

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACT (97 OF 1998):
CASE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR**

by

CANUEL NHLAPO

submitted in accordance with the requirements for
the degree of

MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROF CORLIA ALERS

February 2026

DECLARATION

I, **Canuel Nhlapo**, student number 48156884, hereby declare that **Implementation of the Skills Development Act (97 of 1998): Case of the Department of Employment and Labour**, which I submit in accordance with requirements for the degree of Master of Public Administration (Coursework) at the University of South Africa, is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I declare that this work has not been submitted before for any other degree at any other institution.



SIGNATURE

7 February 2026

DATE

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the following people in my life who, in many ways, have shaped the trajectory of my existence:

- My mother, Elizabeth Nhlapo, who means everything to me.
- My brother, Isaac Nhlapo, who has always been there for me and my family.

Last but not least, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my loving family, my wife, Itumeleng Nhlapo, and our two children, Siphesihle Nhlapo and Luthando Nhlapo, for their understanding and patience during my frequent absences and long hours of academic commitment, even when I was physically present at home. Thank you for your unwavering support; I love you deeply.

I would like my children to know and always remember that nothing is impossible when you commit your heart and mind to a goal. I pray to God that they may harness the strength and determination to achieve even more than their father.

Proverbs 16:1: *“The preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD”* (Holy Bible, 2017).

Habakkuk 2:3: *“For a vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry”* (Holy Bible, 2017).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the following organisations and individuals for their contributions to this research project, as their efforts made the completion of this research report possible:

- My supervisor, Prof C Alers, who believed in my capability and my ability to successfully complete this study. Thank you for your unwavering encouragement and dedication during those difficult moments when my academic journey seemed impossible to comprehend. You became my eyes when I could not see clearly and my anchor during the turbulence of this academic expedition. I am deeply grateful for your cutting-edge academic excellence and guidance. God bless you and your family.
- The Department of Employment and Labour research team for their support in conducting interviews with officials from the Directorate: Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services.
- The Executive of the Department of Employment and Labour for granting approval to conduct this research.
- The research team for their assistance with the coordination of data collection, as well as data capturing and cleaning.
- The officials from the Directorate: Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services for their valuable participation in this study.
- I remain profoundly indebted to the University of South Africa for affording me the opportunity to study and to further my education.

ABSTRACT

This study examined the effects of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 on the transformation of training and development practices within the Department of Employment and Labour. Prior to 1994, education and training in South Africa were shaped by the policy of separate development, which systematically excluded the majority of Black South Africans from skills development opportunities. Within the context of a contemporary constitutional democracy and a developing economy, investment in human resource training and development is regarded as essential for improving institutional effectiveness and achieving strategic and operational advantage. To investigate training and development practices within the Department of Employment and Labour, this study explored the main research question 'To what extent does the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 influence the design, implementation and effectiveness of learning and development programmes within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the Department of Employment and Labour?'

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach and utilised official document analysis, and a structured questionnaire and personal interviews for data collection. The findings revealed significant gaps between the objectives of the Skills Development Act of 1998 and its implementation within the Department. While most respondents acknowledged the existence and partial implementation of the Act, many indicated that officials had not attended relevant training over the previous five years. Disparities were evident across salary levels, with management having greater access to training opportunities than lower-ranking officials. Although performance agreements and personal development plans played an important role in guiding training and development, awareness of the linkage between departmental human resource policies and the Skills Development Act remained limited. The study further found that training and development opportunities were not offered equitably among officials, highlighting the need for improved policy implementation, communication, and monitoring within the Department of Employment and Labour.

KEY CONCEPTS

Skills Development Act 97 of 1998

Training and Development

Human Resource Development

Public Sector Transformation

Department of Employment and Labour

Policy Implementation

Performance Management and Personal Development Plans

Capacity Building

Post-1994 Democratic Reforms

TABLE OF CONTENTS

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACT (97 OF 1998): CASE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR

DECLARATION.....	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
KEY CONCEPTS	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xv
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS.....	xvi
 CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	 1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION.....	2
1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT	5
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	7
1.5 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES	8
1.6 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION.....	8
1.6.1 Skills development.....	9
1.6.2 Skills Development Act 97 of 1998	9
1.6.3 Public human resource management	10
1.6.4 Policy implementation	11
1.6.5 Transformation of the public service	12
1.6.6 Workplace learning and development programmes.....	13
1.6.7 Institutional and organisational context	13

1.6.8	Career development and promotion.....	14
1.7	RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	14
1.8	SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	15
1.9	RESEARCH SCOPE AND DELIMITATION TO THE STUDY	16
1.9.1	Limitations of the organisational scope	17
1.9.2	Mitigation of limitations.....	17
1.10	OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS.....	18
1.11	CHAPTER SUMMARY	20
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT.....		22
2.1	INTRODUCTION	22
2.2	WHAT IS A LITERATURE REVIEW?.....	23
2.3	PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION CONTEXT OF THE STUDY.....	24
2.4	THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES UNDERPINNING TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	25
2.4.1	Human Capital Theory	26
2.4.2	Organisational Learning Theory.....	29
2.4.3	Adult Learning Theory (Andragogy).....	32
2.5	HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN POST- APARTHEID PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	34
2.6	TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT EXPLAINED	36
2.6.1	Strengthening skills development and legislative framework in Public Administration	39
2.6.2	Why do organisations offer training and development?	40
2.7	PUBLIC INSTITUTION AS A LEARNING PLACE	41
2.7.1	Work environment constraints.....	44
2.7.2	Factors affecting training and development	45
2.7.2.1	Population profile.....	45
2.7.2.2	Supply and demand for labour	46
2.7.2.3	Technological acceleration and change	49

2.8	DETERMINING TRAINING NEEDS	50
2.8.1	Training needs assessment	51
2.8.2	Types of needs assessments.....	54
2.9	MEETING TRAINING NEEDS.....	56
2.10	DETERMINING TRAINING POLICY	61
2.11	CHAPTER SUMMARY	62
 CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY		63
3.1	INTRODUCTION	63
3.2	RESEARCH DESIGN	63
3.2.1	Mixed methods research design	64
3.3	RESEARCH APPROACH	65
3.3.1	Exploratory research	65
3.3.2	Descriptive research	66
3.3.3	Explanatory research	67
3.4	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	67
3.4.1	Literature review	68
3.4.2	Document analysis.....	69
3.4.2.1	Official documents.....	69
3.4.2.2	Mass media documents	70
3.4.3	Case study method	70
3.4.4	Empirical research	70
3.5	POPULATION AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES	71
3.5.1	Questionnaire respondents.....	71
3.5.2	Interview participants	72
3.5.3	Sampling techniques.....	73
3.5.3.1	Probability sampling	73
3.5.3.2	Non-probability (purposive) sampling	73
3.5.3.3	Inclusion criteria	74

3.6	DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENTS	74
3.6.1	Questionnaire.....	74
3.6.1.1	Grouped questionnaire statements aligned to research objectives ...	75
3.6.2	Personal interviews	77
3.6.2	Semi-structured interview questions aligned to research objectives .	78
3.7	DATA ANALYSIS PROCESSES	79
3.8	RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS.....	81
3.8.1	Validity	81
3.8.2	Reliability.....	82
3.8.3	Trustworthiness of qualitative data.....	82
3.9	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	83
3.9.1	Institutional permission and ethical clearance.....	83
3.9.2	Informed consent	83
3.9.3	Confidentiality, privacy and voluntary participation	84
3.10	CHAPTER SUMMARY	84
	CHAPTER 4: LEGISLATIVE AND CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA	86
4.1	INTRODUCTION	86
4.2	AIM AND SCOPE OF THE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACT 97 OF 1998	86
4.2.1	Constitutional and Policy Context of Skills Development in South Africa...	87
4.2.2	Aim and scope of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998	88
4.2.3	Sector Education and Training Authorities	90
4.3	NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK ACT 67 OF 2008	92
4.3.1	Quality Councils	95
4.4	WORKPLACE SKILLS PLANS.....	95
4.5	CHAPTER SUMMARY	97

