



Report:

Skills Development Initiatives:

Department of Defence



List of Acronyms:

DOD:	Department of Defence
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
FET:	Further Education and Training
HET:	Higher Education and Training
ICT:	Information Communication and Technology
MHS:	Military Health Service
NDP:	National Development Plan
NSDS:	National Skills Development Strategy
NSF:	National Skills Fund
SAAF:	South African Air Force
SAMHS:	South African Military Health Service
SANDF:	South African National Defence Force
SAPS:	South African Police Service
SASSETA:	Safety and Security Education and Training Authority
SSP:	Sector Skills Plan
CENC:	Commission on Enhancing National Cybersecurity

Table of Contents

LIST OF ACRONYMS:.....	1
FIGURE.....	4
TABLE.....	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	5
CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION, OVERVIEW & STRUCTURE.....	8
1. INTRODUCTION.....	9
2. RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES.....	10
3. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY.....	12
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	13
1. INTRODUCTION.....	14
2. OVERVIEW.....	14
3. ASSESSMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE (DOD).....	17
3.1. SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE (SANDF).....	18
3.2. SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY HEALTH SERVICES.....	20
3.3. SOUTH AFRICAN NAVY.....	21
3.4. SOUTH AFRICAN AIR FORCE.....	21
4. SASSETA SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES.....	22
4.1. THE NATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PLAN.....	23
5. SKILLS MISMATCH.....	26
6. EMPLOYMENT EQUITY.....	27
7. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE.....	28
8. CONCLUSION.....	29
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	31
1. INTRODUCTION.....	32
2. RESEARCH DESIGN.....	32
3. RESEARCH APPROACH.....	33
3.1. SAMPLING METHOD.....	33
3.2. DATA COLLECTION.....	34
3.3. DATA ANALYSIS.....	34
4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	35
5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	35
6. SUMMARY.....	35
CHAPTER 4: KEY FINDINGS & STUDY RESULTS.....	37
KEY FINDINGS.....	38
STUDY RESULTS.....	40
SASSETA.....	41

PROGRAMMES.....	41
1. PARTICIPATING PROGRAMMES	42
2. TIMELINES: ARTISAN PROGRAMME.....	43
3. TIMELINE: INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME	44
LEARNERS.....	45
4. DEMOGRAPHICS	46
5. TRAINING PROGRAMME: POSITIVE IMPACT	48
6. TRAINING PROGRAMME: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & EMPLOYMENT	49
7. TRAINING PROGRAMME: RATING AND START & COMPLETION TIME	51
8. EMPLOYMENT: POST-TRAINING	52
9. EMPLOYMENT: TRAINING EMPLOYER (DOD)	53
10. CAREER PATH: SATISFACTION LEVEL	54
11. MENTORSHIP AND WORKING TOOLS	55
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE (DOD) (EMPLOYER).....	57
<i>STUDY RESULTS</i>	<i>57</i>
1. DEMOGRAPHICS	58
2. TRAINING PROGRAMME: LEARNER STATISTICS (2016 TO 2021).....	59
3. SASSETA-FUNDED LEARNER PROGRAMMES	60
4. LEARNER'S PROFESSIONALISM AND SASSETA ENGAGEMENT & SUPPORT	61
5. WORKPLACE: PRACTICAL COMPETENCE AND UNDERSTANDING	62
CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION	63
1. INTRODUCTION	64
2. RECOMMENDATIONS	64
2.1. GENERAL:.....	64
2.2. INTERNSHIP	67
2.3. ARTISAN	70
3. CONCLUSION.....	71
BIBLIOGRAPHY	72
REFERENCES.....	73

Figure

Figure 1: SASSETA-Funded Learners.....	7
Figure 2: Structure of the Study	12
Figure 3: Structure of the Study	12
Figure 4: Structure of the Study	12
Figure 5: Legislation Policy	15
Figure 6: Legislation Policy	16
Figure 7: Occupational Band.....	28
Figure 8: Sampling	33
Figure 9: Study Methods	34
Figure 10: Participating Programmes	42
Figure 11: Timelines: Artisan Programme	43
Figure 12: Timeline: Internship Programme.....	44
Figure 13: Demographics.....	46
Figure 14: Demographics.....	47
Figure 15: Training: Positive Impact	48
Figure 16: Training: Professional Development.....	49
Figure 17: Training: Timelines.....	51
Figure 18: Employment - Post-Training	52
Figure 19: Employment - Training Employer	53
Figure 20: Career Path - Satisfaction Level.....	54
Figure 21: Working Tools & Mentorship.....	55
Figure 22: Demographics (Employer)	58
Figure 23: Learner Statistics	59
Figure 24: SASSETA-Funded Learner Programmes.....	60
Figure 25: Learner Professionalism and SASSETA Engagement.....	61
Figure 26: Practical Competence and Understanding	62

Table

Table 1: Skills Development Outcomes	23
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Executive Summary

There is a gap and a need for research on engagements and training within the Departments of Defence across many countries around the world. As much as there is literature signifying this, gaps that include each division of the Department of Defence, and the shortage of research external to the Department of Defence have been poignant.

Specific to South Africa, the Department of Defence remains a research “Black Box” that holds so much information but is still to be explored with regards to training and means of enhancing this. The secure nature of the Department of Defence has proven an additional barrier to research. The ability to reach participants and obtaining access from gatekeepers hampers data collection.

Literature has been able to highlight how skills development may be risked and compromised by skills mismatch. Skills development also entails the matching of skills available and labour available. According to this assertion, the mere presence of skills development does not entail a match of skills. There is still room for research to gain access and understand how the Department of Defence in South Africa conducts trainings and how skills are developing as a result.

The objectives of the current research are included below:

1. To identify and elaborate on key change drives that influence the demand for and supply of skills (whether positively or negatively) in the sub-sector.
 - Through the research, it is plausible to decipher key change drivers within the South African National Defence Forces. The research does not yield enough change driver information for all the Department of Defence sectors as the research team could not have access to any other sectors apart from the SANDF. More research is required with active engagement with all the sectors to depict the main change drivers that can be generalized to all sectors.

2. To determine occupational shortages in the sub-sector, as well as the requisite skills interventions required to respond to occupational shortages and skills gaps in the sub-sector.
3. Assess if the implementation of SASSETA's learning programmes closed the gaps identified in the WSP (training needs) submitted by the DOD.
 - The research has been able to assert the valuable contributions that the learning programmes have made, specifically to the learners. The research can state with great certainty, that the physical training has had an immense impact on the careers of the learners, and also assert with great certainty that most of the learners who are beneficiaries of these programmes are learners who stay with the Department of Defence. SASSETA still has a lot of work to do in closing the gap between training and the requirements and/or expectations of the Department of Defence.
 - Although results are specific to the SANDF, some gaps that need to be addressed by SASSETA include practical skills affiliated with learners' ability to work under pressure, presentation skills that need to be improved and recovered in comparison to the softer skills like people skills and the ability to communicate.
4. To assess if the learner's employability has improved and if support rendered to DOD by SASSETA is sufficient.
 - Through this research, it is safe to state that the learners are employable or at the least can create some sense of employability. It is imperative to note from the research that most of the learners are employed in one form or another. These learners also assert that the training programme has been able to contribute to their current employment and what they are engaged in. What remains imperative and open space for research is the gap suggested by the assertion that DOD employers (specifically SANDF) do not absorb the bulk of their programme interns. The reason this is imperative is that it opens up a

curious inquiry alluding to whether this gap is due to the capacity of the Department of Defence or the realization of the lack of skills in learners. The latter, fortunately, seems less plausible.

The relationship between the DOD and learners seems to create a gap than closing a gap in terms of job provision and career development. This assertion is based on the results indicating that the DOD is unable to absorb the bulk of the learners who are in their programmes. The learners are also reflected to be employed in other careers or categories apart from the DOD which they trained for and are interested in. Although a lot of the participants are interested in utilizing their skills in the DOD and adequately trained for this, it seems that contracts end, leaving learners not being able to renegotiate these terms or utilize the major skills elsewhere.

In the period between 2018 and 2022, the number of learners that have been funded by SASSETA for the Department of Defence has significantly declined. Within 5 years, SASSETA has been able to fund 2032 learners with the Department of Defence. 2019 was the year with the most funded learners as it had 37% of the total learners were funded. From 2019 to 2020, there was a significant decline in funding from 37% to 11%. This drop might be attributed to lack of funding for the learners from pre-COVID pandemic to post-COVID pandemic times. This drop has stagnated from 2020 to 2022 and has remained at the same level.

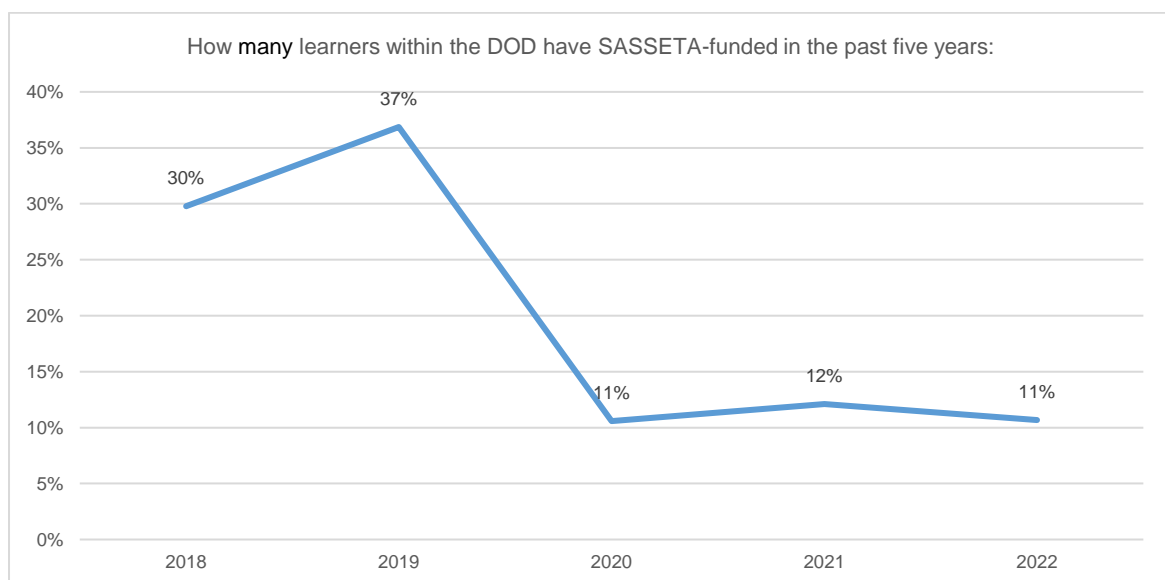


Figure 1: SASSETA-Funded Learners

CHAPTER 1

Orientation, Overview and Structure

1. Introduction

The Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority (SASSETA) has conducted Qualitative and Quantitative Research focused on assessing the implementation of the skills initiative within the Department of Defence sub-sector.

The learners are funded through the following programmes:

- Bursary
- Learnership
- Internship
- Apprenticeship
- Skills Programmes
- Work Integrated Learning

The study will also be sourcing data from the Department of Defence (DOD) as the employer, as the learners are located at various divisions/sections within the DOD, namely:

- South African Defence Force
- South African Airforce
- South African Navy
- South African Military Health

The stakeholders for this project are spread across South Africa's 9 provinces and this project is a means of gathering feedback from them regardless of their location. As part of the study, we will be able to highlight the current employment status of the learners, their impression of the skills initiatives within the DOD and how the programme has contributed towards attaining the necessary skills and experience.

In addition, input towards the implementation and effectiveness of the programmes has been sourced from the Department of Defence and SASSETA and also looking at the current relationship between the two entities.

2. Research Aim and Objectives

This research aims to identify and elaborate on key change drivers that influence the demand for and supply of skills (whether positively or negatively) in the sub-sector. In addition to this, the research also aims to determine occupational shortages in the sub-sector, as well as the requisite skills interventions required to respond to occupational shortages and skills gaps in the sub-sector.

In combining the above aspects, the research aims to provide clarity into how the demand and supply of skills are related to occupational shortages within the sub-sector. Through this research, it should be possible to ascertain the supply resources of SASSETA and the demand needs of the DOD. The research is an effort at reconciliation of the two aspects and response to the effectiveness of the skills and training efforts that SASSETA has made in responding to the DOD.

The research also aims to provide an assessment of the implementation of SASSETA's learning programmes to close the gaps identified in the WSP (training needs) submitted by the DOD. This research is meant to respond to the validity and reliability of these learning programmes when aligned with employability, ability to be placed (absorbed) and future career trajectories of learners.

Although results are specific to the SANDF, some gaps that need to be addressed by SASSETA include practical skills affiliated with learners' ability to work under pressure, presentation skills that need to be improved and recovered in comparison to the softer skills like people skills and the ability to communicate.

The specific objectives of the study as highlighted by SASSETA were:

- I. To conduct quantitative and qualitative research on the implementation of skill initiatives.
- II. To identify and elaborate on key change drivers that influence the demand for and supply of skills (whether positively or negatively) in the sub-sector.

- III. To determine occupational shortages in the sub-sector, as well as the requisite skills interventions required to respond to occupational shortages and skills gaps in the sub-sector.
- IV. Assess if the implementation of SASSETA's learning programmes closed the gaps identified in the WSP (training needs) submitted by the DOD.
- V. To assess if the learner's employability has improved and if support rendered to DOD by SASSETA is sufficient.

