
- Match between qualifications attained and occupations.
- Nature of employment, in terms of employment sector or types of employment. (e.g. formal or informal); tenure (part time or full time, contract or permanent); salary level; benefits (UIF, pension, medical aid, allowances); and,
- Further Study

This WBL tracer study conducted for SASSETA to track and trace learners who participated in and completed SASSETA-funded learning programmes, specifically learnerships, apprenticeships and internships, in the periods 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18, address the following research questions:

1. What literature is available from different sources about WBL, including its design (models) and implementation, successes, challenges, as well as the opportunities of improvement in South Africa.?
2. Is WBL achieving its mission, broadly across SETAs and specifically for SASSETA, and assist in demonstrating the programme’s outcomes (successes and failures) to SASSETA?
3. What link exist between SASSETA funded WBL graduates and their opportunities for further study?
4. What recommendations can be made for the improvement of WBL programmes by SASSETA

For SASSETA, like other SETAs, the outcome of this WBL tracer study is vital for illuminating short-term sectoral trends and will impact sectoral skills planning and strategies as well as resource deployment thereby immensely contributing towards skills development in the safety and security sector and sub-sectors and promote inclusive economic growth in the country.

For several social, political and economic reasons (e.g. slow economic growth, youth unemployment, and increased access to higher education), understanding the employability and unemployment of South African graduates has become increasingly important (Rogan et al. 2015, vii). Implementing regular graduate tracer studies by higher education institutions and/or relevant higher education organisations could facilitate identifying long-term trends in employment and the workplace productivity of higher education graduates (CHEC 2013); and assist in linking these trends to the aforementioned social, political and economic dynamics. Moreover, Kraak (2015) argues that the results from graduate tracer studies are being increasingly used on a global scale to provide nuanced information about graduate employment, career pathways and the graduate labour market. It is thus probable that the South African higher education and labour market systems would also benefit from the regular collection of context-specific data of this kind.

## **2.2. INTRODUCTION TO TRACER STUDIES**

There is a raft of available literature on tracer studies from both developed and developing countries, bringing out the importance being placed by governments, educational and training authorities and donors on understanding the impact of learning interventions on exited learners in various aspects of post schooling life. A tracer study is a research approach which is gaining wide-spread use by governments, funders of education as well as education and training institutions themselves to track, and, in some cases, to keep record of their learners once they have graduated. Its aim is to retrospectively analyse graduates through a standardised survey, which takes place a while after graduation (normally, between 6 months and 3 years). Tracer studies are also known as graduate surveys, alumni surveys, or graduate tracking. According to the European Training Foundation (ETF) (2017), normally the target population is a homogenous group of students / trainees who finished their studies at the same time (generation or graduation cohort). Tracer studies are common in higher education, but are becoming more and more popular in vocational education.

The Association of African Universities (AAU) (2002), and Boaduo et al., (2009), explain that tracer studies enable the contextualization of graduates of a particular institution through a system that is dynamic and reliable in order to determine their life path or movement. It also enables the evaluation of the results of the education and training provided by a particular institution and examines and evaluates the current and future career and employment opportunities/ prospects of graduates

(Boaduo et al., 2009). Graduates' job titles, years of employment, nature of employment, income levels, and biographical data can be revealed through tracer studies (Millington, 2017).

Tracer studies are not very old as a concept to the South African education landscape with these studies having been conducted in various forms, shapes and sizes. Until the Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC), (2013) Pathways from University to Work publication (which traced graduates from four universities, two years after their graduation), "graduate destination research [has been] highly underdeveloped [in South Africa] ... and there is no systematic attempt to understand graduate pathways outside of a few sporadic institutionally-based surveys". The bulk of graduate tracer studies seems to have taken place in Australia, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA), and in Europe (CHEC 2013, p7).