CHAPTER 5: CASE STUDY: DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR	98
5.1 INTRODUCTION	98
5.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION	98
5.3 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION OF DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR IN SOUTH AFRICA ...	100
5.4 LEGISLATIVE MANDATE OF DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR.....	101
5.4.1 Organisational structure of the Department of Employment and Labour .	104
5.5 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION ANALYSIS OF CORE PROGRAMME FUNCTIONS OF DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR	105
5.6 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AT THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR.....	107
5.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY	116
 CHAPTER 6: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION.....	118
6.1 INTRODUCTION	118
6.2 RECAP OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS	119
6.3 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	120
6.3.1 Questionnaire respondents	120
6.3.2 Interview participants	121
6.4 ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATIONS AND FINDINGS OF QUANTIFIABLE DATA: QUESTIONNAIRE	122
6.4.1 Contextualisation of skills development	122
6.4.2 Legislative and policy framework	124
6.4.3 Implementation of learning and development programmes	128
6.4.4 Institutional and organisational context	132
6.4.5 Improvement and equity outcomes	133
6.5 ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATIONS AND FINDINGS OF QUALITATIVE DATA: INTERVIEWS	135
6.5.1 Contextualisation of skills development	137

6.5.2	Legislative and policy framework	139
6.5.3	Implementation of learning and development programmes	140
6.5.4	Institutional and organisational context	141
6.5.5	Equity, redress and improvement	142
6.6	ALIGNMENT BETWEEN QUESTIONNAIRE STATEMENTS AND COMPLEMENTARY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	143
6.7	SMMARY OF FINDINGS.....	145
6.7.1	Comprehensive list of quantitative findings.....	146
6.7.2	Comprehensive list of qualitative findings	147
6.7.3	Comprehensive list of findings: Skills development at the Department of Employment and Labour	149
6.8	CHAPTER SUMMARY	151
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		152
7.1	INTRODUCTION	152
7.2	CONCLUSIONS	153
7.2.1	Research Objective 1: Contextualise the skills development challenge within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate.....	153
7.2.2	Research Objective 2: Analyse theories and literature on training and development in Public Administration relevant to workforce skills enhancement	155
7.2.3	Research Objective 3: Examine the legislative and policy framework governing the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 in South Africa	155
7.2.4	Research Objective 4: Assess the implementation of learning and development programmes aligned with the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998	157
7.2.5	Research Objective 5: Analyse the institutional and organisational context as it relates to skills development implementation	159
7.2.6	Research Objective 6: Propose recommendations for improving the effective implementation of the Skills Development Act.....	160

7.3	APPLICATION OF HUMAN CAPITAL THEORY TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AT DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR	161
7.4	RECOMMENDATIONS	163
7.4.1	Research Objective 1: Contextualise the skills development challenge within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate.....	163
7.4.2	Research Objective 2: Analyse theories and literature on training and development in Public Administration	163
7.4.3	Research Objective 3: Examine the legislative and policy framework governing the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998.	164
7.4.4	Research Objective 4: Assess the implementation of learning and development programmes aligned with the Skills Development Act	164
7.4.5	Research Objective 5: Analyse the institutional and organisational context as it relates to skills development implementation	166
7.4.6	Research Objective 6: Propose recommendations for improving the effective implementation of the Skills Development Act.....	166
7.5	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY.....	167
LIST OF REFERENCES		168
ANNEXURES.....		178
Annexure A: Unisa Ethics Clearance Certificate		178
Annexure B: Gatekeeper permission letter from the National Department of Employment and Labour		180
Annexure C: Participant Information Sheet		181
Annexure D: Informed Consent Letter.....		184
Annexure E: Questionnaire		185
Annexure F: Interview Schedule		188

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Levels of Training Needs Assessment	53
Table 2.2: Types of training delivery methods in the South African public sector.....	59
Table 3.1: Interviews – Designation in site population and sample sizes	72
Table 4.1: National Qualifications Framework of South Africa	94
Table 5.1: Promotions by salary band for the period 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024	109
Table 5.2: Promotions for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	110
Table 5.3: Skills development for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.....	111
Table 5.4: Training needs identified for the period 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024	113
Table 5.5: Training provided for the period 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.....	114

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Integration of Human Capital Theory, Constitutional Principles and the Skills Development Act in Public Administration	28
Figure 2.2: Organisational Learning Theory and the Skills Development Act in South African Public Administration.....	31
Figure 2.3: Adult Learning Theory (Andragogy) and Skills Development in South African Public Administration.....	34
Figure 2.4: Conceptual framework for the analysis of skills supply, skills demand and skills imbalances	48
Figure 3.1: Overview of data analysis process.....	81
Figure 6.1: Contextualisation of skills development – Responses to Statement 1 .	123
Figure 6.2: Contextualisation of skills development – Responses to Statement 2 .	124
Figure 6.3: Legislative and policy framework – Responses to Statement 3	125
Figure 6.4: Legislative and policy framework – Responses to Statement 4	126
Figure 6.5: Legislative and policy framework – Responses to Statement 5	127
Figure 6.6: Implementation of learning and development programmes – Responses to Statement 6	129
Figure 6.7: Implementation of learning and development programmes – Responses to Statement 7	130
Figure 6.8: Implementation of learning and development programmes – Responses to Statement 8	131
Figure 6.9: Institutional and organisational context – Responses to Statement 9 ..	133
Figure 6.10: Improvement and equity outcomes – Responses to Statement 10	134
Figure 7.1: Effective learning programme implementation at Department of Employment and Labour	165

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	MEANING / DEFINITION
ATR	Annual Training Reports
CHE	Council on Higher Education
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFETQSF	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework
HEQSF	Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework
HR	Human Resource
HRM	Human Resource Management
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
DEL	National Department of Employment and Labour
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
LRA	Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NDP	National Development Plan 2030
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
NSF	National Skills Fund
NQF	National Qualifications Framework

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	MEANING / DEFINITION
OJT	On-the-Job Training
OQSF	Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework
PHRM	Public human resource management
POPIA	Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013
PSETA	Public Service Education and Training Authority
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SDA	Skills Development Act 97 of 1998
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TNA	Training Needs Assessment
UNISA	University of South Africa
WSP	Workplace Skills Plan
WPTPS	White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service Of 1995

CHAPTER 1:

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Prior to the advent of democratic governance, South Africa was subjected to the Apartheid system, which institutionalised racial discrimination and systematically deprived black Africans of equitable access to education, learning and skills development opportunities. Within the public service in particular, the Apartheid regime privileged white employees in recruitment, training, and promotion, while deliberately marginalising other racial groups. The absence of inclusive education and development policies before the 1994 democratic elections resulted in mounting pressure on the newly elected government to transform the education and training system and to reform public-sector skills development programmes (DEL Strategic Plan, 2025:9; SAQA, 2023).

One of the earliest responses to these demands was the adoption of the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service in 1995. This policy framework sought to dismantle discriminatory laws and practices inherited from the Apartheid era and to establish a foundation for improving the quality of life of all South Africans across social and economic spheres, including education, training and learning within the public service. In support of these transformation objectives, the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 (hereafter referred to as SDA) was promulgated to promote workplace learning, improve the quality of skills development, and enhance the employability and career progression of employees in both the public and private sectors (SDA, 1998:Chapter 1(2); WPTPS, 1995:Chapter 2).

Within government departments, including the National Department of Employment and Labour, the effective implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 is essential to ensuring that public officials acquire relevant and sustainable skills. Against the historical backdrop of racially biased education and training policies, post-Apartheid public service reform has emphasised the advancement of historically disadvantaged groups into senior and managerial positions, while simultaneously ensuring that skills development opportunities remain accessible to all employees.