3. Structure of the Study

The study was structured into 5 different phases, all of which had defined timeframes:

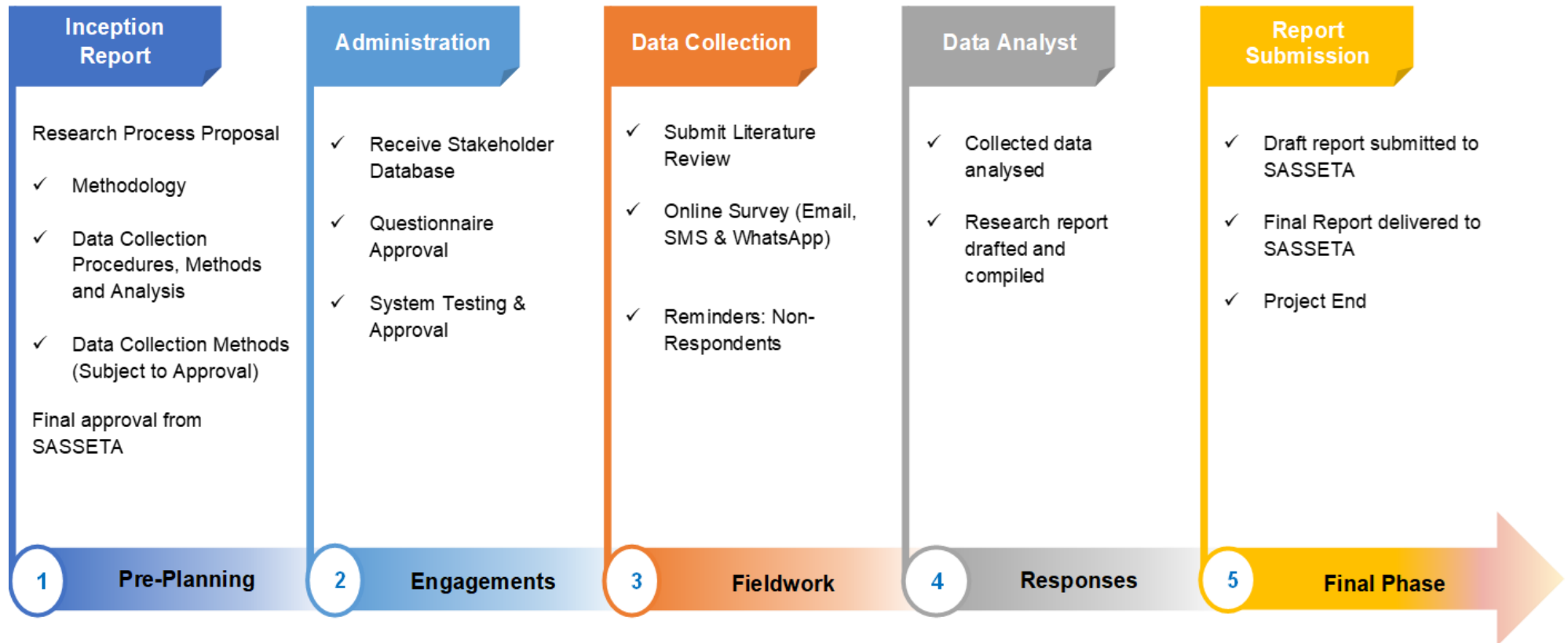


Figure 2: Structure of the Study

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

1. Introduction

The subsequent research has been initiated to conduct quantitative and qualitative research on the implementation of skill initiatives with the Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority (SASSETA) subsector, Department of Defence (DOD). The Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority (SASSETA) is a SETA that has been set up to facilitate education and training specific to the wide range of safety and security providers and services in South Africa.

The SASSETA has scheduled the current research to understand the successful career trajectory and experiences of their learners. In attaining this, SASSETA wants to obtain clarity on the validity of their learning experience, the applicability of the learnings and the employment potential this provides learners (are they absorbed by the DOD, and if not, why?). SASSETA also wants to gain insight into the knowledge attained by the learners at the end of the programme paying particular attention to what the learners know at the end of the training, and if they can use the provided training.

Through the current research, SASSETA wants to assess the value of the programmes they have implemented and also to correlate the job knowledge and the ability to impart knowledge and share skills with others through teaching one's job. These research objectives among others are gathered through engaging and surveying both students and the Department of Defence.

2. Overview

The establishment of SASSETA was guided by the Skills Development Act, No. 97 of 1998. According to this act, the mandate of SASSETA is to promote and facilitate skills development for the safety and security sector (SASSETA, 2022). In addition to this mandate, the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology relicensed the SETAs for the period of 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2030. The purpose of this relicensing is to ascertain that ability to execute within the framework of skills development is

continued and as pronounced in the National Skills Development Plan (SASSETA, 2022).

SASSETA views skills development as a critical element for economic growth and social development within South Africa. Dedication to skills development in South Africa allows for mitigation measures that counter unemployment, and poverty and increase youth skills development. These aspects are still prominent global concerns, and therefore SASSETA has also opted to prioritize them. South Africa has one of the highest unemployment and inequality rates in the world, with the bulk of the workforce unskilled and historically employed in primary industries such as mining and agriculture. The current unemployment rate in South Africa has increased to 29% (SASSETA, 2022).

Section 29(1) states that the State should take reasonable means to make adult and further education accessible to all citizens as a human right. Section 22 stipulates that every citizen has the right to choose their trade or occupation.

Legislation/Policy Strategy	Description
Skills Development Act, No. 97 of 1998 (as amended)	<p>To develop the skills of the South African workforce – to improve the quality of life of workers, their prospects of work and labour mobility; to improve productivity in the workplace and the competitiveness of employers; to promote self-employment; and to improve the delivery of social services.</p> <p>To amend provisions relating to the establishment, amalgamation and dissolution of SETAs; to provide for the incorporation of a subsector of one SETA into another SETA; to provide for the composition of the Board for each SETA; to regulate the eligibility to become a member of the Board and to provide for a constitution for every SETA.</p>
Skills Development Levies Act, No. 9 of 1999	The Act makes provision for leviable employers to pay 1% of their payroll to the South African Revenue Service (SARS).

Figure 5: Legislation Policy

SIC codes	Sub-sector	Constituency
9110A*	Policing	The Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID), the Secretariat for Safety and Security, Civilian Secretariat for Police, and The South African Police Service (SAPS)
9 1301		Municipal and Metro Police Services, Traffic Management/law Enforcement, and Road Traffic Management Corporation (RMTC)
91302		
9110B*	Corrections	The Department of Correctional Services (DCS)
		Private correctional service providers
		Kutama Sinthumule Correctional Centre
		Mangaung Correctional Centre
		Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services
	Correctional Supervision and Parole Boards	
9110D*	Defence	The Department of Defence (DOD)
		South African National Defence Force (SANDF) (SA Navy, SA Air Force, and SA Military Health and Army)
9110C*	Justice	The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD)
		National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), and Special Investigations Unit (SIU)

Figure 6: Legislation Policy

(SASSETA, 2022)

In conducting research within the DOD, this research aims to respond to the aims and objectives below:

- To identify and elaborate on key change drives that influence the demand for and supply of skills (whether positively or negatively) in the sub-sector.
- To determine occupational shortages in the sub-sector, as well as the requisite skills interventions required to respond to occupational shortages and skills gaps in the sub-sector.
- Assess if the implementation of SASSETA's learning programmes closed the gaps identified in the WSP (training needs) submitted by the DOD.
- To assess if the learner's employability has improved and if support rendered to DOD by SASSETA is sufficient.

3. Assessment of the Department of Defence (DOD)

The DOD derives its mandate from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996). Schedule 6 Section 24(1), provides the following functions of the Defence Force, as originally established by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 200 of 1993, as amended, continue in force as if the previous Constitution had not been repealed (DOD, 2020). The objectives of the DOD are:

- To provide for a structured and disciplined military force with the primary objective to defend and protect the Republic, its territorial integrity and its people in accordance with the Constitution and the principles of international law regulating the use of force.
- To provide for the political responsibility and employment of the Defence Force.
- To provide a staff function for the fostering and management of cooperative government and inter-governmental relations through the cluster system (DOD, 2020).

The National Skills Development Program is the key policy driver that has to be implemented by all the SETAs. The purpose of the NSDP is to ensure that South Africa has adequate, appropriate and high-quality skills that contribute towards economic growth, employment creation and social development (DHET, 2019). The National Development Plan (NDP) identifies the need for expanded systems of further education and training to offer clear, meaningful education and training opportunities particularly, for young people.

The National Development Plan (NDP) envisages the building of the state's capabilities to achieve an expansive national development agenda so that South Africans can attain a decent living standard. The NDP is in place to address the challenges that still impede skills development today, and the key driving force for the NSDS III is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the skills development system (DHET, 2019)

Among the key objectives are to build safer communities where people live without the fear of crime, and have confidence in the police and criminal justice system. SASSETA's role: SASSETA has positioned its strategies and programmes to advance skills development interventions that will boost transformation and professionalization across the sector. Skills Development is a mandated focus of SASSETA and is disseminated to all the categories of the DOD and has already been proven to have a positive impact in the DOD (DOD, 2020). To understand these sub-sectors, each of them is briefly outlined in the section below.

3.1. South African National Defence Force (SANDF)

As part of the post-1994 transformation of the military and the police, the decision was taken by the government to demilitarize South African society. This decision was associated with a further revision of the South African military, which adopted a new framework and abandoned the traditional functions of the South African military and a White Paper on National Defence for the Republic of South Africa of 1996 and Defence Review of 1998 were published giving expression to this new vision (Blyth, 2021).

These change imperatives were driven by the desire to transform both the police and the military for the needs of a democratic country, in terms of the priorities and the socio-political context of the time. According to the White Paper on National Defence for the Republic of South Africa, 4 of the key decisions that emerged from that period in South Africa's history were:

- The demilitarization of South Africa;
- The withdrawal of the military from internal activities;
- The transfer of military responsibilities from the South African Police;
- Service to the South African National Defence Force (SANDF);
- Transfer of policing responsibilities from the SANDF to the SAPS and
- The closure of the commando units (Montesh & Basdeo, 2012)

The Constitutional provisions of SANDF in terms of section 200 (2) of the Constitution, “the primary object of the defence force is to defend and protect the Republic, its territorial integrity and its people in accordance with the constitution and principles of international law regulating the use of force”. However, whenever a need arises, sections 18–20 of the Defence Act²⁰ provide that the SANDF may be deployed with SAPS in the following functions:

- For service in the defence of the Republic, for the protection of its
- Sovereignty and territorial integrity
- For service in compliance with the international obligations of the Republic about international bodies and other states
- For service in the preservation of life, health, or property
- For service in the provision or maintenance of essential services
- For service in the upholding of law and order in the Republic in cooperation with the South African Police Service under circumstances set out in law where the Police Service is unable to maintain law and order on its own, and
- For service in support of any department of state for the purpose of socio-economic upliftment (Blyth, 2021).

The SANDF is designed and equipped chiefly to fulfil its primary mission of defence against aggression. Nevertheless, it has personnel, skills and resources which are utilized for various nonmilitary tasks, normally in support of the civil authority. They are regarded as secondary functions and are not a major factor in the determination of force design and force levels. To provide defence capabilities that are commensurate with the needs of South Africa, and to manage, prepare and employ these capabilities in accordance with the regulations of the constitution, national legislation, and parliamentary and executive direction (Blyth, 2021).

3.2. South African Military Health Services

The purpose of the Military Health Services is to provide prepared and supported health capabilities and services for the defence and protection of South Africa (Kudjoe, 2022). The South African Military Health Service (SAMHS), is an authoritarian and rigidly hierarchical corporate organization with the responsibility of providing health services to soldiers, military veterans and their dependents (Mabona, Van Rooyen, Jordan, & Ham-Baloyi, 2019).

This integration of MHS into the DOD and working with other branches of the army is not only unique to South Africa but other countries too. Specific to the United States of America, the Military Health System is one of the largest integrated healthcare systems in the United States. It is composed of a “direct care” system of military treatment facilities managed in a federated manner by the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Defence Health Agency and a “purchased care” component that consists of a network of health care providers managed through TRICARE (Adirim, 2019).

Many countries’ armed forces are reorganizing their medical services to reduce costs by deepening the symbiosis with the public health system and by shifting from healthcare services which are oriented specifically to navies, armies and air forces to an integrated, joint system (Bricknell & Cain, 2019). The SA Military Health Service (SAMHS) provide medical management and health services and support to various departments (e.g. the SAPS and the departments of health, foreign affairs, the environment, transport and correctional services).

Such support can include the provision and distribution of medicine to national and provincial authorities; the provision of specialized facilities (e.g. air medical, dive medical and hyperbaric treatment facilities); immunization campaigns; maintaining essential medical services during labour unrest; assisting in disaster relief operations; training primary health care personnel; health service management and treatment of SAPS and Department of Correctional Services personnel and animals; and social upliftment programmes where required (Kudjoe, 2022).

3.3. South African Navy

Through the White Paper on Defence and the Defence Review process – the key requirements for the Navy. Priorities include, among others:

- Modern deep-sea naval patrol vessels and submarines
- Maritime helicopters and long-range patrol aircraft
- Missiles and air-defence systems
- Secure communications systems
- State-of-the-art computer technology; and
- Hi-tech command and control systems (Modise, 1997).

According to Modise (1997), many countries are offering South African attractive defence procurement packages that enable the country to acquire military hardware while creating jobs, training and education opportunities for our workforce – and other benefits, possibly including the development of harbours, shipbuilding capacity, and ship-repair facilities.

The role of the Navy has been summed up in the responsibilities below:

- The Navy's primary role is to protect our seas and access to these seas.
 - As South Africa is a trading nation, trading nations need a navy.
 - South Africa is also an island economy, and this means that most of the trade is conducted by sea, and there are clear maritime interests to safeguard.

3.4. South African Air Force

The South African Air Force is mainly responsible for protecting South African citizens by securing and protecting our air space. To effectively carry out its mandate, the SA Air Force relies heavily on the skills and dedication of all serving personnel

(DefenceWeb, 2020). Research has been able to illustrate that the SA Air Force (SAAF) is the second-oldest air force in the world as it was founded in 1920 by Sir Pierre van Ryneveld, a pioneer of aviation in South Africa (DefenceWeb, 2020).

The mandate of the SA Air Force is to provide and manage the air defence capability of the Department of Defence on behalf of the DOD, thereby participating in the service to ensure:

- The sovereignty and protection of the Republic's territorial integrity.
- Compliance with the international obligations of the Republic to international bodies and states.
- In plainer language, the SAAF exists to defend South Africa's airspace from unfriendly or unauthorised incursion, to support its sister services and to support the government's foreign and domestic policies.

4. SASSETA Skills Development Programmes

As the custodians of training and development, the Safety and Security Education and Training Authority (SASSETA) is one of 21 SETA's established in terms of the Skills Development Act - Act 97, 1998 (DOD, 2020). SASSETA is responsible for facilitating skills development in the safety and security sector. This is particularly important because the safety and security sector is not only one of the major contributors to employment in South Africa, but is also responsible for addressing safety issues and for implementing a vision that will result in a situation where "all people are and feel safe" (Irish-Qhobosheane, 2017).

Education and skills development are at the apex of the government agenda and it is for this reason that to overcome the legacy of our country's past, the government took a conscious decision that skills development will be at the centre of driving the transformation agenda. In our Sector Skills Plan (SSP), we identified the following skills priority actions which will be at the apex of the SETA agenda:

1. Strengthening partnerships with sector training institutions and academies,

2. Professionalisation and transformation of the sector,
3. Information communication and technology (ICT),
4. Technical and specialised skills, and
5. Building active citizenry. (SASSETA, SASSETA Strategic Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25, 2022).

The table below illustrates the skills development outcomes of the Department of Defence in the period 2020/2021. During this period, the total number of people whose skills were developed was 9 302. Service and Sales Workers were the most positively impacted group in terms of the number of people going through Skills Development with 3 769 people during this period. This was followed by clerks who had 1 598 people.

Skills Development for the period 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 (Table 3.6.7)									
Occupational Categories	Male				Female				Total
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White	
Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Professionals	100	7	3	11	64	14	2	13	214
Technicians and Associate Professionals	797	82	21	91	381	42	13	25	1 452
Clerks	688	105	14	52	603	90	11	35	1 598
Service and Sales Workers	2 255	266	26	149	883	126	12	52	3 769
Skilled Agriculture and Fishery Workers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Craft and Related Trades Workers	759	93	19	97	338	55	4	19	1 384
Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	9	6	0	1	3	0	0	0	19
Elementary Occupations	478	88	13	59	178	40	1	9	866
Total	5 086	647	96	460	2 450	367	43	153	9 302
Employees with Disabilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 1: Skills Development Outcomes

4.1. The National Skills Development Plan

According to the Department of Higher Education Training, the National Skills Development Plan seeks to ensure that South Africa has adequate, appropriate and high-quality skills that contribute towards economic growth, employment creation and social development (DHET, 2019).