To begin with, several South African higher education institutions conduct graduate opinion surveys at their graduation ceremonies, and these surveys typically "aim to gather a quick 'snapshot' of job search behaviour, employment status, entry-level salaries, as well as satisfaction with the higher education institution, the curriculum they offer and its relevance to the workplace" (CHEC 2013, 7). Although these efforts point to simply being graduate opinion surveys, with the likely challenge of lack of longitudinal depth, this attests to the realisation by South African higher and tertiary education providers of the value add of tracer studies to their strategic wellbeing and sustainability, Vocational Educational Training (VET) institutions included.

Throughout the progression of this literature review and the subsequent study, as well as for the purposes of this assignment, it is of paramount importance to distinguish graduate tracer studies from graduate opinion or exit surveys which, in the context of gaining higher education and training insights, are two different forms of enquiry. By definition, and perhaps as already articulated at the beginning of this review, A tracer study or graduate survey is a survey (in written or oral form) of graduates from education institutions, which takes place sometime after graduation or the end of the training. The subjects of a tracer study can be manifold, but common topics include questions on study progress, the transition to work, work entrance, job career, use of learned competencies, current occupation and bonds to the education institution (school, centre, university) Schomburg, H. (2016, Vol 6, p18).

## 1. OBJECTIVES OF THE TRACER STUDY

This tracer study is on learners who have completed Workplace Based Learning (WBL) programmes funded by SASSETA during the 2015/2016, 2016/17 and 2017/18 financial periods.

The project will enable the SETA to understand, explore and document key features, trends, challenges and outcomes of skills interventions in various sub-sectors. Fundamentally, the evaluation study will assist the SETA in further enhance its WBL programmes. It is also envisaged that the project would immensely contribute towards skills development in SASSETA sub-sectors and promote inclusive economic growth in the country.

## 2. TRACER STUDY DESIGN

### 4.1. Target Population

Most tracer studies focus on one homogenous group of students/trainees who finished their study at the same time (generation or graduation cohort). Such a group is called a cohort, as in graduates of the year 2013 or 'generation 2013'.

The target group for this tracer study are learners who participated in and completed the following SASSETA-funded learning programmes:

- Learnerships
- Apprenticeships
- Internships

The tracer study should provide answers to the following questions.

- What is the Employment Status (i.e. employed, self-employed and unemployed) of the graduates
- What are the Employment rates of the graduates across the various learning programmes
- What is the Match between qualifications attained and current occupations?
- What is the Nature of employment, in terms of employment sector or types of employment, (e.g. formal or informal); tenure (part time or full time, contract or permanent); salary level; benefits (UIF, pension, medical aid, allowances); and
- What are the needs and opportunities for Further study for these graduates (education pathways)

## 4.2. Time after graduation

For all the above three target groups, there are 3 cohorts per target group as follows:

Target Group	Period of Graduation			Total No. of Cohorts / Target Group
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	
Learnerships	√	√	√	3
Apprenticeships	√	√	√	3
Internships	√	√	√	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>

## 4.3. Survey sample size

All graduates of one cohort should be invited. In general the target group (or target population) in tracer studies of individual learning programmes in a single institution of education is the total population of graduates; the aim is to achieve the participation of nearly all graduates in the survey. Institutional tracer studies need participation from as many graduates as possible from the different learning programmes. Not all graduates invited will participate; the response rate is usually far below 100%. Therefore, in every tracer study the participants are just a sample of all graduates. The following are the cohorts, cohort sizes and samples for this tracer study:

Target Group	Period of Graduation			Total No. of Cohorts / Target Group	Total Cohort Size	Study Sample	Sample %
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18				
Learnerships	√	√	√	3	320	175	55%
Apprenticeships	√	√	√	3	170	85	50%
Internships	√	√	√	3	100	80	80%
<b>Total Learners from all WBL programmes for the period</b>					<b>590</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>58%</b>

## 5. FINDINGS

The literature available shows that WBL has been embraced internationally as a learning pedagogy as more and more higher education and tertiary institutions and stakeholders realise the importance of learning through work and learning at work. As cited in the review, the key shortcomings of classroom based learning revolve around theoretical learning which has raised huge concerns from employers and learners alike.