Accordingly, the democratic state initiated wide-ranging reforms aimed at redressing the inequalities entrenched by Apartheid's racialised labour market. These reforms were also shaped by the imperative to integrate South Africa into a global capitalist economy, thereby placing increased pressure on government to develop policies capable of addressing historical imbalances while supporting economic competitiveness (DPSA, 2024; SAQA, 2023).

Furthermore, Chapter 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 underscores that public administration must be underpinned by effective, efficient, and development-oriented human resource management and career-development practices across all spheres of government, organs of state, and public entities, with the objective of maximising human potential. In this regard, skills development and career progression are positioned as central instruments for achieving a capable and developmental public service (Constitution, 1996:Chapter 10).

The focus of this study is public human resource management within the National Department of Employment and Labour. More specifically, the study critically analyses the extent to which transformation in public servants' learning and development, aligned with the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, has progressed since the end of the Apartheid era. The empirical focus is on the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the Department, situated in the Gauteng Province.

This chapter outlines the background and motivation for the study, the problem statement, research objectives, and conceptual clarification. It further presents the research design and methodology, ethical considerations, the scope and delimitation of the study, and an overview of the chapter structure.

1.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Globally, skills development and continuous learning have become central components of public-sector reform and socio-economic development. International organisations such as the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization emphasise that investment in workforce skills is essential for improving productivity, employability, institutional performance, and inclusive economic growth (ILO, 2022; UNESCO, 2021). In the

contemporary knowledge economy, governments are increasingly expected to build capable, ethical, and developmental public administrations through continuous professional development and workplace learning. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development further argues that public institutions worldwide face growing pressure to modernise administrative systems, improve service delivery, and strengthen employee competencies to respond effectively to complex governance challenges (OECD, 2021).

Within developing countries, particularly in Africa, the challenge of skills shortages and inadequate public-sector capacity continues to undermine service delivery and economic transformation. Many governments experience difficulties in aligning employee training with occupational demands, technological advancement, and labour market needs. The African Union's Agenda 2063 identifies human capital development, technical skills enhancement, and lifelong learning as critical pillars for sustainable development and improved governance across the continent (African Union, 2015). Consequently, countries are increasingly adopting workplace learning strategies, occupational training frameworks, and skills development policies aimed at strengthening state capacity and addressing socio-economic inequalities.

In the South African context, skills development remains a national priority because of the historical legacy of Apartheid, which systematically excluded the majority of the population from quality education, occupational advancement, and economic participation. Since the advent of democracy in 1994, the South African government has introduced various legislative and policy measures to address these inequalities and promote workforce development within both the public and private sectors. The significance of this study is therefore grounded in Section 195(1)(h) of Chapter 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, which stipulates that good human resource management and career-development practices must be cultivated to maximise human potential in public administration. Furthermore, Chapter 2 of the Constitution, which contains the Bill of Rights, recognises the right to education and affirms the need to redress the consequences of past discriminatory laws and practices (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

The importance of skills development in South Africa is further reinforced by persistent labour market challenges. According to Statistics South Africa, the official

unemployment rate stood at 32.9% during the first quarter of 2025, while youth unemployment reached 46.1% (Statistics South Africa, 2025(a)). These statistics illustrate the urgent need for improved education, training, and skills development interventions capable of enhancing employability and organisational performance. In response to these challenges, the government enacted the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 to improve workforce competencies, increase investment in training, and encourage workplace-based learning. The Act further established Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) to facilitate skills planning and occupational training aligned with labour market demands.

Despite these interventions, numerous public-sector institutions continue to experience shortages of appropriately skilled personnel and insufficient implementation of learning and development programmes. Reports by the Department of Higher Education and Training indicate that many government departments struggle to align Workplace Skills Plans (WSPs), Personal Development Plans (PDPs), and training interventions with organisational objectives and occupational needs (DHET, 2024). In addition, the National Skills Development Plan 2030 highlights the need for stronger monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that training initiatives result in meaningful career advancement and improved institutional performance (DHET, 2023).

The motivation for conducting this study within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the National Department of Employment and Labour arises from concerns regarding the effectiveness and adequacy of learning and development programmes implemented through the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998. The Department continues to face challenges in developing a skilled and capable workforce able to contribute effectively to service delivery and socio-economic transformation. Within the Directorate, there is evidence of insufficient learning and development programmes aimed at strengthening critical and occupational skills. Despite repeated requests by supervisors for relevant training opportunities, access to training remains limited, resulting in a discernible gap between human resource management practices, career development initiatives, and the objectives of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 (DEL Annual Report, 2024:9).

Consequently, this study seeks to analyse the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate to assess progress in public-sector skills development since the democratic transition in 1994. The study further aims to determine whether the Department of Employment and Labour's skills development policies and objectives are being achieved and to examine public servants' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the Skills Development Act in promoting employee development and career advancement.

In line with the statutory emphasis on workplace-based learning and employer responsibility, the Skills Development Act establishes formal pathways for career progression through accredited learnerships, internships, bursaries, occupational qualifications, and skills programmes. Moreover, SETAs and the National Skills Development Plan seek to align training provision with occupational demand to ensure that learning outcomes contribute to employability, productivity, and promotion opportunities (DHET, 2024). However, the extent to which these mechanisms generate sustainable career trajectories for employees within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate requires empirical investigation. This study therefore intends to examine internal human resource records, promotion trends, post-training placement practices, the Directorate's utilisation of Workplace Skills Plans and Personal Development Plans, outcomes of SETA-funded interventions, and monitoring data contained in Annual Training Reports and sector skills plans.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the South African public sector, the need for effective skills development and continuous learning has become increasingly important because of persistent labour market challenges, skills shortages and growing demands for efficient public service delivery. According to Statistics South Africa, the official unemployment rate increased to 32.9% during the first quarter of 2025, while youth unemployment reached 46.1%, reflecting serious challenges regarding skills development, employability, and labour market readiness (Statistics South Africa, 2025(a)). Furthermore, the Quarterly Labour Force Survey revealed that approximately 8.2 million South Africans were unemployed during this period, demonstrating the urgent need for institutions to strengthen workplace skills and training initiatives in both the public and private sectors.

The South African government has continuously emphasised the importance of skills development as a mechanism for improving productivity, service delivery, and economic growth. The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 was specifically introduced to improve the quality of the workforce, increase investment in education and training, and enhance the competencies of employees in the workplace. However, despite the legislative framework and policy interventions, skills shortages and inadequate workforce development remain significant challenges within many government departments. Research on labour market trends in South Africa further indicates a persistent mismatch between the skills possessed by employees and the skills required within the modern economy and public service environment (Bhorat, Goga & Stanwix, 2013).

Within the National Department of Employment and Labour, there is a shortage regarding the provision of relevant learning and development programmes and strategies to enhance the development of skills in demand among public officials in the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate (Department of Employment and Labour Annual Report, 2024:8-9). This challenge negatively affects employee performance, organisational productivity, and the ability of the Directorate to provide effective and efficient support services. There is no doubt that the knowledge and skills of the workforce within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate are not being enhanced to their full potential, resulting in the objectives of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 not being fully achieved.

Moreover, the absence of adequately targeted training programmes, continuous professional development initiatives, and relevant workplace learning opportunities may contribute to poor service delivery, low employee morale, reduced organisational effectiveness, and limited career progression among employees. Although several national policies advocate for employee development and capacity building within the public sector, there appears to be insufficient empirical research focusing specifically on skills development challenges and learning strategies within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the National Department of Employment and Labour.

The problem statement can therefore be formulated as follows:

A lack of learning and development programmes and strategies that should enhance the skills of the workforce of the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the National Department of Employment and Labour exists, due to the ineffective implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the research problem, the main research question is formulated as:

To what extent does the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 influence the design, implementation and effectiveness of learning and development programmes within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the Department of Employment and Labour?