When structural change occurs, too often the outcome is retrenchments rather than retraining and redeployment of working people. Systemic blockages such as a lack of synergy between the various post-school sub-systems (e.g. universities, FET colleges, SETAs) (ILO, 2020); a lack of clarity about the role expected of the various parts of the skills development system; inefficiency and waste; and the silo mentality which prevents the partnerships and alignments needed to improve effectiveness (Kraak, et al., 2013).

The absence of coherent strategies within economic and industrial sectors is compounded by the lack of systematic skills development to support and sustain growth and development. The urban bias of our economic development and therefore the urban bias in our skills development initiatives, result in skills for rural development being neglected.

One of the professional needs and requirements discovered by SASSETA is technological advancement. This can enhance the work of the DOD and improve the function overall. ICT advancement in terms of tools and skills is a key component of DODs around the world and is an element that affects all sub-categories of the DOD (Takai, 2011).

One of the key investment areas and developmental areas associated with the advancement of tools in the DOD is the upgrade of the skills that are aligned with the available tools. ICT Security Specialists have been identified by SASSETA as one of the skills that are missing within SASSETA. To intervene with this high demand of the skill, SASSETA has implemented a bursary that attends to this. The quantity of people required for this skill is 400 and SETA will support 10 people (SASSETA, 2022).

According to Filmalter (2022) the high failure rate of ICT projects in defence institutions, such as the DOD, is alarming and underlined by the current Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) sounding an alarm that, even with a surge in ICT investment, ICT projects continue to fail. Although a defence institution is not project-driven, as previously discussed, ICT projects need special attention due to the speed of the changes they bring (Filmalter, 2022).

Technology as a whole category has been identified by SASSETA as a priority skill that is required to be continually updated and included in the roadmap for SASSETA. Some of the opportunities that have been identified by SASSETA are emerging and the evolution of new technologies such as 5G, Block-Chain, Artificial Intelligence and Cloud Computing, and Cyber security.

Research including some stated below has been able to highlight that cyber threats may never be totally eradicated; therefore, we must learn to manage them to an acceptable level of risk. Developing a successful cyber risk strategy should involve a multipronged educational approach that aligns the business and technical arenas (Bardwell, Buggy, & Walls, 2017). “The risk calculus some private sector entities employ does not adequately account for foreign cyber threats or the systemic interdependencies between different critical infrastructure sectors” (Bardwell, Buggy, & Walls, 2017) (Clapper, Lettre, & Rogers, 2017, p. 2).

According to SASSETA, these technological advancements are an opportunity for smart policing and to create new jobs (SASSETA, 2022). In the absence of the above, there is a presence of inadequate capacity to deal with cybercrime, and inadequate infrastructure to deal with advanced technological space, among others. Research has also suggested that cyber security should be made a field of Military education and study (Tikk-Ringas, Kerttunen, & Spirito, 2014). In the 2022/23 plan, SASSETA has outlined the responses below to attend to the technological needs of SASSETA:

- Implement more training on ICT
- Invest in ICT infrastructure
- Implement the ICT Strategy
- Aggressively implement e-learning within the sector (SASSETA, 2022).

In December 2016, the Commission on Enhancing National Cybersecurity (CENC) presented a report on securing and growing economies in the digital world. They identified six imperatives to focus on, which are:

- Protect, defend, and secure today's information infrastructure and digital Networks.
- Innovate and accelerate investment for the security and growth of digital networks and the digital economy.
- Prepare consumers to thrive in a digital age.
- Build cybersecurity workforce capabilities.
- Better equip government to function effectively and securely in the digital age.
- Ensure an open, fair, competitive, and secure global digital economy (Bardwell, Buggy, & Walls, 2017).

5. Skills Mismatch

Skills development also entails the matching of skills available and labour available. According to van Rens & Rathelot (2017), a better understanding of skills mismatch is essential to finding effective policy options. They further contend that productivity would be much higher and unemployment much lower if the supply of and demand for skills were better matched. As a result, the skills mismatch between workers (supply) and jobs (demand) commands the ongoing attention of policymakers in many countries (van Rens & Rathelot, 2017).

It is apparent from the information above that the investments of SASSETA are aimed at acknowledging this match. Given South Africa's slow economic growth and high level of unemployment, many government-supported growth initiatives have prioritized the creation of low-skill jobs and the development of high-level skills (Sutcliffe & Bannister, 2020).

This is in the context of changing skills requirements associated with the shift to a service economy and technological innovation which can result in a skills mismatch. . According to the International Labour Organization, a skills mismatch is a discrepancy

between the skills that are sought by employers and the skills that are possessed by individuals. Simply put, it is a mismatch between skills and jobs (ILO, 2020).

Specifically, skills mismatch can be used to describe vertical mismatch (usually measured in terms of overeducation, undereducation, over skilling and under skilling), skill gaps, skill shortages (usually measured in terms of unfilled and hard-to-fill vacancies), field of study (horizontal) mismatch and skill obsolescence (McGuinness, Pouliakas, & Redmond, 2017) According to Pillay (2022) focusing on the skills mismatch as a root cause of the unemployment problem leads to a series of questions: “Does South Africa need a grand strategy on skills matching and what would that look like? How do we promote local and international collaboration in addressing the skills mismatch in South Africa?”

6. Employment Equity

The DOD adheres to the principles of equity and equal opportunities in all practices. In its 2020/21 annual report, it outlines how it values, and manages diversity and recognizes that talent, ability and potential are inherently distributed across the population. In the same period, the DOD was focused on eradicating all forms of unfair stigma and discrimination within the department.

To ensure that the employment equity targets provided by the government are reached by the DOD, the DOD issued the revised Policy on Transformation Management on 23 August 2018. The table below highlights the number of employees in the DOD and their employee equity distribution in the 2020/21 period.

Total Number of Employees (Including Employees with Disabilities) in each of the Following Occupational Bands as on 31 March 2021									
Occupational Band	Male				Female				Total
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White	
Top Management	14	0	0	1	4	0	0	1	20
Senior Management	175	18	14	52	72	13	10	26	380
Professionally Qualified and Experienced Specialists and Mid-Management	3 632	172	925	1 880	1 809	107	354	940	9 819
Skilled Technical and Academically Qualified Workers, Junior Management, Supervisors, Foreman and Superintendents	12 092	222	2 447	2 178	5 359	81	955	1 417	24 751
Semi-Skilled and Discretionary Decision Making	20 201	212	2 226	645	7 646	76	1 269	224	32 499
Unskilled and Defined Decision Making	1 125	4	146	23	1 332	8	227	32	2 897
MSDS	1 060	27	84	54	620	10	84	17	1 956
Interns	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	38 299	655	5 842	4 833	16 842	295	2 899	2 657	72 322

Figure 7: Occupational Band

7. Skills Development Research in the Department of Defence

Research that has been conducted on skills development specifically in the defence sector has remained thin and requires further investigation. Wade, Jefferson, Shir, Robson, Saum-Manning, Hastings, Best, Panis, Ramos and Bicksler (2018) contend that security cooperation's importance, scale, and complexity have grown substantially in recent years, but efforts to develop and manage the Department of Defence (DoD) security cooperation workforce have lagged significantly. In their research, they found that:

- Available data describing the security cooperation workforce are incomplete and inadequate for managing it.
- Twenty-one security cooperation-specific competencies emerge from this analysis, of which five appear common to almost every job: security cooperation strategy, security cooperation analysis, cultural awareness/international affairs, security assistance case management, and global perspective.

- The workforce appears to be divided into different job families: international affairs, security assistance implementation management, international training management, and financial management (Wade, et al., 2018).

Although the research above was based on the American DOD, it also highlights multiple shortcomings in security cooperation–related training and education programs specifically “personnel selected to fill security cooperation positions, lack the experience, skills, and training necessary to carry out their responsibilities most effectively”. In addressing this, the research recommended a far more deliberate approach to developing a robust security cooperation workforce by systematically identifying and tracking personnel to make sure their career trajectories aligned appropriately with their subsequent assignments (Wade, et al., 2018, p. 2).

Research by Laura Webber has managed to map skills development findings in the US DOD on four pillars of talent management which are: build and organize, train and develop, manage and motivate performance, and promote and retain the right talent (Webber, 2021). The purpose of this research was aimed at providing a synthesis of the results based on more than 30 RAND Corporation reports about the U.S.

Department of Defence’s talent management of knowledge workers, identifying areas for improvement, ways for the department to proactively approach talent management, and opportunities for future research. One of the key findings of the report in reference to the four pillars mentioned above was the assertion that diversity management was a theme that cut across these four pillars, with studies featuring observations related to recruitment, development, and retention of such groups as women, racial and ethnic minorities, and people with targeted disabilities (Webber, 2021).

8. Conclusion

The current research attempts to conduct research on skills implementation in the DOD. Research that has been conducted in this space has already pointed the direction to research gaps that are present in the implementation and proper execution of skills management with the tools availed to the DOD. Although the literature places focus on ICT, this research attempts to get an overview of skills inclusive of ICT.

It is imperative to note that as a result of the internal research nature of the DOD, there is still limited research that has been compiled on the sub-categories and this makes it imperative for this research to be able to gather this data and contribute to research as well.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

1. Introduction

This research project makes use of data attained from the SASSETA-funded learners who are completing or have completed their training programme at the Department of Defence (DOD). All the learners that responded to the study are based within the following divisions/sections at the DOD:

- South African National Defence Force (SANDF)
- South African Airforce
- South African Navy
- South African Military Health

Additional data was attained from the representatives of the Department of Defence (DOD), and all respondents were only based within the SANDF division. The participant's responses were obtained through a quantitative method (online survey), and a few qualitative questions were asked within the study to give more context to their quantitative responses.

Two separate questionnaires were designed for the learners and the DOD, and both their results will be disseminated in the report.

2. Research Design

The research was conducted in two different phases:

- Phase 1: Literature Review
- Phase 2: Online Survey

As part of phase 1 and in line with the study objectives as highlighted on page 10, a literature review was conducted about the background of the Implementation of Skills Initiatives within the DOD, as highlighted in Chapter 2.

Phase 2 of the study involved collecting data using an online survey from both the SASSETA-funded learners and their employer, the Department of Defence.

3. Research Approach

To effectively investigate the research questions and objectives outlined in the first chapter, and for the research to gain considerable insight in response to the objectives of the study outlined in the first chapter, the researcher utilized a mixed-methods approach.

A mixed-method approach entails that both quantitative and qualitative methods were implemented in the research process. This approach allowed the researchers to gain responses that were oriented with statistical significance and be able to complement these with qualitative or explanation-driven responses which add context to the numbers.

The quantitative research approach for the research was conducted in the form of online surveys. The surveys include matrix and dimension-based questions whose numbers would yield responses on a 5-point Likert scale. The responses from the scales would be aggregated to provide a statistical direction upon analysis.

3.1. Sampling Method

The total population for the SASSETA-funded learners is 397 and for the employer, the Department of Defence (DOD) is 5. The database for the learners was received from SASSETA and for the DOD it was received through their internal channels.

	Learners	Department of Defence (DOD)
Population	397	5
Sampling	397	5
Response Rate	31%	80%

Figure 8: Sampling

A convenient sampling guided the gathering of participants in the research. The target population is based on the data provided by SASSETA and the DOD, and no external participants were included in the research and the dissemination of the survey ascertained that all the stakeholders had an equal opportunity to participate.

3.2. Data Collection

The data was collected using online surveys. The questionnaires were based on and designed to elicit responses that are targeted and responding to the study objectives. The questionnaires were designed with input from the SASSETA team, to ascertain consistency with the desired outcomes through the process.

The following methods were used to collect data:

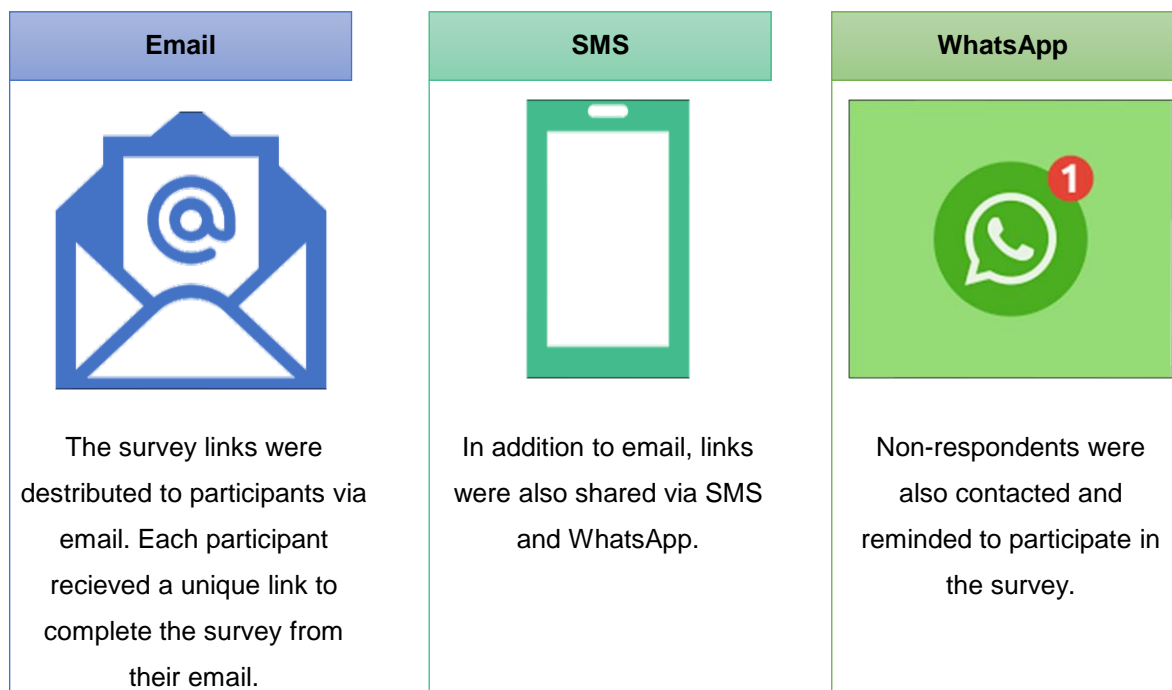


Figure 9: Study Methods

- Each participant has a unique ID linked to their profile.
- If a participant attempted to respond to the survey more than once, the system will automatically inform them that they have already responded regardless of the platform used by participants to complete the survey.

3.3. Data Analysis

After collecting the data using mixed methods, the qualitative data were transcribed, and the quantitative data tabulated to provide a consistent representation of thematic analysis. Apart from assisting with arranging the data

and breaking it down into more manageable and collective parts, this also aids in preparing data for analysis and theorizing (Lerner, 2004). Thematic analysis is used to allow the research team to present the data in digestible formats and structure for SASSETA.

4. Ethical Considerations

The Implementation of Skills Initiatives at the Department of Defence study was conducted with the highest regard for ethical considerations. No harm was brought to the participants, and a disclaimer was added to the survey email confirming to all participants that their responses will remain confidential and that their details or who responded will not be shared with SASSETA.

The Researcher is a full member of the South African Marketing Research Association (SAMRA), we are bound by the association in our research practices and management of data.