Since 2010 there has been significant growth of work-based learning. Examination of practice and literature indicates a growing sophistication in the way that work-based learning is being theorised and facilitated in higher education. Challenges continue to exist between the demands and opportunities provided by the workplace; however, evidence indicates that well-designed work based learning programmes are both effective and robust.

Learnership and apprenticeship learning programmes have increased access to vocational training and skills development for previously disadvantaged and marginalised groups, whose participation in these two systems is proportionately greater than their participation in FET or higher education systems. One of the major limitations in the implementation of the learnership and apprenticeship systems is that they do not enable equal labour market access for all participants, particularly vulnerable constituencies and those who experience social inequality on the basis of race, gender and class.

Analysing all the data from previous tracers studies, access has grown faster than success indicators, entries have almost doubled, about 97% increase across the three learning programmes, but completions have grown by just over half (a 65% increase) across the three learning programmes.

According to Wildschut *et al.*, (2017), those with the largest numbers of learners participating in WBL programmes between 2014 and 2015 are: CETA (13952 participants), MERSETA (12258 participants), TETA (11647 participants) and W & R SETA (10531 participants), registration to 44.1% of all the SETA registrations. SASSETA registered 3771 learners contributing 3.4% of the total number of registrations for all SETAs. SETAs with the lowest registrations across all learning programmes were, PSETA (694 participants), BANKSETA (1492 participants), FOODBEV (2404 participants) and AGRISSETA (2798 participants) registering only 6.7% of the total number of learners.

The population data also displays a pattern of sectorial preference for the provisioning of certain types of programmes. CETA and MerSETA dominated the provisioning of apprenticeships in 2014/15, together establishing 55.2% of registration and completions. WRSETA and HWSETA, on the other hand, dominated in the provisioning of learnerships, constituting roughly 23% of registration and completions. Lastly, MICT and PSETA dominated the provisioning of internships, constituting roughly 38% of registration and completions in 2014/15.

Across all SETAs the figures of learners who did not complete programmes are so alarming, in some cases they amount to more than 50%. ETDPSSETA had the highest number of learners who did not complete their WBL, its enrollment was 1600 learners but only 239 managed to complete, which stipulates that only 15% of registered learners managed to complete the programmes they were studying. For the period as a whole, SASSETA registered 3771 participants but only 1980 completed their WBL which is 53% of the registered learners. However HWSETA, BANKSETA, AGRISSETA and CHIETA had highest WBL completion rates which are 94%, 91%, 83% and 81% respectively.

Table 1 - Table 1: SETA Work-place Based Learning Tracer Studies Conducted in 2014/2015 with Registration and Completion Figures