The research questions supporting the main research question are:

1. What contextual and institutional factors influence skills development within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the Department of Employment and Labour?
2. Which theoretical perspectives and scholarly insights inform effective training and development in the public sector?
3. How does the legislative and policy framework guide the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 in the public sector?
4. To what extent are learning and development programmes aligned with the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 implemented within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the Department of Employment and Labour?
5. How does the organisational and institutional context of the Department of Employment and Labour influence skills development implementation?
6. What measures can improve the effective implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Department of Employment and Labour?

1.5 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to analyse the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 and its influence on learning and development programmes within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the Department of Employment and Labour, with the purpose of enhancing workforce skills development.

The objectives supporting the research aim are:

1. Contextualise the skills development challenge within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the Department of Employment and Labour.
2. Analyse theories and literature on training and development in Public Administration relevant to workforce skills enhancement.
3. Examine the legislative and policy framework governing the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 in South Africa.
4. Assess the implementation of learning and development programmes aligned with the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the Department of Employment and Labour.
5. Analyse the institutional and organisational context of the Department of Employment and Labour as it relates to skills development implementation.
6. Propose recommendations for improving the effective implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Department of Employment and Labour.

The key concepts used in this study are clarified in the following section.

1.6 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

This section clarifies the key concepts underpinning the study by defining skills development, public human resource management, and transformation within the public service, while situating workplace learning, institutional contexts, and career development practices within the scope of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 to ensure conceptual coherence and analytical consistency throughout the research.

1.6.1 Skills development

For the purposes of this study, skills development is conceptualised as a deliberate, structured and continuous process through which public servants acquire, enhance and apply competencies required for effective job performance, service delivery and career advancement. In the South African public service, skills development is not a neutral administrative activity, but a constitutional and developmental imperative aimed at redressing the structural inequalities created by the Apartheid education and labour systems. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa explicitly mandates public administration to maximise human potential through effective human resource management and career development practices, thereby positioning skills development as a foundational pillar of democratic governance (Noe, 2020:31; Constitution, 1996:Chapter 2).

Within this study, skills development is analysed as both an individual and institutional phenomenon. At an individual level, it concerns employability, occupational mobility and improved performance. At an organisational level, it concerns productivity, service quality and institutional sustainability. Contemporary scholarship emphasises that skills development in the public sector must be aligned with occupational demand, integrated into human resource planning, and supported by enabling organisational environments in order to yield measurable outcomes (Noe, 2020:31; Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger & Smith-Jentsch, 2019:76). The study therefore interrogates whether skills development initiatives within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate translate into meaningful competence development, job rotation capability and career progression.

1.6.2 Skills Development Act 97 of 1998

The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 represents the central legislative instrument guiding workplace learning and development in South Africa. The Act was enacted to address the fragmented and racially skewed skills system inherited from Apartheid by establishing an integrated national framework for education and training (SDA, 1998:Section 2(1)). For the purposes of this study, the SDA is conceptualised as both a corrective policy tool and an implementation mechanism through which the

constitutional mandate for human potential development is operationalised within the public service.

The Act seeks to develop the skills of the South African workforce, increase investment in education and training, improve productivity, encourage employment, and ensure the quality of learning in and for the workplace. These objectives are directly relevant to the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate, where operational efficiency, job rotation and technical competence are critical to service delivery. The SDA promotes workplace-based learning through learnerships, internships, skills programmes and accredited occupational qualifications, while placing responsibility on employers to plan and report on skills development through Workplace Skills Plans and ATRs. However, empirical evidence suggests that in many public institutions the Act is implemented in a compliance-driven manner, with limited impact on career development and promotion outcomes (SDA, 1998:Section 2(1)-(2)); Reddy, Bhorat & Powell, 2018:27). This study therefore critically analyses the extent to which the objectives of the SDA are realised in practice within the Directorate.

1.6.3 Public human resource management

Public human resource management (PHRM) is understood in this study as the strategic management of people in government institutions to achieve constitutional values, policy objectives and service delivery outcomes. PHRM differs from private-sector human resource management in that it is explicitly bound by legislative, ethical and equity considerations (Xu, Wang & Song, 2025:12). Chapter 10 of the Constitution positions human resource development and career management as integral to effective public administration, thereby elevating skills development to a strategic governance function rather than a discretionary managerial activity (Constitution, 1996:Chapter 10).

Within the framework of PHRM, skills development must be integrated with workforce planning, performance management, succession planning and promotion systems. Weak alignment between these components often results in training that is disconnected from organisational needs and employee career trajectories (Cloete, 2019:41). In this study, PHRM is conceptualised as the institutional mechanism through which the Skills Development Act is implemented within the Department of

Employment and Labour, and its effectiveness is assessed by examining how learning and development initiatives are embedded within broader human resource practices.

1.6.4 Policy implementation

Grelle and Hofmann (2024:260) and Knill and Tosun (2008:499-501) describe policy implementation as the transformation of newly adopted laws and programmes into concrete practice. In this sense, a policy lacks real meaning or value if it is not supported by an effective implementation strategy. Similarly, McGovern's (2023:55) characterises implementation as the continuation of politics through alternative means. Mathebula (2023:58-59) explains implementation as the execution of a foundational policy decision, typically embodied in legislation, although it may also arise from significant executive directives or judicial rulings. Ideally, such a decision clearly defines the problem to be addressed, outlines the intended objectives, implies a causal logic for achieving those objectives, and structures the implementation process to realise the desired outcomes.

Laurence J. O'Toole Jr. has also contributed extensively to the conceptualisation of policy implementation. In his 1995 article *Rational Choice and Policy Implementation*, he defined implementation as the link between governmental intent and tangible outcomes (O'Toole, 1995:43). Later, in 2000, he described it as the process unfolding between the government's expressed intention to act (or refrain from acting) and the eventual effects in practical reality (O'Toole, 2000:266). For O'Toole, the key issue in implementation research concerns what transpires between the adoption of policy and its real-world impact (O'Toole, 2000:273).

The implementation process generally proceeds through a series of phases. It begins with the enactment of primary legislation, followed by the policy outputs or decisions made by implementing agencies. Thereafter, target groups are expected to comply with these decisions, leading to observable outcomes; both intended and unintended. These outcomes are then assessed, which may ultimately result in amendments or attempts to revise the original statute (Mathebula, 2023:60). Moreover, implementation encompasses all activities undertaken to operationalise policies adopted by the legislature. As McGovern's (2023:37) notes, this may involve

establishing new institutions, departments, or agencies, as well as reallocating responsibilities within existing structures.

It is therefore evident that policy implementation is a dynamic and multifaceted process that extends beyond government alone. Non-state actors, including private enterprises, civil society organisations, and non-profit entities, often play supportive roles in executing public policies. Consequently, the effectiveness of a policy depends largely on the capacity of these institutional and bureaucratic arrangements to carry out governmental decisions efficiently (Grelle & Hofmann, 2024:261).

In addition, Spink (2024:2) emphasises that implementation approaches vary according to the type of policy concerned. Regulatory policies require implementing agencies to remain responsive to the communities they oversee. Distributive policies are typically carried out with a degree of bureaucratic discretion, accompanied by ongoing oversight from legislative subcommittees and organised interest groups. By contrast, redistributive policies generally limit bureaucratic discretion, as legislatures invest considerable effort in their detailed design. Finally, the successful execution of public policy depends significantly on the availability of adequate resources. Grelle and Hofmann (2024:262) underscores that sufficient resources are essential to convert policy objectives into workable and operational programmes.

1.6.5 Transformation of the public service

Transformation of the public service refers to the comprehensive restructuring of state institutions to dismantle the racial, gender and class inequalities entrenched by Apartheid. This process is underpinned by the Constitution and reinforced by post-1994 policy instruments such as the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service. Transformation encompasses representativity, equity, access to opportunities and the empowerment of historically disadvantaged groups through education and training (Constitution, 1996: Preamble; WPTPS, 1995:Chapter 1.3 & Chapter 3.1).