5. Limitations of the Study

Access to the participants was entirely based on the database received from SASSETA with a population of 397 learners and 5 DOD representatives.

The only limitation we encountered is that all the 397 learners did not have any email addresses. We had to rely on their mobile numbers to send the survey link via SMS and WhatsApp. As a result, this could have also affected the overall response rate.

6. Summary

A good survey response rate range between 5% and 30%. An excellent response rate is 50% or higher. While the response rates between 30% and 40% are fairly standard in survey research, a lower response rate does not necessarily mean lower representativeness in the survey. A well-rounded participant base is more crucial to the representation of the data than a high number (Baruch & Holton, 2008, Chung, NA).

The Researcher managed to gather responses from 31% of the participants who sufficiently represent all the groups affiliated with the SASSETA in terms of specified demographics. The sample that was gathered from the target population is representative of the whole population and it contains all categories.

As a result, all 9 provinces in South Africa are represented including the different divisions/sections at the Department of Defence.

CHAPTER 4

Key Finding and Study Results

Key Findings

- I. 40% of the beneficiaries found the training programme highly impactful in finding adequate employment. The programmes are effectively aligned with the job description expectations from various trades. In addition, this also suggests that the trades or careers taken by the beneficiaries are spaces where they can practically apply learnings from the programmes.
- II. 65% of the beneficiaries agree (although to varying degrees) to verification of the adequacy of finding adequate employment subsequent to the training programme.
- III. Only 18% of the learners assert that the training programme had little to no impact on finding adequate jobs. This speaks volumes about the impacts of the training programmes regardless of where the learners end up.
- IV. In addition to the above, 75% of the beneficiaries perceive the impact of the training programme on future development and career. These participants are inclusive of those who have received opportunities because of the training programme and possibility perceive future prospects and possibilities as a result of this exposure.
- V. Only 5% of the beneficiaries stated that the programme had little to no impact on their future development or career. This number is significant in highlighting the overall applicability of the training and the resources it provides for various learners.
- VI. Practical Training is stated as the most useful training programme according to beneficiaries as 29% of the participants chose it as the most effective.
- VII. A combined 80% of the beneficiaries were employed in one form or the other. 45% of the beneficiaries were employed on a full-time basis, while 15% were employed on a part-time basis. 20% of the beneficiaries were self-employed

while 20% were studying. It therefore is plausible to suggest that the training programme provides for high employability of learners regardless of the route their career ends up taking.

- VIII. For 98% of the beneficiaries, the training was aligned with their studies. This assertion validates the reliability and successful alignment of the training programme to the studies.
- IX. This relevance is essential as beneficiaries would essentially use the training to substantiate the knowledge and resources provided in the studies.
- X. Only 2% of the beneficiaries are of the assertion that the training was not related to their studies.

Study Results

SASSETA Programmes

1. Participating Programmes

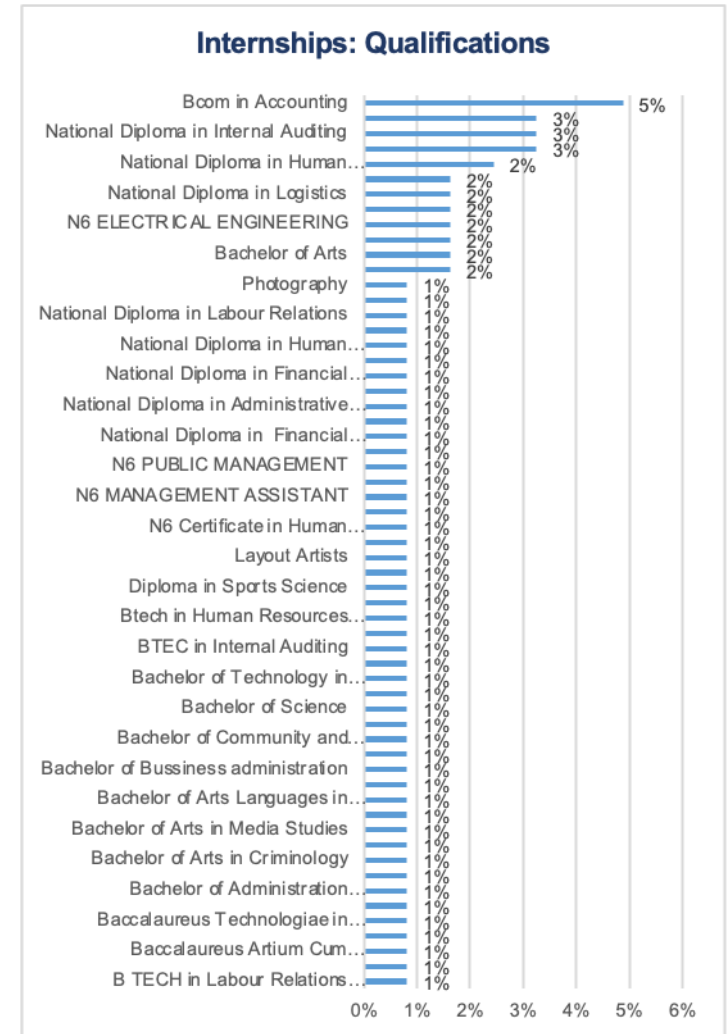
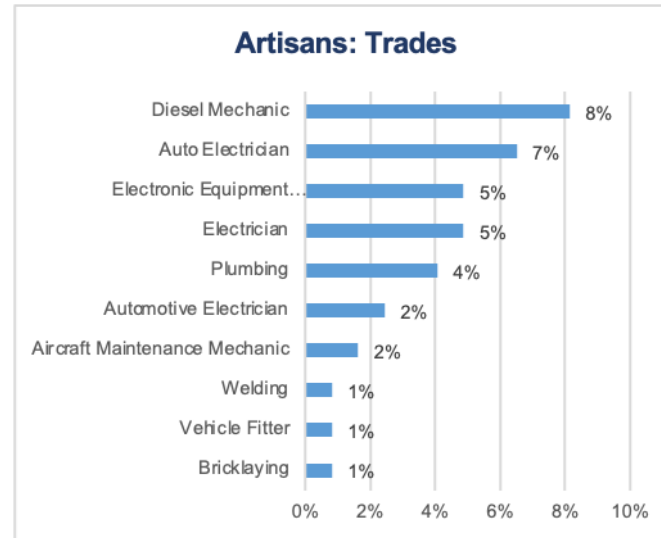
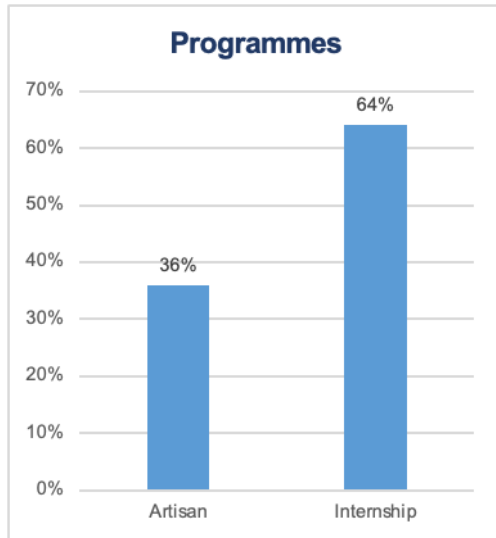
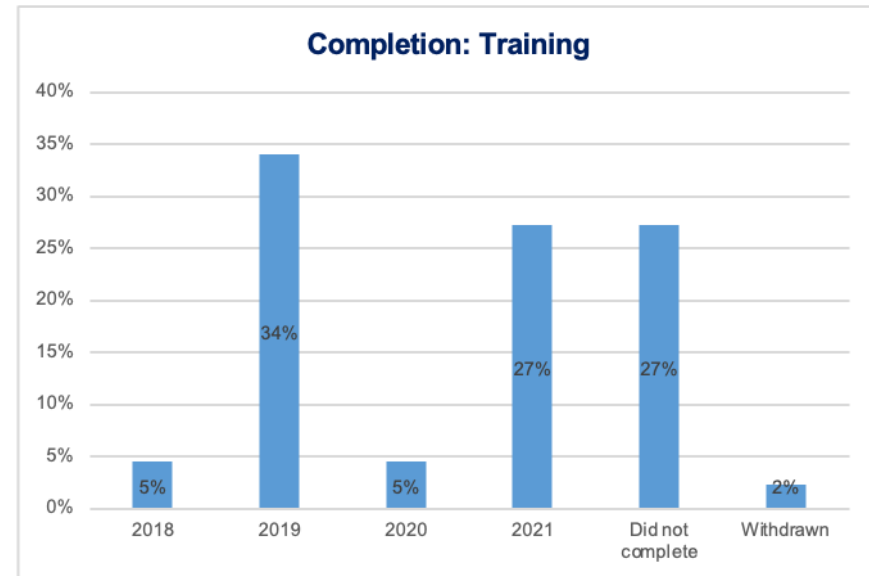
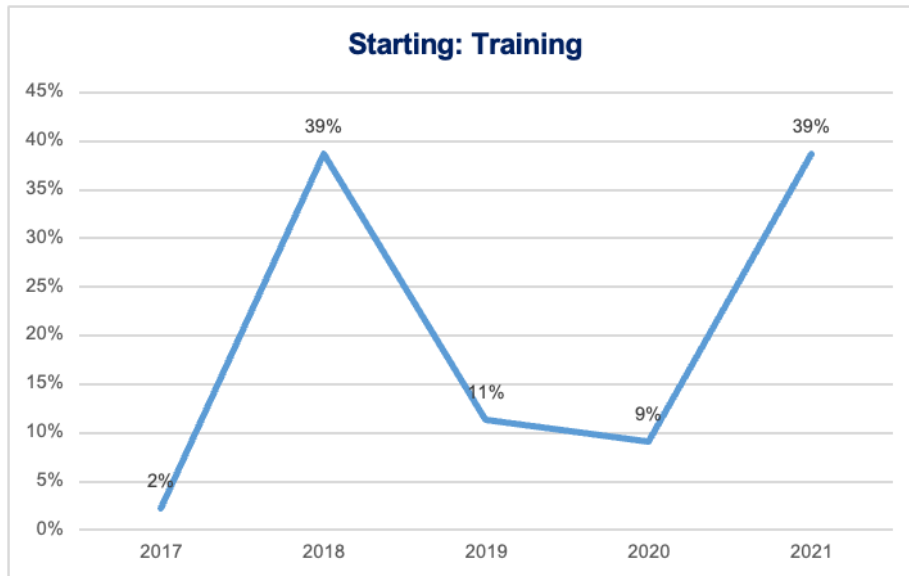


Figure 10: Participating Programmes

Of the participants who completed the survey, 64% were interns, while 36% were Artisans:

- From this sample, Qualifications were distributed across multiple trades or Qualifications.
- The Qualifications ranged from National Diplomas, Bachelor's Degrees, and Practical Degrees.
- No specific area of qualification focus dominated the sample since the participants were from various backgrounds including Humanities, Finance, Science, Management and Engineering.
- 8% of the participants categorized themselves as Diesel Mechanics, while auto electricians were 7% of the participants.

2. Timelines: Artisan Programme



- 2% of Artisans started their training in 2017.
- The number of Artisans who started their training rose in 2018, with 39% of the participants starting in that year.
- In 2019, 11% of the Artisans started their training and this slightly decreased to 9% in 2020.
- 39% of the Artisan participants started their training in 2021.

- 5% of the participants completed their training in 2018 and 2020 respectively, therefore equalling the least number of participants who completed their training within the years relevant to this study.
- 34% of the participants completed their training in 2019.
- 27% of the participants did not complete their training, while 2% withdrew from their training.

Figure 11: Timelines: Artisan Programme

3. Timeline: Internship Programme

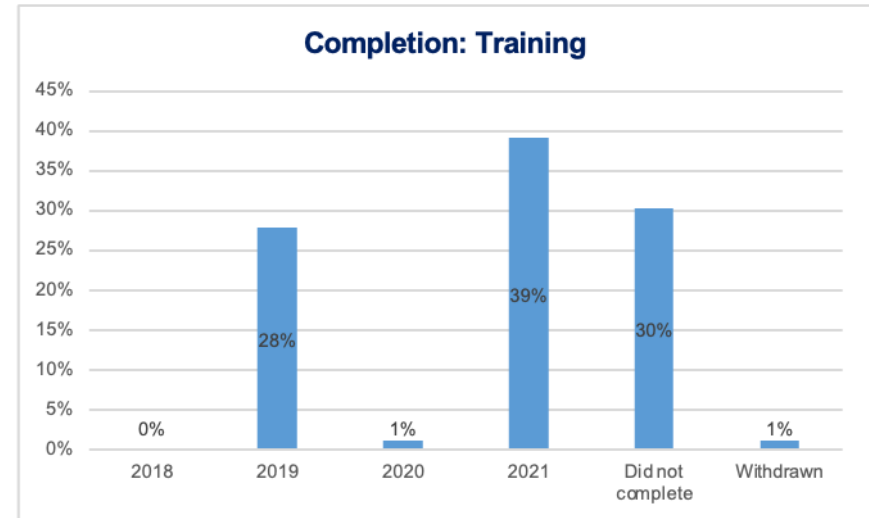
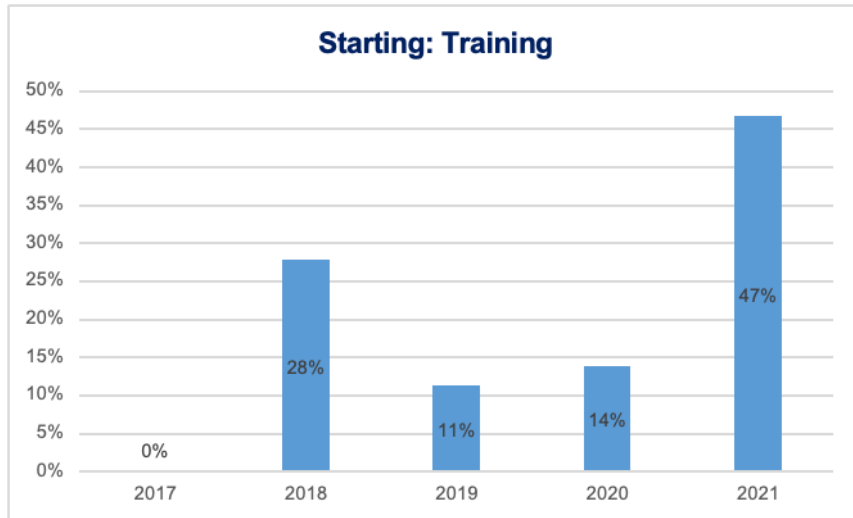