SETA	Apprenticeship			Learnership			Internship			TOTAL Registration	Total Completed	%
	Registered	Completed	%	Registered	Completed	%	Registered	Completed	%			
SASSETA	469	110	23	3247	1870	58	55	0	0	3771	1980	<b>53</b>
AGRISETA	263	118	45	2399	2110	88	136	94	69	2798	2322	<b>83</b>
BANKSETA	-	-	-	1388	1352	97	104	10	10	1492	1362	<b>91</b>
CATHSETA	362	200	55	3411	879	26	162	62	38	3935	1141	<b>29</b>
CETA	5855	108	2	7360	2136	29	737	48	7	13952	2292	<b>16</b>
CHIETA	1703	1196	70	3781	3476	92	570	250	44	6054	4922	<b>81</b>
ETDPSETA	-	-	-	1481	212	14	119	27	23	1600	239	<b>15</b>
EWSETA	219	276	126	2620	2077	79	312	0	0	3151	2353	<b>75</b>
FOODBEV	82	33	40	2041	703	34	281	162	58	2404	898	<b>37</b>
FP&M	265	21	8	2750	1105	40	257	125	49	3272	1251	<b>38</b>
HWSETA	36	0	0	5283	4595	87	182	586	322	5501	5181	<b>94</b>
LGSETA	802	383	48	5229	826	16	349	0	0	6380	1209	<b>19</b>
MERSETA	6027	5521	92	6004	3336	56	227	125	55	12258	8982	<b>73</b>
MQA	1407	1267	90	1383	2827	204	670	111	17	3460	4205	<b>122</b>
PSETA	46	0	0	396	132	33	252	598	237	694	730	<b>105</b>
SSETA	1055	620	59	3762	586	16	295	0	0	5112	1206	<b>24</b>
TETA	1916	567	30	9634	4192	44	97	109	112	11647	4868	<b>42</b>
W&R SETA	563	212	38	9634	4192	44	334	0	0	10531	4404	<b>42</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21070</b>	<b>10632</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>77058</b>	<b>40528</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>11370</b>	<b>3145</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>109498</b>	<b>54305</b>	<b>50</b>

Source: Wildschut *et al.*, (2017)

Table 2 - WBL Registration and Completion Figures per SETA 2014 – 2015 compiled from previous studies

<b>SETA</b>	<b>TOTAL Registration</b>	<b>Total Completed</b>
SASSETA	3771	1980
AGRISETA	2798	2322
BANKSETA	1492	1362
CATHSETA	3935	1141
CETA	13952	2292
CHIETA	6054	4922
ETDPSETA	1600	239
EWSETA	3151	2353
FOODBEV	2404	898
FP&M	3272	1251
HWSETA	5501	5181
LGSETA	6380	1209
MERSETA	12258	8982
MQA	3460	4205
PSETA	694	730
SSETA	5112	1206
TETA	11647	4868
W&R SETA	10531	4404
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>109498</b>	<b>54305</b>