For the purpose of this study, transformation is conceptualised as an outcome that is partly realised through effective skills development and career development practices. The Skills Development Act of 1998, Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 and related policies collectively aim to ensure that African males and females, in particular, are

afforded meaningful opportunities for advancement into skilled and managerial positions without excluding other groups. The study therefore interrogates whether the implementation of skills development initiatives within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate contributes substantively to transformation objectives.

1.6.6 Workplace learning and development programmes

Workplace learning and development programmes are defined in this study as structured and intentional interventions that facilitate learning within the work environment. These include learnerships, internships, bursaries, mentoring, coaching, skills programmes and on-the-job training initiatives. The Education White Paper 3 of 1997 reinforces the principle of lifelong learning and positions workplace learning as a critical mechanism for meeting the learning needs and aspirations of individuals throughout their working lives (DoE, 1997).

Within the SDA framework, workplace learning programmes are intended to create formal pathways for skills acquisition that are aligned with occupational demand and organisational needs. For the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate, such programmes are particularly important for enabling job rotation, technical competence and operational efficiency (SDA, 1998:Chapter 4(16)).

1.6.7 Institutional and organisational context

Institutional and organisational context refers to the internal and external conditions that shape the implementation of skills development policies. These include leadership commitment, organisational culture, governance structures, administrative capacity, resource allocation and compliance systems. Institutional theory suggests that policy outcomes are significantly influenced by organisational environments and implementation capacity rather than policy design alone (Peters, 2021:23-24).

In this study, the organisational context of the Department of Employment and Labour is analysed to understand how factors such as management support, coordination with SETAs, utilisation of WSPs and monitoring through Annual Reports influence the effectiveness of skills development initiatives (SDA, 1998:Chapter 7(27)). The Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999 is particularly relevant in this regard, as it establishes a funding mechanism for training and creates an expectation that

employees contributing to the levy should meaningfully benefit from skills development opportunities (SDLA, 1999:Chapter 1(5)).

1.6.8 Career development and promotion

Career development and promotion are conceptualised as structured processes through which employees progress into roles of increasing responsibility, competence and remuneration. In the public service, career development is closely linked to fairness, motivation and retention, and is supported by legislative frameworks such as the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 and the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998. These Acts reinforce the right to fair labour practices, employee participation in decision-making, and equitable access to development opportunities (EEA, 1998:Chapter II (5); LRA, 1995:Chapter 1(1)).

For the purposes of this study, career development and promotion are treated as key indicators of effective skills development implementation. A disconnect between training participation and promotion outcomes is interpreted as evidence of ineffective skills development implementation rather than individual underperformance (Yu, Guo, Hu & Fu, 2025:756).

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Christensen, Johnson and Turner (2020:12-14) note that researchers can enhance confidence in the credibility of research findings by employing multiple research methods to investigate the same research problem. This approach allows for the triangulation of data and strengthens the validity of the study. This section therefore briefly outlines the qualitative and quantitative research designs and methodologies applied to conduct systematic and rigorous research.

Firstly, the quantitative research approach focuses on the transformation of data into numerical form and its analysis through statistical techniques. Quantitative data analysis typically utilises computer-based software packages such as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft 365 Excel. One of the key advantages of quantitative analysis is that it enhances the reliability of research findings, as statistical analysis provides a structured and objective basis for description and interpretation. In this study, the quantitative research method was applied through

the use of a structured questionnaire. The integration of quantitative findings with qualitative insights strengthened the overall analytical depth and credibility of the study. The qualitative research approach enabled the researcher to gain in-depth insight into the problem under investigation, to develop new concepts and theoretical perspectives, and to identify challenges that may exist across different contexts. (Nieuwenhuis, 2020:72-73).

In this study, the qualitative research methodology made use of semi-structured face-to-face interviews as the primary data collection method. This approach allowed respondents to express their views freely while enabling the researcher to probe further and obtain detailed information. The interviews provided valuable insights into participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the National Department of Employment and Labour, and also served to verify and enrich data obtained through other sources. Therefore, the study employed a mixed methods research methodology, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to ensure comprehensive data collection and analysis. Data collection was undertaken following formal approval from the Department of Employment and Labour, which enabled structured engagement with participants and access to relevant institutional documentation. This process ensured that the data collection activities were conducted in a systematic and ethically sound manner within the organisational context.

The research design adopted in this study is a case study, which allowed for intensive examination of a specific unit of analysis. According to Piekkari and Welch (2018:348), a case study design explores a single individual, group or institution in depth, with the aim of achieving close examination, detailed scrutiny, and the collection of rich, contextualised data. Through this approach, a researcher was able to test the validity of assumptions and theories.

The research design and methodology adopted in this study are described in detail in Chapter 3, *Research Design and Methodology*.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the study is derived from an experience encountered within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate, as a workplace environment. There

is a shortage when it comes to training and development, regarding training programmes to enhance the development of skills in demand. There has been insufficient training for the workforce of the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate. As a result, there is a gap between development orientated public administration, human resources management and career development programmes with reference to the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998.

The expected contribution of the research is to close the gap of unskilled sectorial public service servants and contribute to the work and discipline knowledge under the research topic.

1.9 RESEARCH SCOPE AND DELIMITATION TO THE STUDY

The organisational focus on the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate allowed for an in-depth examination of Skills Development Act implementation within a specialised support-function environment. The Directorate played a critical role in enabling service delivery through fleet management, logistics and auxiliary services, and therefore required targeted skills development to ensure operational efficiency, compliance and institutional support. Concentrating on a single directorate enhanced analytical depth and ensured that findings were grounded in a clearly defined organisational context.

The period under review reflected a post-COVID-19 stabilisation phase, during which departments had resumed standard operational and training practices after prolonged disruptions to skills development, workplace learning and capacity-building initiatives. Studying this timeframe enabled the research to assess the implementation of the Skills Development Act under relatively normalised administrative conditions, particularly as it related to operational and technical skills within the selected directorate. Furthermore, the 2023/24 financial year was characterised by a renewed emphasis on public sector capacity, vacancy reduction and workforce development, as reflected in government-wide priorities and the Department's strategic focus. This made the period and directorate particularly suitable for evaluating how the Skills Development Act of 1998 was operationalised within the DEL, specifically in relation to staff training, upskilling and capacity building within support service functions.

Limiting the organisational scope enhanced the feasibility, depth and reliability of the study. Focusing on a specific directorate allowed for detailed analysis of implementation processes, administrative practices and workforce development outcomes, while ensuring that data remained current, accessible and verifiable.

1.9.1 Limitations of the organisational scope

Despite the advantages of these delimitations, several limitations were acknowledged. Firstly, limiting the organisational scope to the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate meant that the findings could not be generalised across all directorates within the DEL, particularly those with different mandates, occupational profiles or professional skills requirements. Secondly, the study may have been influenced by context-specific factors affecting the selected directorate during the period under review, such as budgetary constraints, staff turnover, or operational pressures, which may have shaped skills development implementation and outcomes.

1.9.2 Mitigation of limitations

To mitigate these limitations, the study situated the findings within a broader legislative, policy and institutional context by drawing on the Skills Development Act of 1998, its subsequent amendments, and relevant national strategies governing public sector skills development. This ensured conceptual continuity beyond the delimited period and organisational unit. In addition, the analysis incorporated contextual references from prior departmental reports, policy documents and academic literature to support interpretation of the findings.

The use of a mixed-methods research approach, combining quantitative administrative data with qualitative insights from key informants and documentary analysis within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate, further strengthened the credibility of the findings through triangulation. This approach compensated for the limited organisational scope by providing richer explanatory depth regarding skills development implementation processes, challenges and outcomes.

1.10 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

This study is composed of seven chapters.