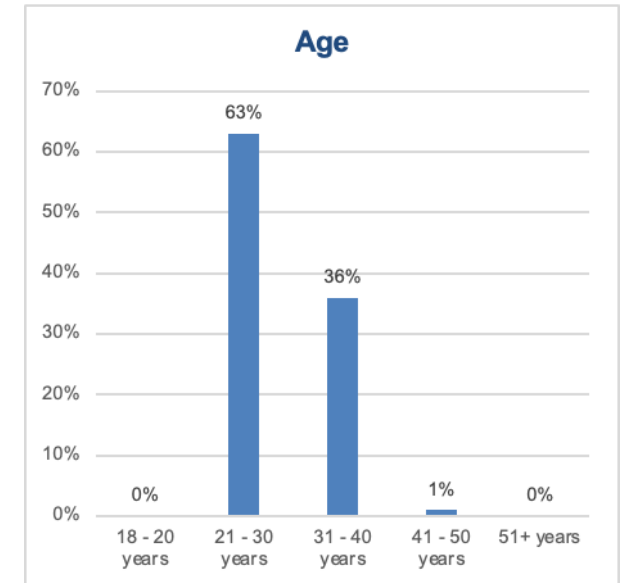
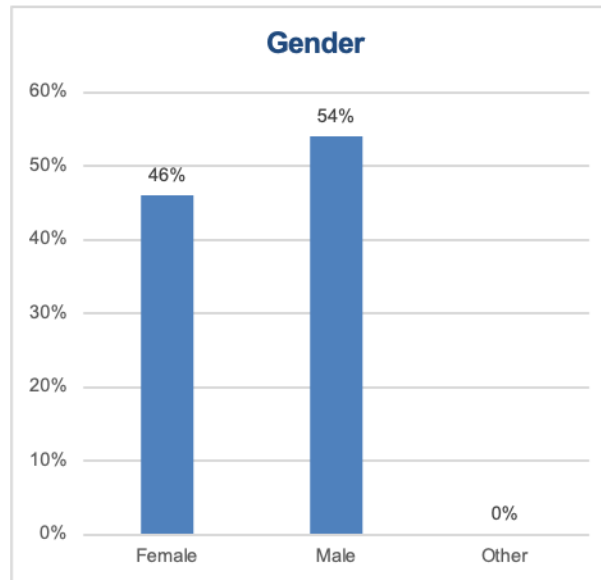
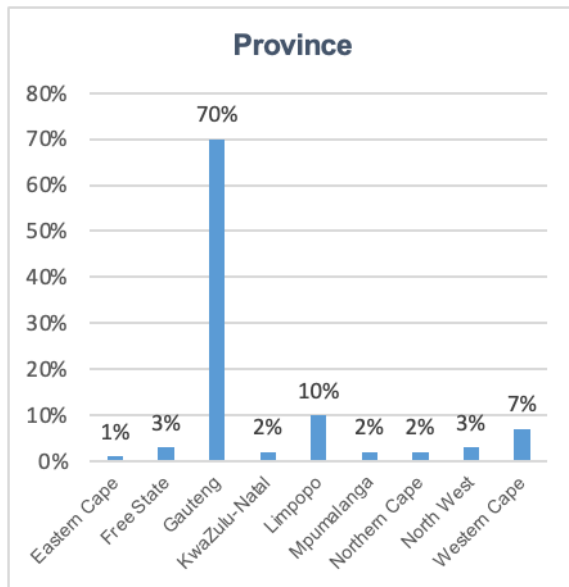
Figure 12: Timeline: Internship Programme

- 2021 Saw the highest number of interns enrolling with the internship programme, contributing to the bulk of the participants of this study (47%)
- 2019 had the least number of interns starting their training with 11% of the participants.
- 28% of the participants started their training in 2018 while 14% started in 2020.
- 2 In 5 Interns competed their training in 2021, while 1 In 5 interns completed their training in 2019. While in 2021 the largest number of interns enrolled and have also subsequently seen the largest number of graduates from the programme for the time period 2018 - 2021.
- 2020 had the least number of interns who completed their training with 1% of the participants completing this year.

Learners

Artisan & Internship Programmes

4. Demographics

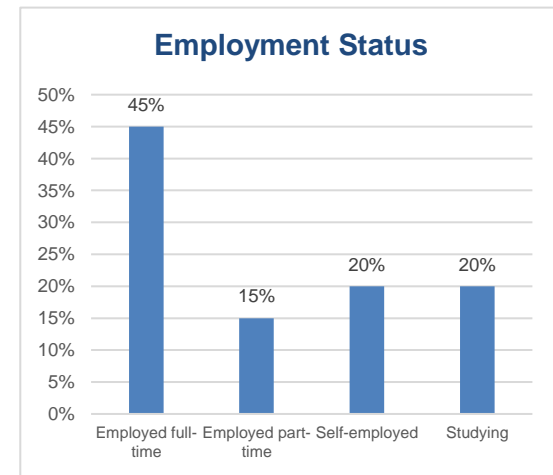
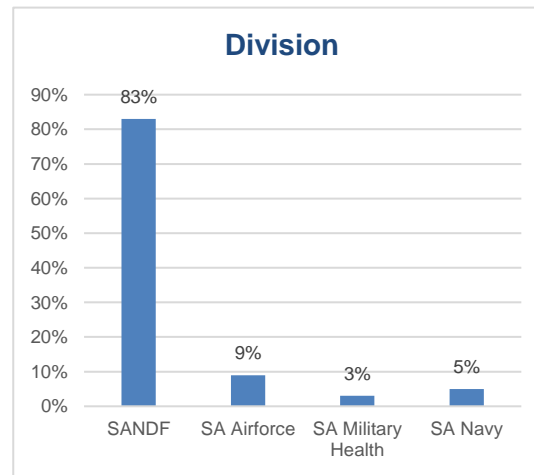
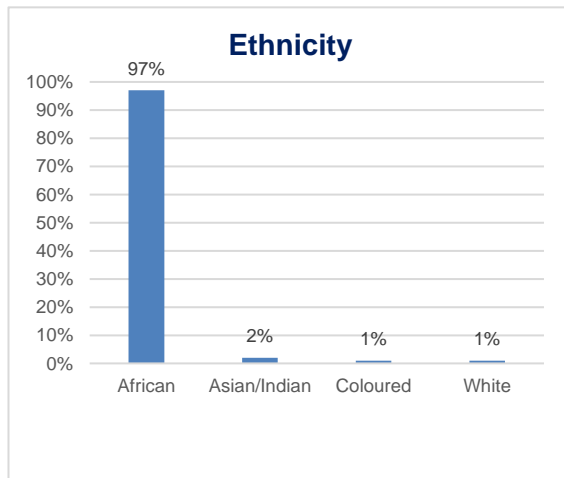


- Gauteng had the bulk of the participants with 70% of the participants based in Gauteng.
- Limpopo was the province that contributed more participants after Gauteng, with 10% of the participants.
- The Eastern Cape had the least participants with 1% of the participants.
- KZN, Mpumalanga, and NC respectively had 2% of the participants each.

- 54% of the participants, who were the largest population identified themselves as Male.
- 46% of the participants were female.

- The age range and distribution for participants was between 21 years to 50 years (maximum).
- 63% of the beneficiaries were between 21 years and 30 years.
- 36% of the participants were between 31-40 years.
- Only 1% of the participants were between 41-50 years.

Figure 13: Demographics



Ethnicity was heavily skewed with 97% of the population being of African ethnicity.

Asian/Indian participants were 2% of the sample. Coloured and White participants were 1% each.

SANDF was the most representative division, with 83% of the beneficiaries.

9% of the beneficiaries represented SA Airforce, while 5% represented SA Navy.

SA Military Health was represented by 3% of the participants.

A combined 80% of the beneficiaries were employed in one form or the other.

45% of the beneficiaries were employed on a full-time basis, while 15% were employed on a part-time basis.

20% of the beneficiaries were self-employed while 20% were studying.

Figure 14: Demographics

5. Training Programme: Positive Impact

- Practical Training is stated as the most useful training programme according to beneficiaries.
- 29% of the participants chose the above as the most effective.
- Leadership and Management were the training programmes that were selected as the least useful for the careers of the beneficiaries.
- In comparison to practical training, it seems like soft skills are the least applicable to the careers of the beneficiaries and the eventual trajectories.
- This suggests that they are not applying the learnings from this training as they do not apply to the trade, or do not align with the trajectory their careers took.

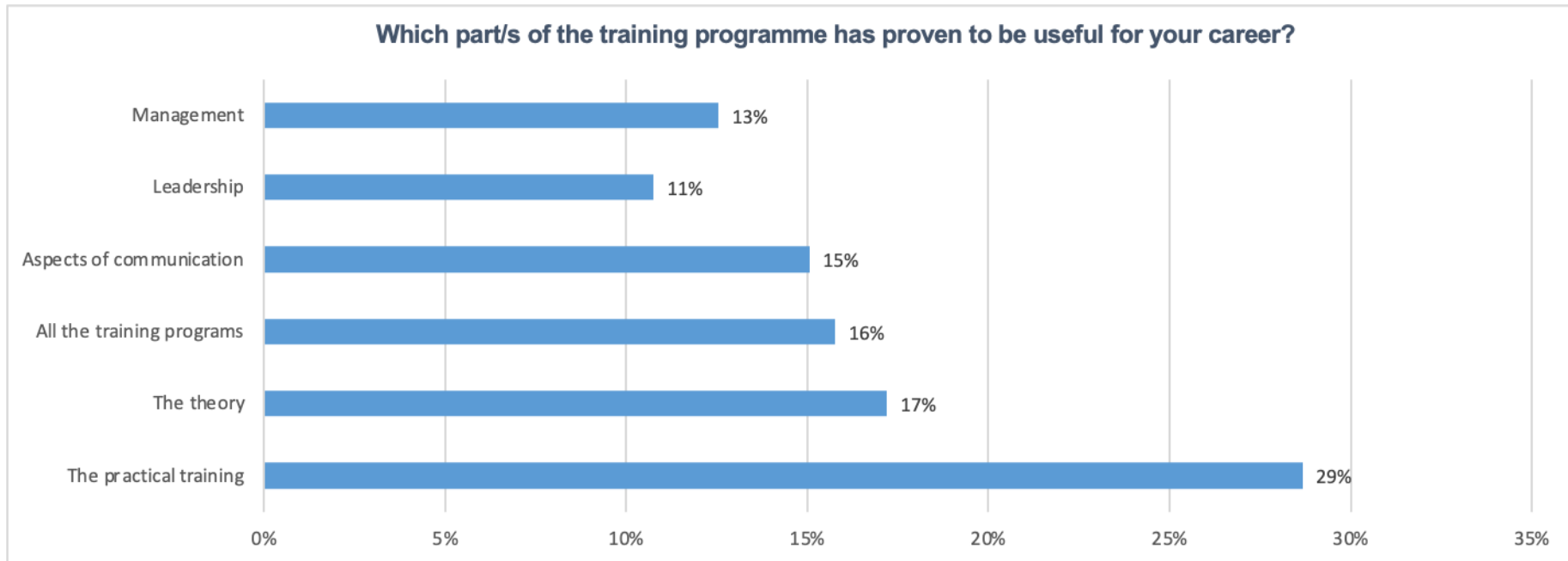


Figure 15: Training: Positive Impact

6. Training Programme: Professional Development & Employment

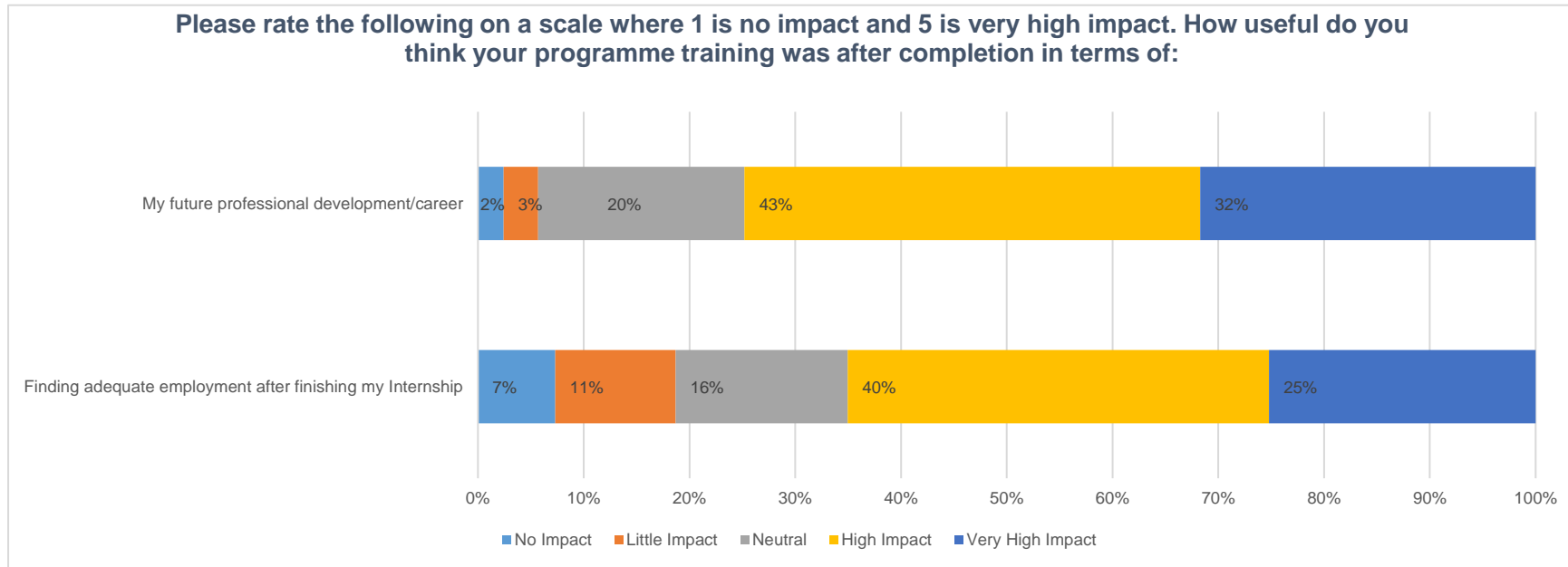


Figure 16: Training: Professional Development

- Almost 2 in 3 (65%) of beneficiaries found the training as having high to very high impact on their ability in finding adequate employment. These beneficiaries agree (although to varying degrees) to verification of the adequacy of finding adequate employment.
- The assertion above suggests that the programmes are effectively aligned with the job description expectations from various jobs. In addition, this also suggests that the trades or careers taken by the beneficiaries are spaces where they can practically apply learnings from the programmes.
- Only 18% of the participants asserted that the training programme had little to no impact on finding adequate jobs.

- 20% of the beneficiaries are not certain about the impact of the training programme on their future career. This can be explained by the 20% of the beneficiaries who are studying and have not yet tested the efficacy of the training programme to gauge future potential and possibilities.
- 75% of the beneficiaries however perceive the training programme as having high to very high impact on their future development and career. These participants are inclusive of those who have received opportunities because of the training programme and possibly perceive future prospects and possibilities as a result of this exposure.
- Only 5% of the beneficiaries stated that the programme had little to no impact on their future development or career.