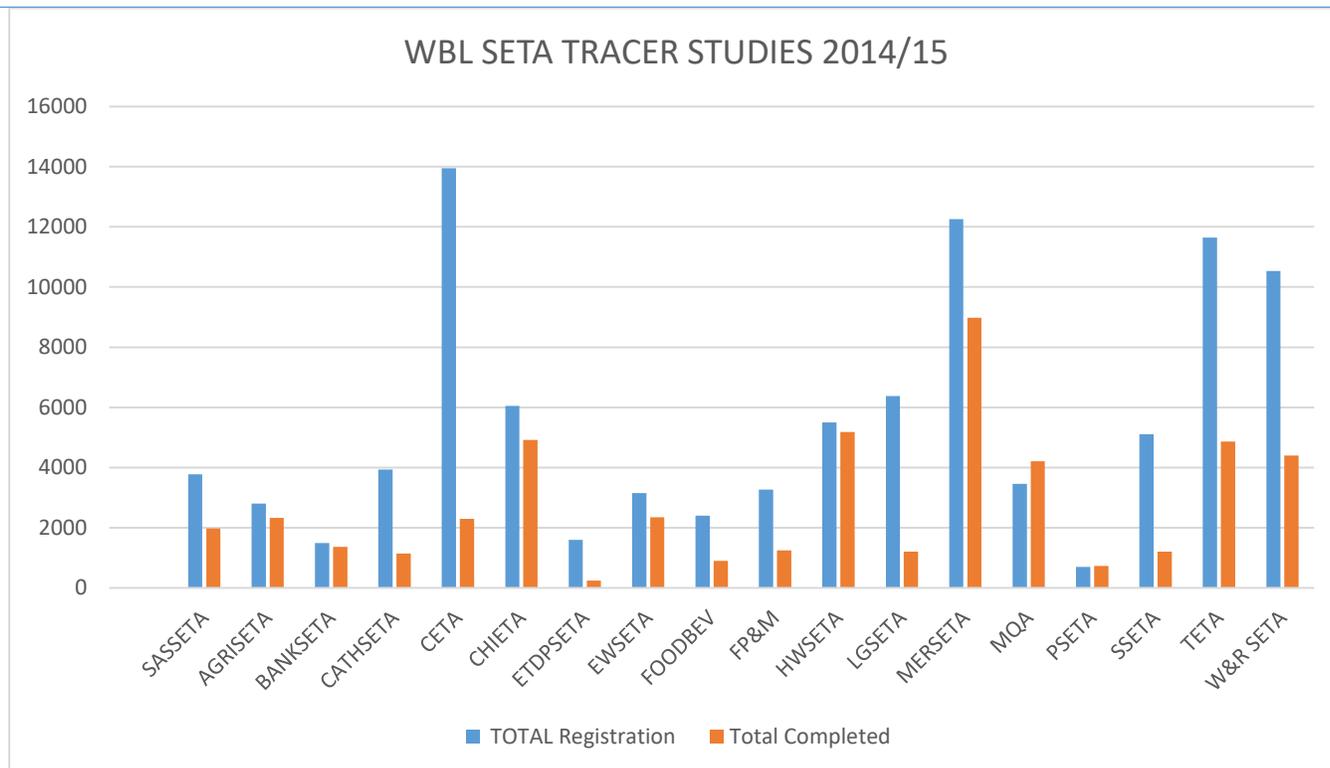


Figure 1- WBL Tracer Studies 2015/15

Low completion rates of all SETA programmes indicated by the data of 2014/15 may be attributed to various factors. The skills that are attained by WBL participants may not be addressing the needs of the labour market. To improve the impact of WBL programmes and to increase completion rates, the purpose of different WPBL programmes needs to be taken into account when labour market impact is assessed for WBL programmes. Once more length learning programmes may also result in many dropouts. The length of the WBL programme has to be taken into account when making decisions about the appropriateness of assessing labour market impact of the programme.

In the case of internships, there is almost never a certificate, especially if the internship was for purposes of workplace experience. This is a serious problem in the WBL system, as a person has no formal credentials proving that he or she has in fact spent a period of time learning on the job. A possible solution could be to convert all internships to learnerships and apprenticeships that have a structured curriculum as well as assessment and certification. Such a translation would have benefits for learners and the economy, as employers would be reasonably assured of the competencies learnt.

There is no record found of BANKSETA and ETDPSSETA of registering apprenticeship. For internship only 10 learners out of 104 managed to complete their programme for BANKSETA. Of all 46 apprentices who were registered by PSETA none managed to finish their programmes. All the SETAs had a total of 21070 learners enrolled for apprenticeship, 10632 managed to complete the programme, those registered for learnership amounted to 77058, however only 40528, Internship had 11370 but 3145 managed to finish the programme. Learnership generally have high participation rate than apprenticeship and internship across all SETAs.

On a more encouraging note, there appears to have been a gradual improvement in reporting over time. The number of SETAs for which there is data increases over time for both participation and placement (Wildschut *et al.*, 2017). There are essentially two main reasons driving this pattern of improvement, namely improvements in the accessibility of annual reports and improvements in the reporting of placement data in particular. While it is not clear what underlies the latter improvement, it is possible that SETAs have begun to attach greater importance to performance within this indicator.

There has been progress in terms of the implementation of WBL programmes by the SETAs on the basis of information they have provided both in their published annual reports and in their responses to a brief questionnaire emailed to them. There are numerous important conclusions that can be drawn from this analysis. Perhaps the most important point to make is that the SETAs often face widely different circumstances and challenges in terms of implementing WBL programmes. Indeed, this is not an issue that is unique to WBL programmes but is certainly evident across all facets of the NSDS II. 27. On the other hand the data being provided by the SETAs on both enrolments and completion appears to contain some discrepancies, for example MQA is showing that 1383 learners registered for learnership but 2827 learners are reported to have finished the programme, PSETA recorded 252 registered for internship but 598 are reported to have finished the programme. These figures are unreliable because there is no proper justification of completion figure being higher than registration figure.