Chapter 1, this chapter, provides the general orientation of the study by outlining its background, context, and rationale. It presents the problem statement and research questions, followed by the aim and objectives of the study. Key concepts relevant to skills development, public human resource management, public service transformation, workplace learning, institutional context, and career development are clarified to establish a common understanding. The chapter further briefly introduces the research design and methodology, highlights the significance of the study, and delineates its scope, limitations and mitigation measures. It concludes with an overview of the subsequent chapters, thereby setting the foundation for the study as a whole.

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of literature on training and development within the South African public administration context. It explores the historical evolution of skills development from the post-apartheid era to the present, highlighting how legislation, policies, and strategic frameworks, such as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, the Skills Development Act of 1998, and the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS), have shaped workforce development and capacity building in public institutions. The chapter also examines the theoretical foundations of training and development, drawing on Human Capital Theory, Organisational Learning Theory, and Adult Learning Theory, to show how investments in employee knowledge, skills, and learning systems enhance both individual performance and organisational effectiveness. In addition, the chapter analyses practical aspects of training and development, including organisational and individual needs, work environment constraints, and methods for identifying and meeting training requirements. Various approaches to training, such as induction, on-the-job training, classroom instruction and apprenticeship programmes, are discussed to illustrate how public institutions foster professional growth and service delivery.

Chapter 3 outlines and applies the research design and methodology used in the study. It explains the mixed methods research design and the exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory approaches that guide the investigation. The chapter describes the research methodology, including the literature review, document analysis, case study

method, and empirical research, which together provide both contextual and empirical evidence for the study. The chapter further details the population and sampling techniques, the data gathering instruments used, and the procedures followed for collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data. Issues of reliability, validity, and trustworthiness are addressed to ensure the credibility of the findings. The chapter concludes by outlining the ethical considerations observed throughout the study, including institutional permission, informed consent, and the protection of participants' confidentiality, privacy and voluntary participation.

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the legislative, institutional, and contextual frameworks that shape skills development in South Africa. It examines the constitutional and policy foundations, including the Constitution of 1996, the National Development Plan 2030, and analyses the Skills Development Act of 1998 as the primary legislative instrument guiding training and workforce development. The chapter highlights the role of the Department of Employment and Labour in implementing policy through oversight of compliance, administration of learnerships and grants, and coordination with Sector Education and Training Authorities and the National Skills Authority. It further discusses supporting legislation, including the National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008 and operational mechanisms such as WSPs.

Chapter 5 presents the case study of the Department of Employment and Labour in South Africa. It begins by providing background information and situating the department within the broader public administration and labour governance context. The chapter examines the historical evolution and institutional transformation of the department, its legislative mandate, and its organisational structure at national, provincial, and service delivery levels. It further analyses the department's core programme functions, including administration, inspection and enforcement, public employment services, and labour policy and industrial relations, with attention to policy intent, institutional capacity, regulatory compliance and labour market activation. Policy implications of the department's activities for skills development, workforce participation, and broader socio-economic outcomes are also considered. The chapter concludes by evaluating skills development at the DEL.

Chapter 6 presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected for the study in relation to the implementation of the Skills Development Act of 1998 within the Department of Employment and Labour. It translates quantitative and qualitative evidence into findings aligned with the research objectives. The chapter outlines the mixed-methods approach, and profiles the respondents to contextualise the sample. It analyses questionnaire data across themes such as contextualisation of skills development, the legislative and policy framework, programme implementation, organisational context, and equity outcomes. Interview data are then examined to deepen and explain the survey results, with alignment between both data sets strengthening the credibility of the findings. The chapter concludes with a consolidated summary of key quantitative and qualitative findings, which inform the conclusions and recommendations that follow.

Chapter 7 draws together conclusions relating to contextual challenges, including limited access to training, inconsistent implementation, communication gaps, staffing constraints and structural changes. It integrates insights from Human Capital Theory and organisational learning to frame skills development as a strategic investment in workforce capability. The legislative and policy environment is examined in relation to policy alignment, awareness and the gap between policy intent and operational practice, while the implementation of learning programmes is assessed in terms of needs analysis, participation, equity of access and integration with performance management. Institutional and organisational factors affecting career progression, promotion and transformation outcomes are also considered, highlighting the structural constraints that mediate the impact of training on advancement.

1.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided the general orientation and contextual foundation of the study by outlining the historical and policy background to skills development and transformation within the South African public service. It presented the problem statement and research questions arising from challenges in the implementation of skills development initiatives, followed by a clear articulation of the research aim and objectives. The chapter further clarified key concepts related to skills development, the Skills Development Act of 1998, public human resource management, public service transformation, workplace learning and development programmes, institutional and

organisational context, as well as career development and promotion, in order to ensure conceptual consistency throughout the study. In addition, the research design and methodology were introduced, the significance of the study was discussed, and the scope, limitations, and mitigation measures were outlined. The chapter concluded with an overview of the structure of the study.

Chapter 2 focuses on a literature review of training and development within the public service context.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW: TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The problem confronting this study arose from an evident shortage of relevant learning and development programmes and strategies intended to enhance the skills required by public officials within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the National Department of Employment and Labour. The knowledge and competencies of the Directorate's workforce are not being developed to their full potential, largely because the purpose of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 is not being fully achieved. Consequently, the problem statement guiding this study emphasised that a lack of appropriate learning and development interventions persists due to the ineffective implementation of the Skills Development Act. This shortcoming raises a central research question concerning the extent to which learning and development programmes and strategies can be improved through the proper implementation of the Skills Development Act of 1998, and whether such improvement can meaningfully enhance the skills profile of the Directorate's workforce.

In addressing this overarching question, the study provides a detailed examination of the scholarly perspectives on training and development, particularly within the South African public administration context. The chapter begins by situating training and development in its broader historical and socio-political context, tracing the evolution of skills development in the post-apartheid era. The chapter also explores the theoretical foundations that underpin training and development, drawing on perspectives such as Human Capital Theory, which underscores the value of investing in employees' knowledge and skills to improve organisational productivity and efficiency. Organisational Learning Theory is examined to emphasise the importance of creating learning systems within institutions that facilitate knowledge sharing, continuous improvement and adaptation to change. Additionally, Adult Learning Theory is discussed to highlight how principles of adult learning inform the design and implementation of effective workplace training programmes, particularly for employees in professional and managerial roles.

The historical foundations of skills development are examined to illustrate the transition from apartheid-era limitations in workforce training to contemporary efforts aimed at broadening access, redressing inequities and fostering a professional, capable public service. The chapter further addresses the concept of training and development. It explores factors that influence training effectiveness, including work environment constraints, employee needs and organisational objectives. Methods for determining training needs and conducting comprehensive needs assessments are reviewed. Finally, the chapter examines various approaches to meeting training needs, ranging from induction and orientation programmes to in-service, on-the-job, vestibule, classroom and apprenticeship-based training. By reviewing these theoretical, legislative, and practical dimensions, the chapter provides a foundation for understanding the mechanisms, gaps and strategies for effective training and development in the public administration context.

2.2 WHAT IS A LITERATURE REVIEW?

The literature review presented in this chapter served a critical function, as it sought to provide the theoretical, conceptual and empirical grounding necessary to respond meaningfully to the research problem and its associated questions. Literature review, as emphasised by Gary (2025:14-15), involves engaging with a substantial body of existing knowledge derived from completed dissertations, scholarly books and credible online sources. The purpose of a literature review is to contribute to a clearer understanding of the nature and meaning of an identified problem and to place the researcher's efforts within an expanded knowledge base.

According to Simsek, Fox and Heavey (2023:294), a literature review establishes a solid foundation of existing knowledge related to the study, while Jha (2024:121) maintain that early engagement with relevant literature offers deeper insight into the dimensions and complexity of a research problem. A good literature review situates a research project within its scholarly context by demonstrating how prior studies have shaped the field and how the current study links to and extends earlier work. This process assisted the researcher not only in conceptualising the research problem within a theoretical framework but also in identifying the knowledge gaps that the present study aims to address. Gary (2025:16) further explain that the literature review becomes invaluable after data collection, as it allows the researcher to compare

findings with existing knowledge and determine the extent to which the study supports, challenges, or advances current understandings.