7. Training Programme: Rating and Start & Completion Time

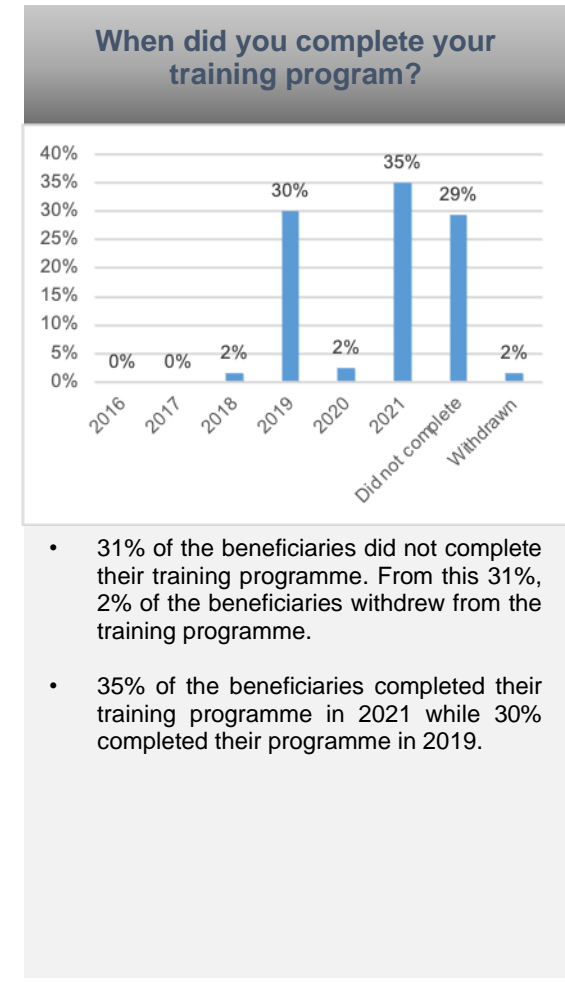
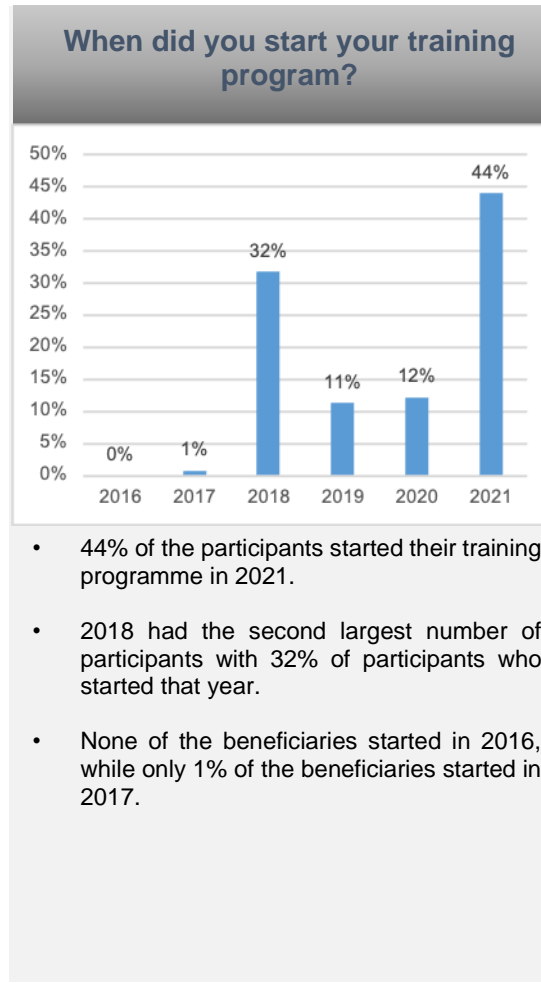
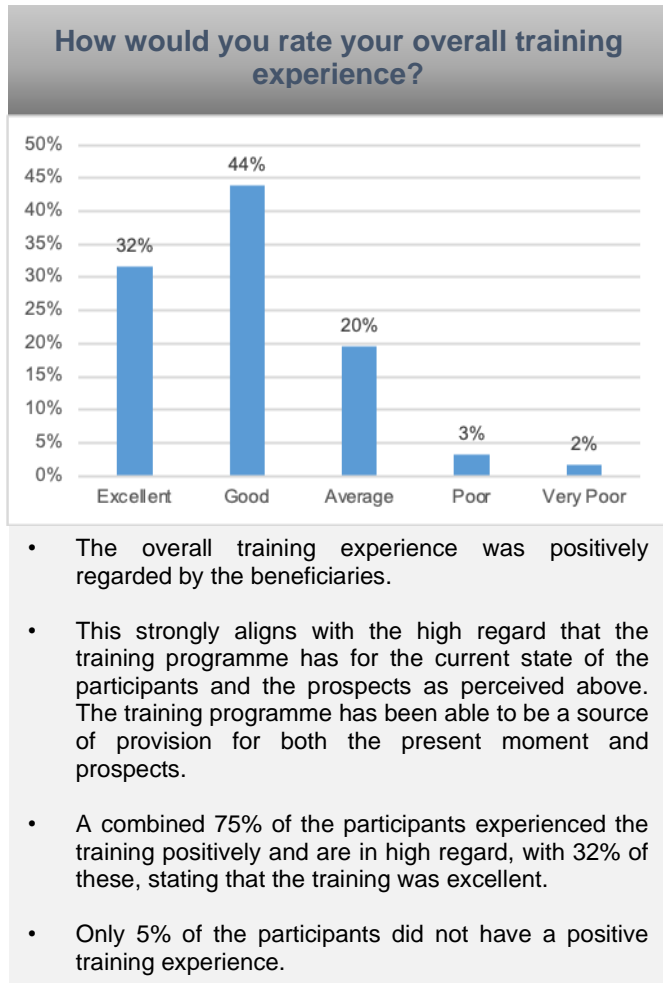


Figure 17: Training: Timelines

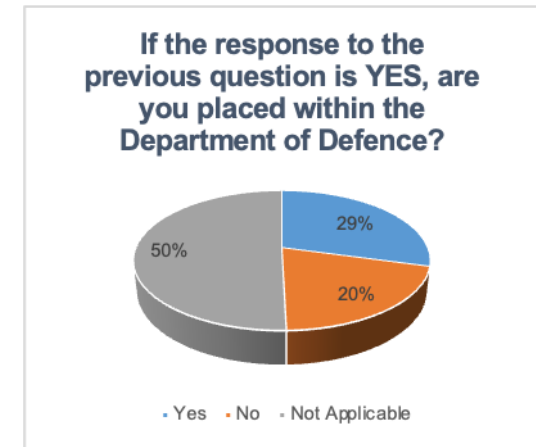
8. Employment: Post-Training



- For 98% of the beneficiaries, the training was aligned with their studies.
- This assertion validates the reliability and successful alignment of the training programme to the studies.
- This relevance is essential as beneficiaries would essentially use the training to substantiate the knowledge and resources provided in the studies.
- Only 2% of the beneficiaries are of the assertion that the training was not related to their studies.



- 59% of the beneficiaries were able to secure a job after their training.
- Although this number is significantly high, it is juxtaposed with 41% of the beneficiaries who were not able to secure employment.
- It is reassuring to note that 80% of the beneficiaries eventually secure employment in one form or the other.
- Some of the beneficiaries might have created their own forms of employment or secured part-time jobs as a way of mitigating unemployment.
- SASSETA needs to establish employment opportunities and career options that address the 41% of the beneficiaries who do not secure employment immediately after their training.



- Only 29% of the beneficiaries were placed within the Department of Defence after their training.
- This figure presents the successful placement of beneficiaries after their training if we consider the results above which show that 20% were still studying and not legible for employment yet.
- 20% of the beneficiaries were NOT placed within the Department of Defence. It is essential that SASSETA continually works with this 20% and tries to create placements for them in the Department of Defence or deduce if this career change is motivated by a lack of jobs or if they opted for the career change.

Figure 18: Employment - Post-Training

9. Employment: Training Employer (DOD)

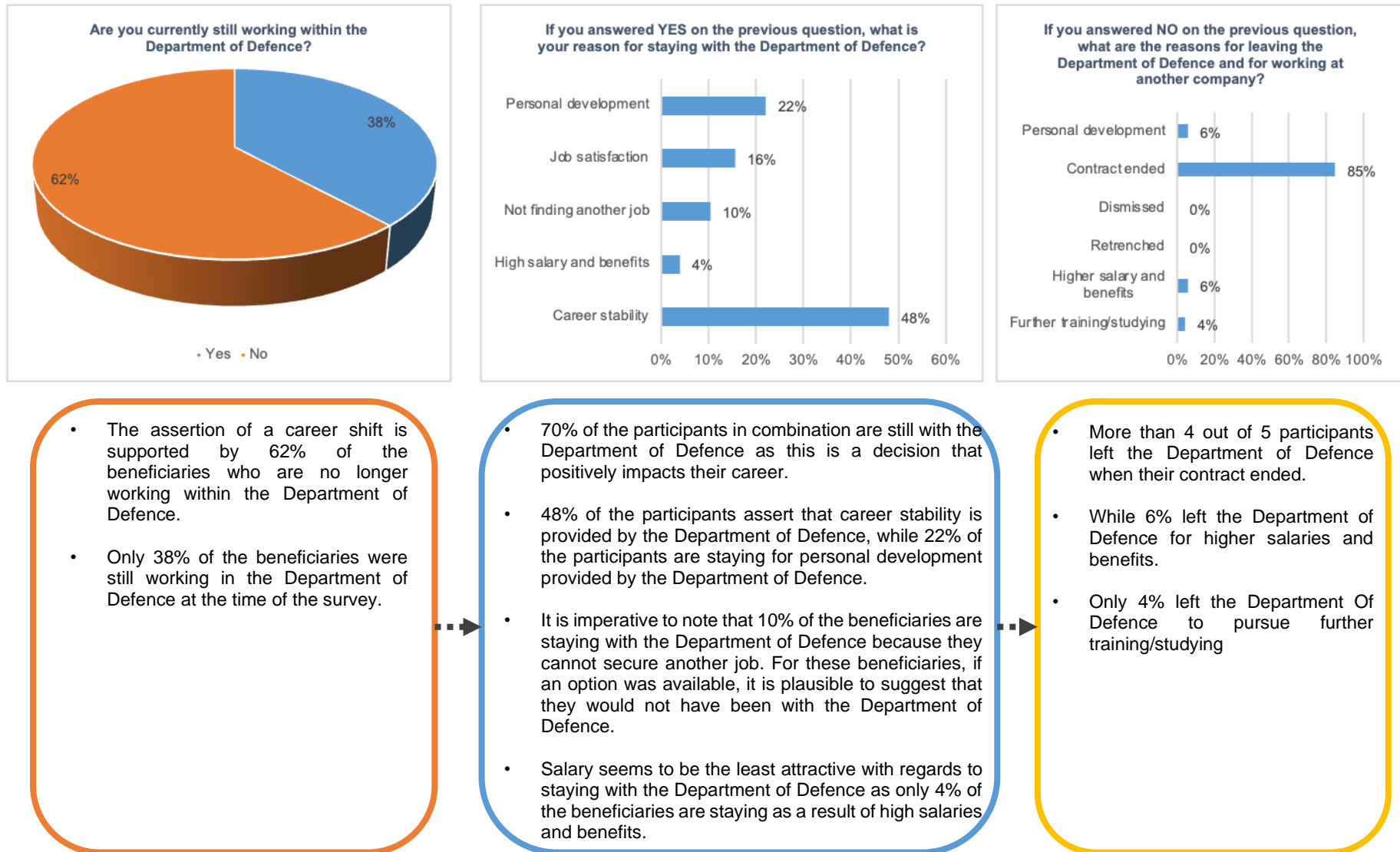


Figure 19: Employment - Training Employer

10. Career Path: Satisfaction Level

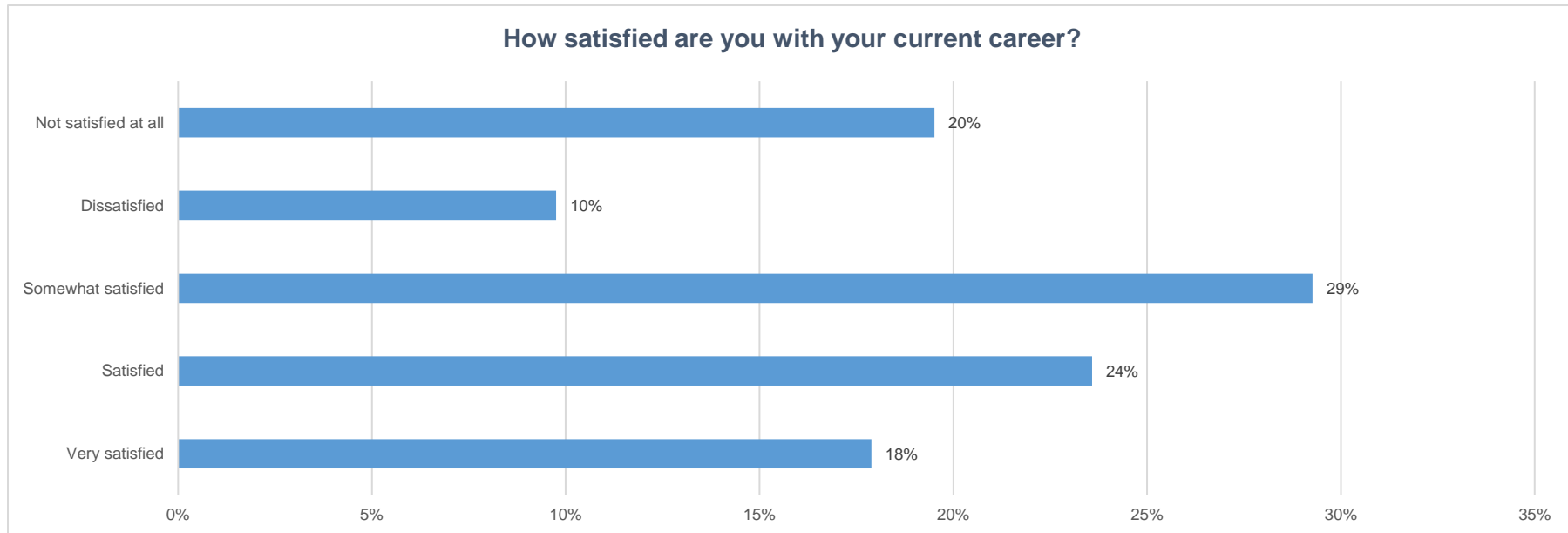


Figure 20: Career Path - Satisfaction Level

- A combined 30% of the beneficiaries are not satisfied with their current career. This number might reflect beneficiaries who received training from the Department of Defence programme but are not employed in a career they can utilize these skills.
- This assertion also aligns with the 35% of the beneficiaries who are employed in part-time and self-employment jobs, where job security is not guaranteed.
- Only 42% of the beneficiaries are satisfied with their current career.