## **Employment Status**

Most of the studies conducted by SETAs show that the larger proportion of learners who complete WBL programmes are finding employment upon completion. The Table below shows previous tracer

studies conducted by SETAs between 2012 and 2017 and percentage of learners surveyed who were employed at the time of the survey.

Table 3 - Some of the Studies that were locally included in this review

SETA	Title of study	Purpose of Study	Year	Target Population	Cohort Size	Sample Size	Response Received	Employed (% Sample Size)	Unemployed (% of Sample Size)
FASSET	The Value of Work-Readiness Programmes	The main aim of this tracer study was to determine the value of the Bonani and Thusanani Work-Readiness Programmes. The specific objectives related to beneficiaries of the Work-Readiness Programmes and the employers where the beneficiaries were employed after completion of the training.	2013	1. Learners as the beneficiaries of the Work-Readiness Programme 2. Employers	2954 combined for both Work-Readiness programmes (Bonani and Thusanani)	1095	1119	89.7%	10.3%
HWSETA	Tracer Study of HWSETA Learners Certificated in 2014/15	To track and trace learners who received certificates for HWSETA-funded learnerships in 2014/15 recorded in the SQMR, in order to ascertain if they had obtained jobs within six months after receiving certificates.	2015	Learners as the beneficiaries of the Work-Readiness Programme	106	106	95	19%	69%

WBL TRACER STUDY 2019/20 - FINAL REPORT

MERSETA	Post Qualification Tracer Study over SETA Year 2012/13	To establish the rate of retention across different learning programmes, including an analysis of: the reasons for leaving the original training employer; the qualification levels prior to the learning programme; the migration patterns; and of how post-training alternative employment was secured. (More details are available in the ToR and MoA.)	2016	Project Artisans (Apprentices) who passed their trade test	2337	400	408	80%	20%
TETA	Tracer Study	The tracer study was intended to clearly provide evidence of the performance of the skills development programmes.	2014	Learners as the beneficiaries of the Work-Readiness Programme	4016	4016	1318	72%	21%
CATHSSETA	GRADUATE TRACER STUDY Gaming and	This graduate tracer study established the whereabouts of CATHSSETA learners who have completed recognised qualifications in gaming and	2016	Learners as the beneficiaries of the Work-Readiness Programme	75	75	54	61%	39%

WBL TRACER STUDY 2019/20 - FINAL REPORT

	Lotteries Sub-Sector	lottery in 2011, 2012 and 2013. We trace graduates for the National Certificate in Dealing (NQF Level 3) and the National Certificate in Gaming Operations (NQF Level 3).							
CATHSSETA	GRADUATE TRACER STUDY Sport, Recreation & Fitness Sub- Sector	This graduate tracer study established the whereabouts of CATHSSETA learners who have completed accredited qualifications in sport, recreation and fitness between 2011 and 2015. We trace graduates for the National Certificate in Fitness (NQF Level 5) and the Further Education and Training Certificate in Sport Administration (NQF Level 4).	2016	Learners as the beneficiaries of the Work-Readiness Programme	234	234	140	48%	52%



## 6. CONCLUSION

Prospective employees that lack work experience may be less productive relative to their more experienced counterparts. This presents a greater risk for employers. Such risk summarizes the informational asymmetries such as job fit, the likelihood and nature of future improvements in the individual's productivity, and work ethic facing employers, the ones who determine whether or not employment occurs. Work based learning is one type of intervention that aims to promote the employability of learners by providing individuals with access to work experience without imposing requirements of permanent employment on employers. Likely benefits are available to both individual learners and employers. Learners are able to obtain work experience, which provides opportunities for the practical implementation in a real world working environment of theoretical knowledge, whilst employers are able to access this pool of labour at a low cost. More benefits of WBL programmes are also realized by the employers when they get chance to evaluate potential employees.