Engaging critically with published and unpublished academic work, including theses, dissertations, books, research reports and scholarly articles, enabled the researcher to contextualise the study within the wider domain of professional research and theory. This engagement promoted clarity, ensured conceptual alignment, and provided direction for empirical investigation (Jha, 2024:122). As summarised by the Simsek, Fox and Heavey (2023:295), a literature review is an objective and critical synthesis of research relevant to a particular topic, intended to foster familiarity with current thinking and to justify the need for further study in underexplored areas.

2.3 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This study is located within the discipline of Public Administration because it focuses on public-sector human resource management, organisational capacity development, skills enhancement, and service delivery within a government department. Public Administration as a discipline is concerned with the effective and efficient management of public institutions, including the development of human capital, implementation of public policy, ethical governance, and improvement of administrative performance (Fox, Schwella & Wissink, 2007: 133-134).

The study specifically examines the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the National Department of Employment and Labour. This directly relates to core Public Administration themes such as public human resource management, employee development, institutional effectiveness, administrative accountability, and the professionalisation of the public service. According to Section 195 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, public administration must promote efficient, economic, and effective use of resources while cultivating good human resource management and career-development practices to maximise human potential (Constitution, 1996). The study therefore contributes to Public Administration discourse by evaluating whether these constitutional and legislative principles are effectively implemented within the Department.

Furthermore, the study aligns with contemporary Public Administration debates regarding capacity-building and developmental governance in South Africa. The National Planning Commission emphasises in the National Development Plan 2030 that the South African public service requires skilled, professional, and capable officials to improve governance and service delivery (National Planning Commission, 2024). Similarly, the Department of Public Service and Administration highlights the importance of continuous training and professional development in building a capable state (DPSA, 2024).

The study therefore contributes to the discipline of Public Administration by generating empirical knowledge regarding the effectiveness of skills development policies and workplace learning within the public sector. In addition, the findings may assist policymakers, human resource practitioners, and public-sector managers in strengthening learning and development programmes, improving employee performance, and enhancing institutional capacity within government departments.

Below is a description integrating Human Capital Theory, Organisational Learning Theory, and Adult Learning Theory within Public Administration, specifically linked to the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998.

2.4 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES UNDERPINNING TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

An examination of training and development within Public Administration requires grounding in theories that explain both the rationale for state-led capacity-building and the mechanisms through which learning enhances organisational performance. The implementation of the Skills Development Act of 1998 draws conceptually from three major theoretical lenses, namely the Human Capital Theory, Organisational Learning Theory and Adult Learning Theory. These theories provide a comprehensive framework for assessing how the SDA addresses capacity constraints, skills shortages, and transformation imperatives within South African public institutions (Fialho, Sousa & Palma-Moreira, 2025: 833).

2.4.1 Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory, rooted in the work of Schultz (1960), argues that individuals possess knowledge, skills, and competencies that function as productive assets capable of generating economic and social returns. In Public Administration, this theory offers a strategic understanding of workforce development by asserting that investment in employee skills enhances institutional performance, service delivery and national development outcomes. As Carlbäck, Nygren and Hägglund (2024: 298) note, human capital remains a central determinant of state capacity, particularly in emerging economies where public institutions must overcome historical imbalances and evolving governance demands.

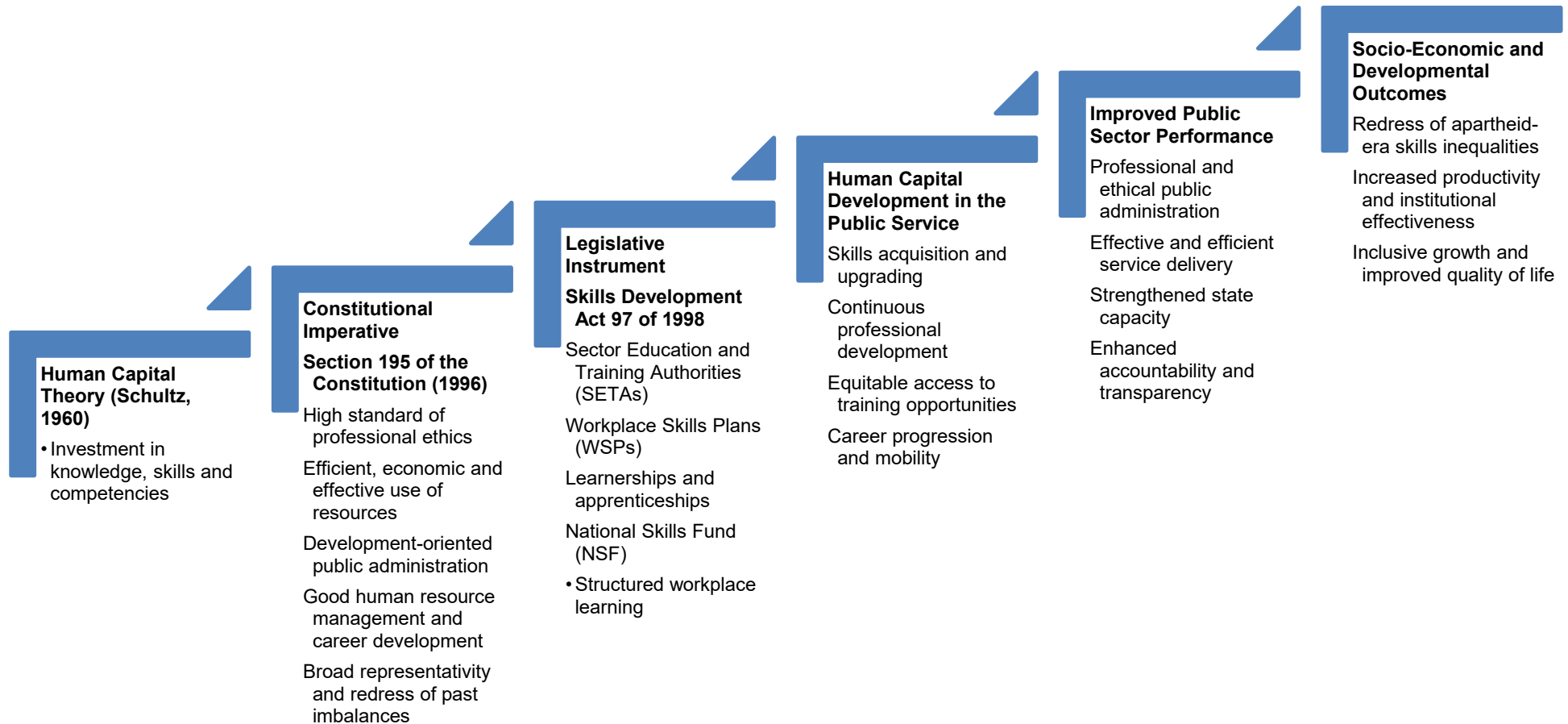
Within the public sector, Human Capital Theory informs a wide range of training initiatives, including competency frameworks, induction programmes, continuous professional development, and sector-driven skills planning. It frames training as an investment rather than a cost, thereby justifying the allocation of substantial public resources to workforce learning. This logic underpins many of the reforms adopted in the post-apartheid period, which sought to create a capable developmental state by expanding access to structured training opportunities (Ray, Nyberg & Maltarich, 2023:315).

The SDA reflects the core tenets of Human Capital Theory through mechanisms such as SETAs, learnerships, the National Skills Fund (NSF), and compulsory WSPs. These instruments reinforce the idea that the national skills base is central to improving economic competitiveness and addressing inequality. Recent studies affirm that the SDA has significantly contributed to improving human capital stocks, although challenges such as uneven implementation, limited workplace placements, and variable SETA performance remain. In essence, Human Capital Theory explains why the South African state adopted the SDA as a transformative intervention capable of redressing apartheid-era skills disparities, closing productivity gaps, and enhancing public-sector performance (Carlbäck, Nygren & Hägglund, 2024: 298-299).