11. Mentorship and Working Tools

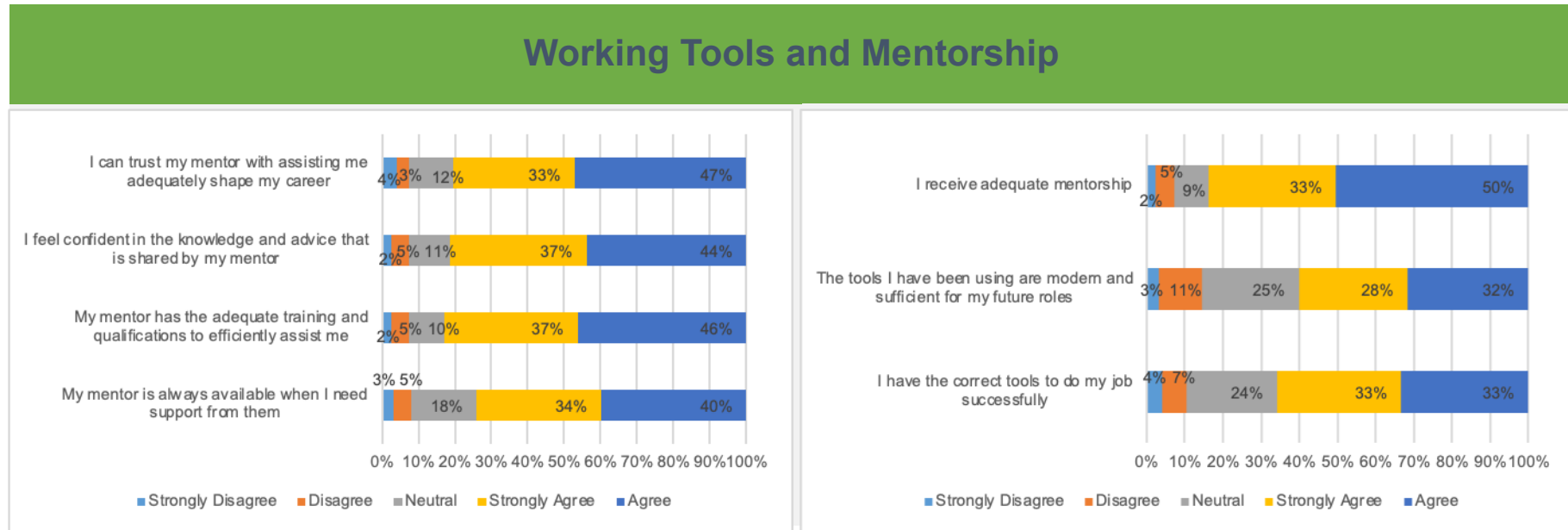


Figure 21: Working Tools & Mentorship

- Beneficiaries are trustful of their mentors and are being assisted efficiently in shaping their careers.
- Beneficiaries are also confident in the knowledge and training of their mentors. 81% of the beneficiaries agree with the adequacy of this knowledge and the efficiency of the assistance they receive through this knowledge.
- 74% of the participants agree that their mentors are always available to support them. It is concerning to see that 18% of the beneficiaries are not certain of this.
- 83% of the beneficiaries agree that they receive mentorship that is adequate for them.

- Only 7% do not agree to receive adequate mentorship, a reflection that the mentorship programme is efficient.
- The uncertainty of beneficiaries brings into question the clarity of the process of utilizing mentors and situations where they need to reach out to mentors. These might need to be further stipulated.
- 60% of the beneficiaries agree that the tools provided are modern and sufficient for their future roles. It is significant to note that 25% of the beneficiaries are not certain about the modernity or sufficiency of the tools they have been provided with.
- This suggests space for more tools to be dispatched and engagement of beneficiaries to ascertain what tools are missing, obsolete and need to be updated.
- The 25% transcends uncertainty with current tools that allow successful job execution. 24% Of the beneficiaries are not certain about these tools.

Department of Defence (DOD) (Employer)

Study Results

1. Demographics

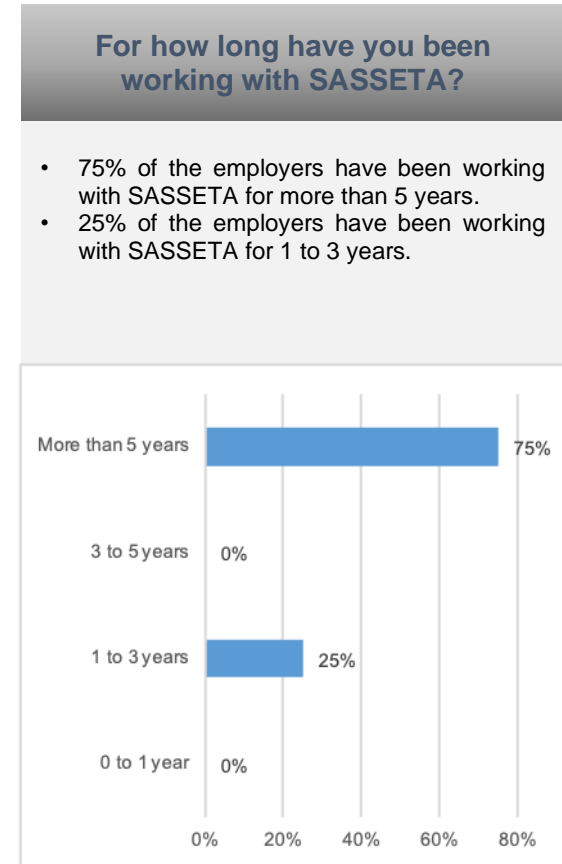
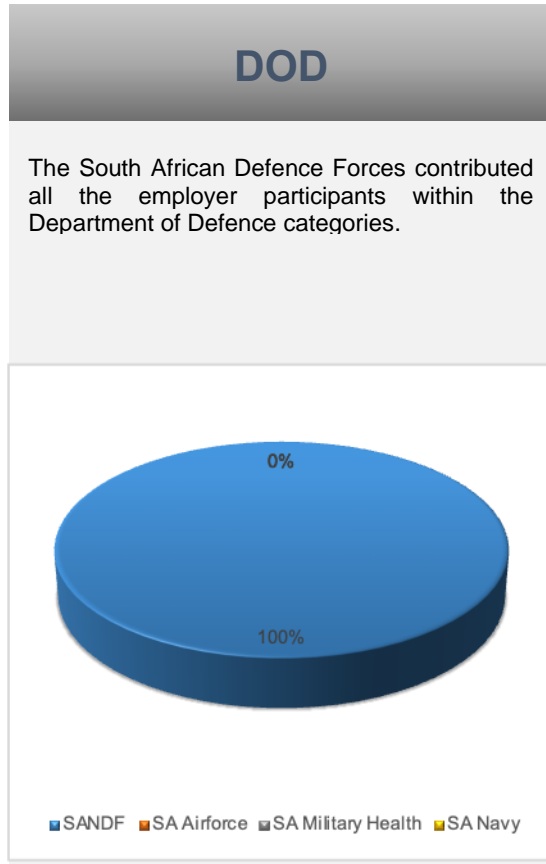
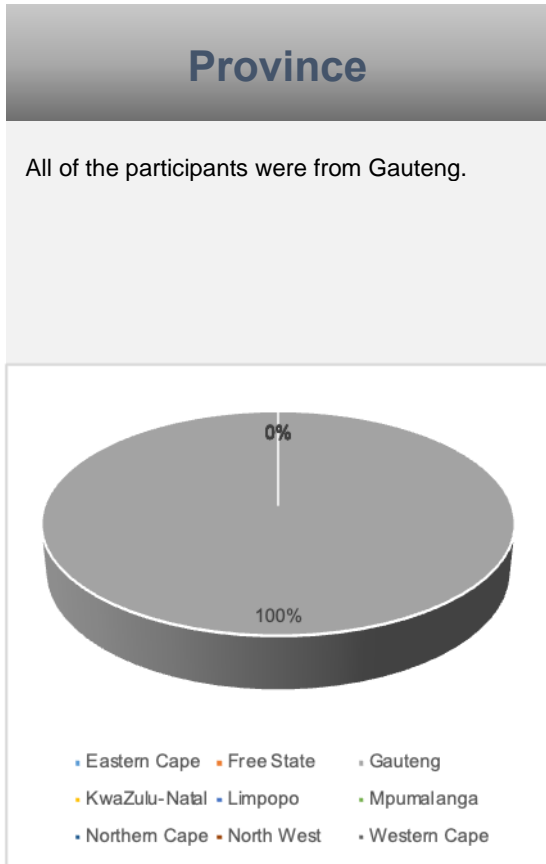
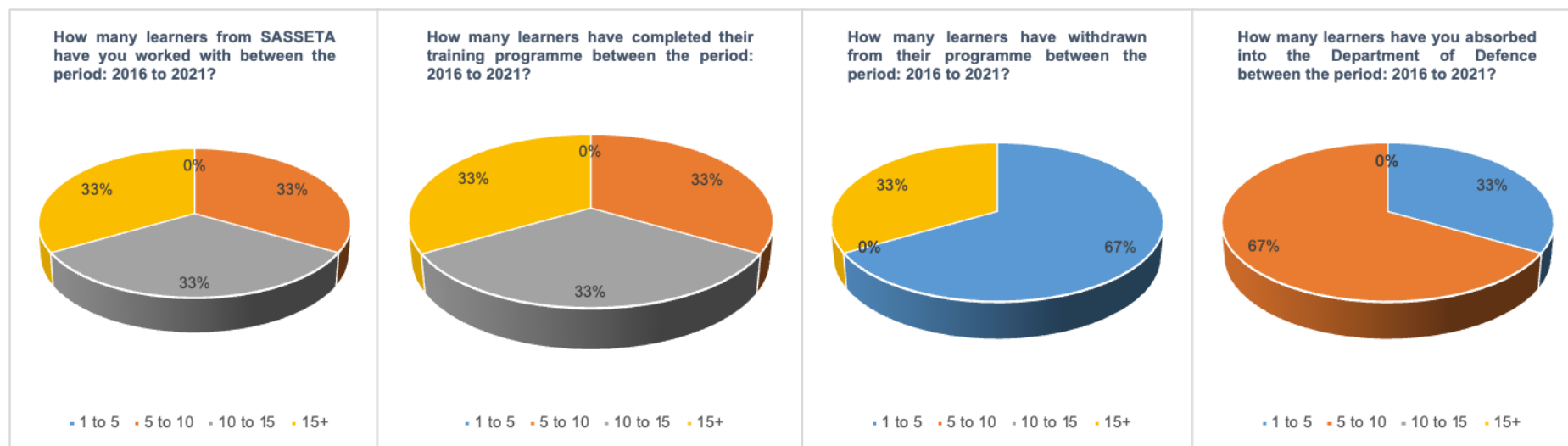


Figure 22: Demographics (Employer)

2. Training Programme: Learner Statistics (2016 to 2021)



- All of the employers have worked with more than 5 learners from SASSETA.
- Respectively, all the employers have worked with 5 to 10, 10 to 15 and 15+ learners from 2016 until 2021.

Employers had 5+ learners each year.

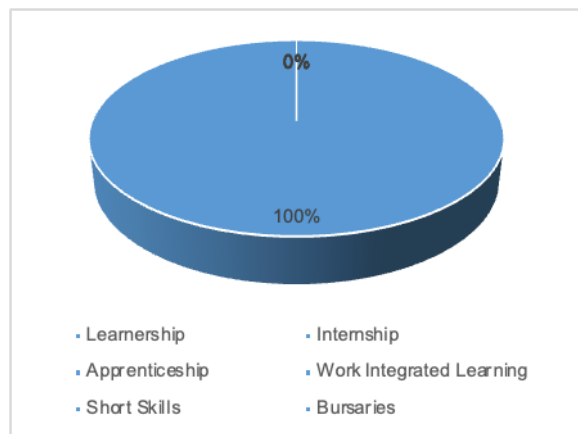
- 67% of the employees had 1 to 5 learners withdrawing from the programme between 2016 and 2021.
- Only 33% of the employers had 15+ learners withdrawing from the programme during the same period.

- The absorption of learners into the department has significantly been low in recent years.
- Between 2016 to 2021, 67% of the employers assert being able to absorb only 5 to 10 learners.
- This insight resonates with the insight of learners whose most contributing reason for not staying with the DOD employment is the contract coming to end and not being absorbed.
- 33% of the employers absorbed about 1 to 5 learners in the same period.
- None of the employers has been able to absorb 10 or more learners between 2016 and 2021.

¹ Figure 23: Learner Statistics

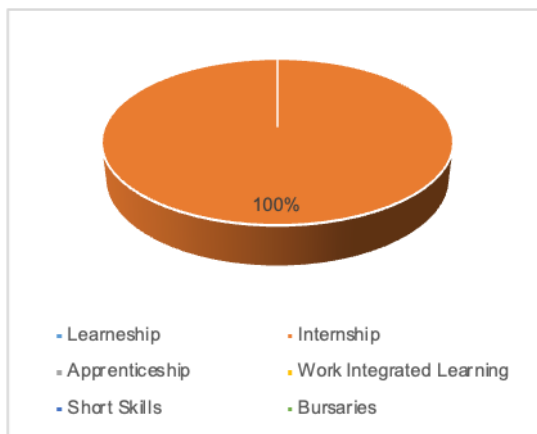
¹ NB: The DOD beneficiaries were all employed at the time of their programme. Some of them were unemployed when the survey was conducted, but at this point, they had completed their training.

3. SASSETA-Funded Learner Programmes



Which programmes do you obtain the most learners from?

- Notably, employers do not have the capacity to absorb learners at least in the years between 2016 to 2021.
- 50% of the employers have NOT absorbed 15+ learners between 2016 and 2021.
- Departments need to consider ways to align absorption and the numbers of learners in training programmes.
- Although not all learners can realistically be absorbed, the ratio of absorption and non-absorption specifically in the South African National Defence Forces is significantly low.



From which Programme(s) did you let most learners go (not absorb)?

- All the employers have lost their learners from internships.
- 100% of the employers selected internships as the programme they did not absorb learners from.
- This is an indication of the low quality of interns that are provided after the programme.
- In addition to this, this insight can also support the notion mentioned by employers that they do not have the capacity to absorb learners.

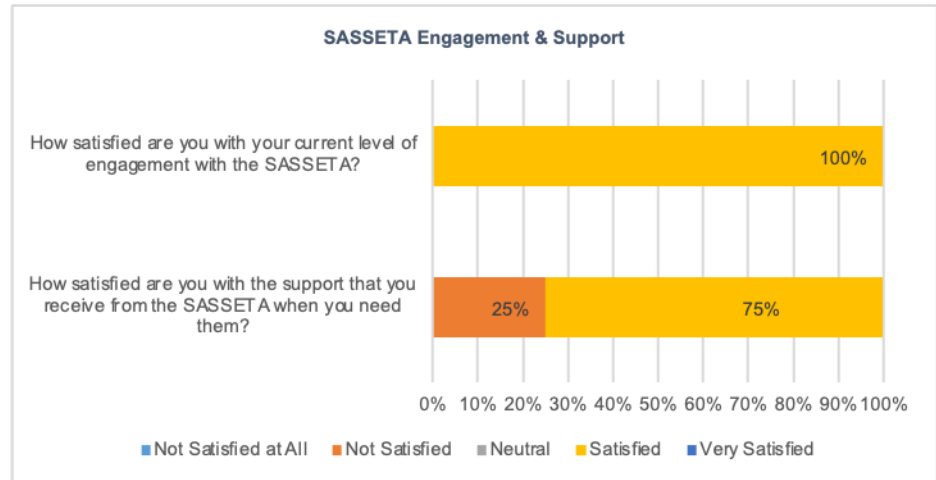
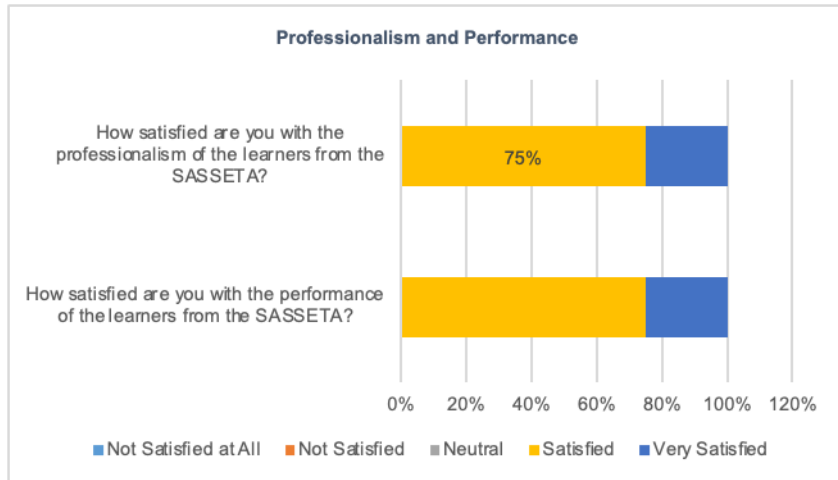
Figure 24: SASSETA-Funded Learner Programmes



How many months do the learners work at the Department of Defence during their programmes?