There is a significant variation in the performance of SETAs, specifically when comparing achievements to targets in WBL programmes. While some SETAs have fallen far short of their targets for participation, others have exceeded their targets by factors of three or more. A significant proportion of this variation can be explained by SETA efforts, employer buy-in, SETAs' internal funding decisions, and sector-specific characteristics that promote or reduce the ability of employers to provide on-the-job training, there remains some question as to how these targets are derived.

In spite of the various problems experienced by SETAs, WBL execution appears to have the room for improvement over time. SETAs are recommended to be innovative in their implementation of WBL, in order to accommodate the sectorial labour market and training realities. They should make sure programmes they are funding are aligned to the critical and scarce skills identified in each sector. Essentially, this will see greater recognition of the benefits associated with WBL and the scope for scaling up. The key, though, remains belief from stakeholders, which is gained through improved communication and through demonstrated benefits of WBL programmes for employers and learners.

### 1.12.1. Selecting Suitable Learners for the Programme

It is important to remember that the learners on WBL programmes in many instances are also full time employees with family and social commitments. Prospective learners need to be made aware of the demands and expectations of WBL programmes.

When an employer informs employees about the programme, typically a significant number wish to register. It is important that the employees interested in completing the programme are made fully aware of the demands involved. It is a good idea to have an information session which gives an honest account of what an employee should expect. If possible give employees that previously completed the programme an opportunity to offer their views to potential applicants.

A number of academic respondents believed that the employer should ensure that all employees on the WBL programme are suitable. Suitability should be determined by an academic and employer representative interviewing all prospective learners thereby significantly increasing the likelihood of success.

### **1.12.2. Assessments**

Assessments should be linked to organisational objectives at which the learner is placed.

WBL partnerships work best when the programme assessments are linked to what the learner (in this case the employee) is expected to do in the organisation. For example, if one of the unit standards is Policing, the learner could be expected to develop a community policing strategy or plan for the organisation as part of the assessment. It is important to remember that in many instances the learners are full time employees and where possible assessment should be linked to tasks the employee could perform in the workplace

WBL partnerships work best when providers consult with the employer when deciding assessment issues. Employees participating on the WBL programme should be given adequate support in areas such as study and research skills, workplace assignment completion, presentations, referencing and completing exams. These typically are areas where learners on WBL programmes are weak.

### **1.12.3. Mentor Support**

Learners stand to benefit from workplace mentors as suggested in the literature, for example Benefer (2007) and Wilson et al (2005).

Learners should be able to access mentoring support within the organisation. The nature of these WBL programmes is that the provider is expected to deliver a lot of information in a fairly short space of time. Additional mentor support from a properly qualified and capable mentor within the organisation could contribute significantly towards a successful programme.

It is important to emphasise that if mentors are expected to provide support to learners, then they need to be allocated time by the employer to provide this mentoring support as Doherty and Bennett (2005) heard in their study from one respondent who stated that “During the early stages of our WBL programme, I was made aware by one of the learners that the mentoring support service that was supposed to be offered to learners was not happening. When I investigated the cause of this, I discovered that mentors refused to offer any support unless they were allocated time off from their normal working duties to do so. It was agreed that participating mentors be allocated two hours a week to help learners and that the company would pay for interested individuals to complete an accredited mentoring programme. This ensured we were able to provide a good calibre of mentoring”

In sum, although many who obtain these qualifications are accessing the labour market, these skills development systems still appear limited in their reach and impact. They do not always function effectively and they need to be refined and better targeted if they are to be extended to include more young people more effectively to support economic growth. There also needs to be a stronger alignment between SETAs, education and training providers and companies in determining and regularly updating curricula frameworks and assessment standards so that they match industry demand and, particularly, keep pace with shifting global technological developments.