- All of the learners work with the Department of Defence (specifically SANDF) for more than 9 months during their programme.
- 50% of the SANDF employers state that the learners work for them for 9 to 12 months during the programme.
- 50% of the employers state that learners work for 12 to 18 months.

4. Learner's Professionalism and SASSETA Engagement & Support

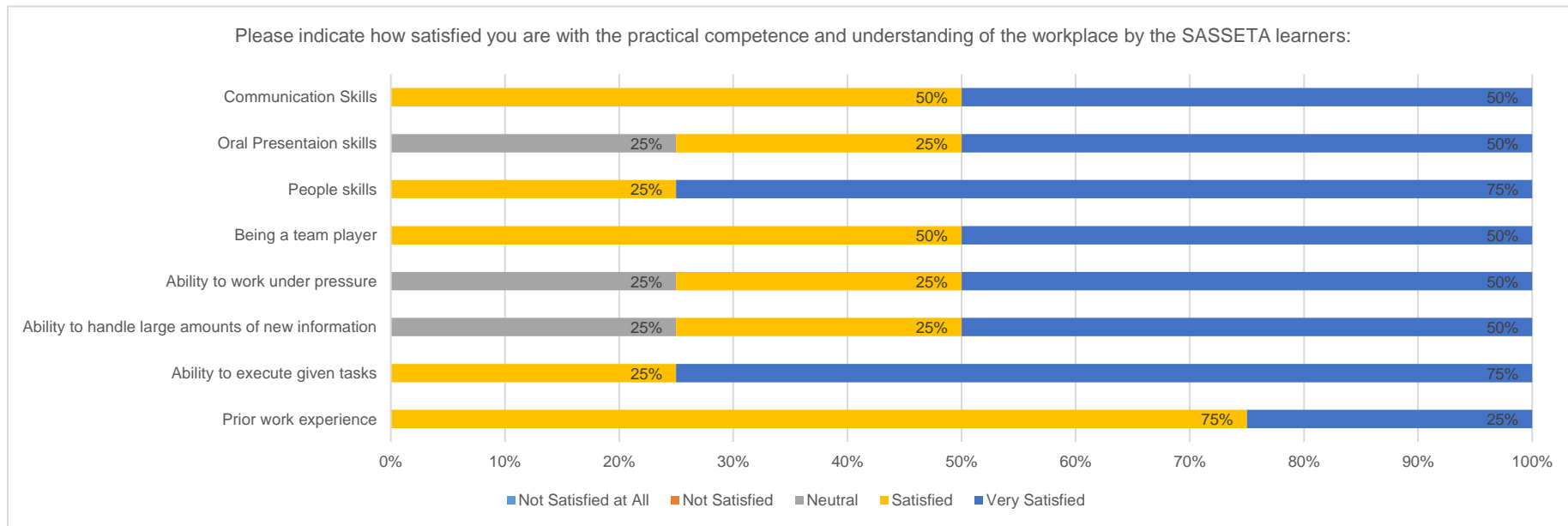


- The support received from SASSETA is adequate and when needed is available. 100% of employers agree with this statement.
- The professionalism of SASSETA and the performance of the learners are also highly recommended by the employers with all employers agreeing that the learners are professional and the performance of learners.

- It is significant to note that support from SASSETA is available when required, but some of the employers are not satisfied with the quality of support that they receive from SASSETA.
- This is a call to action for SASSETA to better the quality of their support resource and potentially standardize it with the use of support agents who are doing a good job.
- The professionalism and engagement with SASSETA is highly regarded by employers, with all agreeing that SASSETA engages well and is professional.

Figure 25: Learner Professionalism and SASSETA Engagement

5. Workplace: Practical Competence and Understanding



- SASSETA learners are highly recommended by employers overall.
- Soft skills which include people skills, communication skills, and being a team player are skills that employees agree that learners have in abundance.
- Learners also possess the ability to execute given tasks according to employers, and prior work experience they possess is evident and comes in handy according to employers.
- Handling large amounts of information, oral presentation skills, and the ability to work under pressure seems to be learner aspects that require attention in perfecting them. Although most employers agree that learners have these skills, some employers cannot state this with great certainty which can be a reflection of an area that requires attention.

Figure 26: Practical Competence and Understanding

CHAPTER 5

Recommendations & Conclusion

1. Introduction

This chapter aims to synthesise the data analysed into practical and realistically applicable next steps for SASSETA. By doing this, the section also aims to allow SASSETA to develop measurable hypotheses which assist in carving the way forward in mitigating and future attempts at addressing any challenges included in the objectives of the study.

This section is divided into the recommendations, which are the interventions and suggestions path going forward for SASSETA through applying these results, and the conclusion. The conclusion sums up the research project and tries to present all the information that contributed to it.

2. Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the responses of the Artisan and Internship programmes and the Department of Defence participants in the survey. The recommendations provide suggested resources for SASSETA to take actionable steps toward improving the scores:

2.1. General

- I. Knowledge acquisition and adequate research insight are still hindered by the Department of Defence's research penetration. SASSETA needs to assert that the research process is a continual process and that gatekeepers are accessible to participants and research resources. This research and other subsequent research in addition to SASSETA could benefit immensely from this.
- II. Although training programmes are effective for beneficiaries (based on qualitative responses they provided, applicability of programmes and employability), it remains imperative that SASSETA addresses placement gaps that make these training futile. Placement remains a problem due to

contracts ending and employers not having the capacity to absorb beneficiaries. SASSETA needs to ascertain placement options for the skills that the beneficiaries are trained for.

- III. Consistent engagement with DOD departments is strongly recommended. The engagements must include a clear understanding of the resource needs, applicability of the current trainings and relevant applicability to the DOD on an annual basis. A constant communication and adaptability gap is evident between SASSETA and the DOD, and this gap presents a challenge in applying skills matching and effectively providing for skills capacity and skills relevance.²

There is an evident of misalignment between SASSETA and the DOD in terms of talents requirements and what the DOD is currently providing. And this kind of engagement might go an extra mile in terms of closing this gap.

- IV. A reassessment of the training modules has to be practised by SASSETA. In this regard, SASSETA needs to effectively respond to the needs of the DOD in their training. Lack of correlation between skills that include leadership and management with their applicability (lack thereof) signifies a skill that is not utilized by the learners and also not required by employers at the level they work with learners to absorb them.
- V. SASSETA needs to realign their training programmes to respond to the training needs required by students and the DOD. According to interns, they do not utilise some of the training components when employed. The DOD

² SASSETA is recommended to establish and maintain clear communication with the DOD departments. The communication must include:

- Attaining clear understanding of the talent requirements for the DOD.
- If and how the current trainings are applicable to the DOD, if they are required and how (if) these change with time

responses also highlight gaps and training needs that are not met by interns. SASSETA needs to align these.

- VI. SASSETA needs to standardize the mentor's knowledge and practices. It seems that the mentors are available at request, but for some of the beneficiaries, the knowledge of the mentors is not evenly distributed. This brings into disrepute the overall impression of mentors and short-changes the work being done by the succeeding mentors.
- VII. SASSETA needs to be in a position to effectively provide resources to beneficiaries who are unemployed within the DOD. There is an evident lack of initiative to engage with and also assist beneficiaries who are unemployed within the DOD. It is imperative to note that there are a lot of learners who are already trained for the skills that training programmes are still training for, but are not absorbed. The lack of addressing this brings into question the applicability and relevancy of the training courses provided in the training programme.
- VIII. SASSETA should extend funding programmes aimed at Interns and Artisans. The rate of participants who did not complete their training is significantly high for both groups.
 - As the first step to efficiently execute the above recommendation, SASSETA needs to engage the current cohort of beneficiaries who did not complete their training in a bid to attain clarity on the challenges they faced, further reasons for not completing, and how SASSETA could have intervened before they dropped out.
- IX. SASSETA needs to provide accessible and always-on contact channels with Artisans and Interns. These channels would serve the sole purpose of being helplines when training is not going according to plan. Having these channels in place assists the DOD and SASSETA to attain visibility over

problems that potentially lead to training incompleteness and provide means to mitigate these.³

- X. 2021 had a significantly large cohort that started their training for both Artisans and Interns. Before this, there are 2 years of significant drops in participants who started their training. Support for this cohort from SASSETA is imperative. SASSETA needs to put in place mentoring structures that are available to this cohort.

- XI. SASSETA needs to specify the qualifications required for their internship training. The participants had a range of qualifications that suggest a misalignment in the training if participants are receiving the same training. SASSETA can benefit from specifying the required qualifications for this match to increase. This mismatch might be the contributory rate to drop-off for the interns.

2.2. Internship

- I. Most of the interns seemed to have completed their training, and 68% of interns completed their internships as validated by the data collected in the survey.
 - It remains a concern that 31% of the interns either did not complete or withdrew from the training. According to the reasons provided for drop-off by participants, it is recommended that SASSETA considers:

- II. **Post-intern training courses and placement resources.** This is the support resource required by most participants and the one they are not receiving. Some of the interns see no career value in the training, as they

³ DOD chooses its own learning programmes and then Sasseta funds it. Sasseta does not develop learning programmes content; it is not our role.

remain in poverty with little or no opportunities after the training. This seems to be a trend that keeps interns out of further similar training or drops them from current ones.

- III. Placements in positions of relevant qualifications need to be scoped and changed by SASSETA. Currently, it seems that placements do not follow the training areas, expertise and desired career direction of the interns. This has been stated to be a reason for drop-off but also evidently devaluates the training or defeats the purpose of the training being career focused.

We recommend that SASSETA sets the tone of the intern's expectation clearly from the beginning - Interns who participated in the survey were from various fields of study and represented different fields of expertise. In such an environment, the training serves to be multi-directional rather than a linear process. This not only increases the vagueness of the training but also confuses interns who want to further their career direction. Focusing on identified careers and groups might be essential in SASSETA keeping interns and aligning the training with their goals.

- IV. We also recommend that SASSETA focuses on engaging and reorienting internship graduates to existing and potentially established career opportunities with the DOD or even external to the DOD. The current purpose of the internship is not clear and seems to be serving to perpetuate the cycle of poverty for the interns as they go back to their original economic and employment position after the internship.

SASSETA needs to proactively engage these interns, do an assessment of their employability according to their training, and aid them in the enhancement of their careers. In the absence of this, the validity and value of the training are also further devalued as evidenced by the inability of this group to be placed or assisted.

- V. This resonates closely with some interns who mentioned that they dropped out as a result of evidence of the essential impact of the training. The tangibility of the training remains in question since those who are employed are mostly not in the DOD, and the rest are not employed at all.

- VI. Financial assistance and funding must also be reassessed to increase the impact of the training. This is a reality that interns cannot distance themselves from and needs to address the current gap between being able to focus on the training or dropping out. With a 31% dropout rate, it remains a concern that even the interns who completed their training still register insufficient stipends as a red flag. For those who dropped out, this could have been key in addressing this as they would not require any other source of income to sustain their livelihoods.
 - The responses of interns and artisans seem to point out that interns did not receive SNT allowances to travel. During the training, this becomes a genuine blocker of the impact of the training and mediation in this regard is required. ⁴

- VII. In the absence of the above, it seems that the impact of SASSETA training on the DOD is hard to measure and minimal. SASSETA might be creating a pipeline of possible candidates for the DOD, and not engaging them on a level that maximizes the impact they can have on the DOD.

According to SASSETA, stipend delays have been flagged in cases where beneficiaries have not submitted their documentation. In such cases, stipends are delayed, but paid out as soon as communication is made with beneficiaries and documentation is submitted.

2.3. Artisan

- I. The training for Artisans could make a better impact if the availability of tools is addressed.
- II. It is evident from the participants that tools are not available, and in cases where they must be available, delays and bureaucracy increase the delays of toolboxes, required standardized tools, and Personal Protective Equipment - PPE (during COVID-times). This impact is largely felt by architects and the bureaucracy and the lack of updating of tools needs redressing if the impact of the training on the DOD is to be increased.
- III. For unspecified reasons, it seems that training is not ending at the designated or desired time. The training for artisans is taking longer than planned at times and this has been a pain point addressed by participants. In addressing this sentiment, we recommend SASSETA actively engage trainees and gather data on why they are training longer, and how much longer they take, and implement mechanisms in the training that curb these delays.
- IV. Most of the artisans are still busy with on-the-job training and actual training. Placeability in this regard remains to be effectively measured. This gap presents a planning and execution opportunity for SASSETA to have placement targets and actively engage the DOD to place the current cohort upon completion of their training. This would be a win for both SASSETA and the DOD, but an impactful reality for the trainees.
- V. Career planning and toolboxes are aspects that dominate the support requirements for Artisans, in addition to the above, we further recommend that SASSETA runs career workshops aimed at creating visible realities for career potentials for the trainees. Apart from efficiently equipping the decisions of the trainees.

3. Conclusion

The aim of the research was to find out the effectiveness of current training programmes aimed at the Department of Defence. In meeting the requirements, the survey was distributed to both SASSETA-funded learners and the Department of Defence as a means of gathering data. In this research project, 123 SASSETA-funded learners and 4 members of the Department of Defence participated, indicating that more efficient engagement with the Department of Defence is necessary.

Specific to this research, the data gathered from the Department of Defence was only a representation of insight from the South African National Defence Forces. Although this relates to access, this issue is also crucial to representing engagement (or effectiveness) between SASSETA and the Department of Defence.

With the aid of existing literature across the current categories of the Department of Defence locally and globally, this research also engaged with literature from various groups in gaining an understanding of the context and seeing how this aligns (or not) with the South African context. There is a lack of specific research data on the Department of Defence

There are understandable levels of gatekeeping that are an obstacle to research inquiry that need to be mitigated for the benefit of companies like SASSETA who have formal relationships with the Department of Defence. Part of this intervention entails SASSETA using their access to the Department of Defence to be able to provide extra facilitation and access to researchers attempting to access participants from the Department of Defence.

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The End!