Figure 2.1 illustrates how Human Capital Theory provides the conceptual foundation for skills development in public administration, while Section 195 of the Constitution of 1996 establishes the normative and ethical principles that guide public service performance. These constitutional imperatives are operationalised through the Skills

Development Act of 1998, which institutionalises skills development via mechanisms such as SETAs and WSPs. Together, these frameworks promote a development-oriented public administration by strengthening human resource capacity, improving service delivery and addressing historical skills imbalances.

Figure 2.1: Integration of Human Capital Theory, Constitutional Principles and the Skills Development Act in Public Administration



Source: (Adapted from Schultz, 1960; Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996; Skills Development Act 97, 1998).

2.4.2 Organisational Learning Theory

Organisational Learning Theory, initially developed by Argyris and Schön (1978), posits that organisations evolve and improve by acquiring, interpreting and institutionalising knowledge. Senge's (1990) later contribution conceptualised the learning organisation as one that fosters systems thinking, shared vision, team learning and reflective dialogue. In Public Administration, this theory provides insight into how public institutions adapt to policy changes, respond to complex societal needs, and cultivate a culture of continuous improvement.

Anand and Brix (2022:132) highlight how organisational learning remains essential for modernising the state and ensuring effective governance. Weak institutional memory, inadequate knowledge-sharing, and limited reflective practice frequently undermine public-sector performance. Consequently, training and development must extend beyond individual skills acquisition to encompass institutional processes that enable collective learning and adaptive governance.

The SDA reflects the principles of organisational learning through its emphasis on workplace-based learning, strategic skills planning and monitoring systems. The requirement for WSPs and ATRs compels organisations to assess their past training interventions and adjust future strategies, thereby reinforcing double-loop learning. SETAs also function as knowledge intermediaries by facilitating shared learning across departments, industries and educational institutions. Additionally, the alignment of the SDA with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and NSDS establishes a systemic approach to knowledge creation, quality assurance and continuous capacity development (Elven, 2025:74).

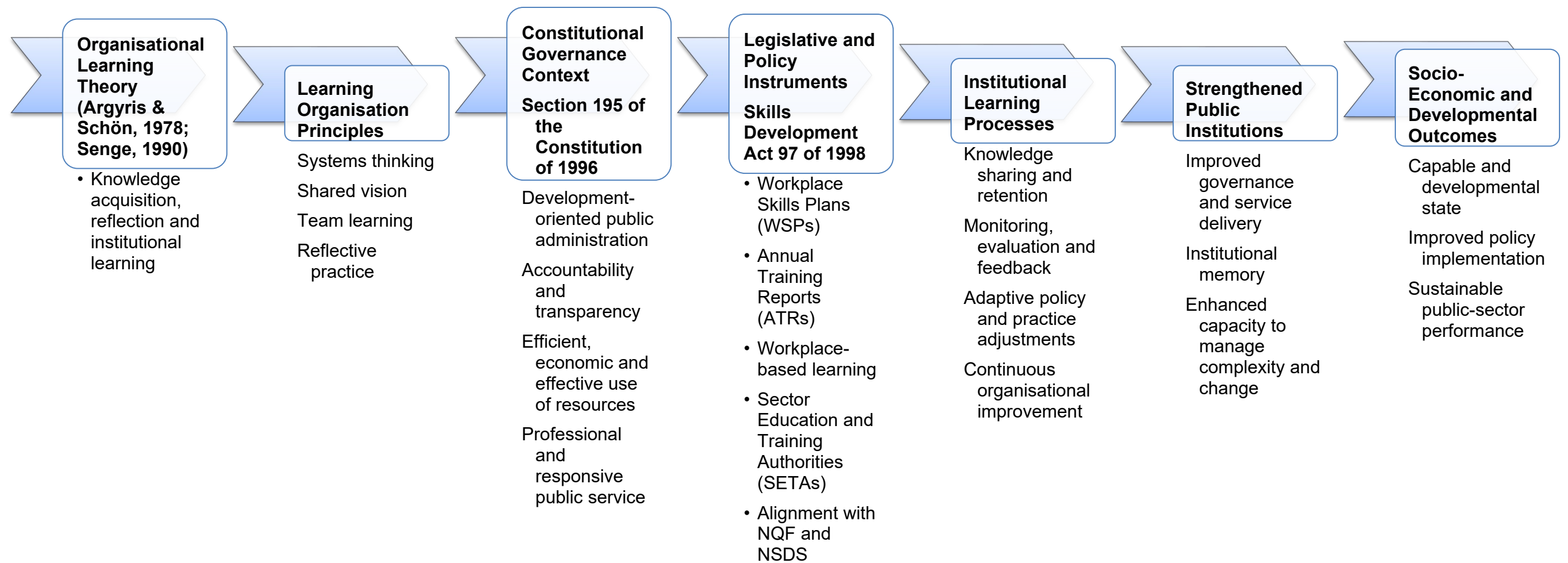
Through this lens, the SDA becomes more than a legislative instrument; it operates as an enabling mechanism for cultivating learning-oriented public institutions capable of responding to South Africa's evolving socio-economic challenges (Anand & Brix (2022:133).

Figure 2.2 illustrates how Organisational Learning Theory provides a conceptual foundation for understanding continuous learning and adaptation within public institutions. The theory emphasises the acquisition, interpretation and institutionalisation of knowledge, which is essential for public organisations operating

in complex and evolving governance environments. These learning principles align with Section 195 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, which requires a development-oriented, accountable and efficient public administration.

The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 operationalises organisational learning through mechanisms such as Workplace Skills Plans, Annual Training Reports and workplace-based learning. These instruments promote reflective practice and feedback loops that enable public institutions to assess past interventions and improve future performance. SETAs further support organisational learning by acting as intermediaries for knowledge sharing across sectors and institutions. Through this integration of theory, constitutional values and legislative mechanisms, the SDA functions as an enabling framework for cultivating learning-oriented public institutions capable of responding effectively to South Africa's socio-economic challenges (Elven, 2025:75; SDA, 1998).

Figure 2.2: Organisational Learning Theory and the Skills Development Act in South African Public Administration



Source: (Adapted from Argyris and Schön, 1978; Senge, 1990; Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996; Skills Development Act 97, 1998; Cloete, 2019; Chipkin and Powell, 2021; Elven, 2025:74-75).

2.4.3 Adult Learning Theory (Andragogy)

Adult Learning Theory, or andragogy, is rooted in the work of Malcolm Knowles (1973), who argued that adult learners differ fundamentally from children in terms of motivation, autonomy and experiential knowledge. Knowles identified several assumptions about adult learners: they are self-directed, bring rich prior experiences to learning contexts, are problem-focused, and are motivated by the relevance and immediate applicability of learning.

This theory has become increasingly significant in Public Administration because most public-sector training targets adult professionals who must integrate new knowledge into practical administrative contexts. Studies conducted in South Africa emphasise that adult-learning principles improve training outcomes because they ensure that learning is experiential, contextually relevant and aligned with workplace realities (Allen, Rosch & Riggio, 2022:253). Public servants often face dynamic policy environments, shifting performance expectations and complex governance challenges: conditions that favour learning approaches grounded in experiential engagement, problem-solving and reflective practice (Atkinson, 2021:194).

The SDA implicitly incorporates adult-learning principles through its emphasis on workplace-based learning, learnerships, skills programmes, and in-service training opportunities. These modalities are designed to integrate theoretical learning with practical application, recognising that adults learn most effectively when they can apply new knowledge immediately. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) within the NQF further illustrates the influence of Adult Learning Theory, as it acknowledges and formalises the experiential knowledge that adult workers acquire over time (Israel, 2023:61-62).

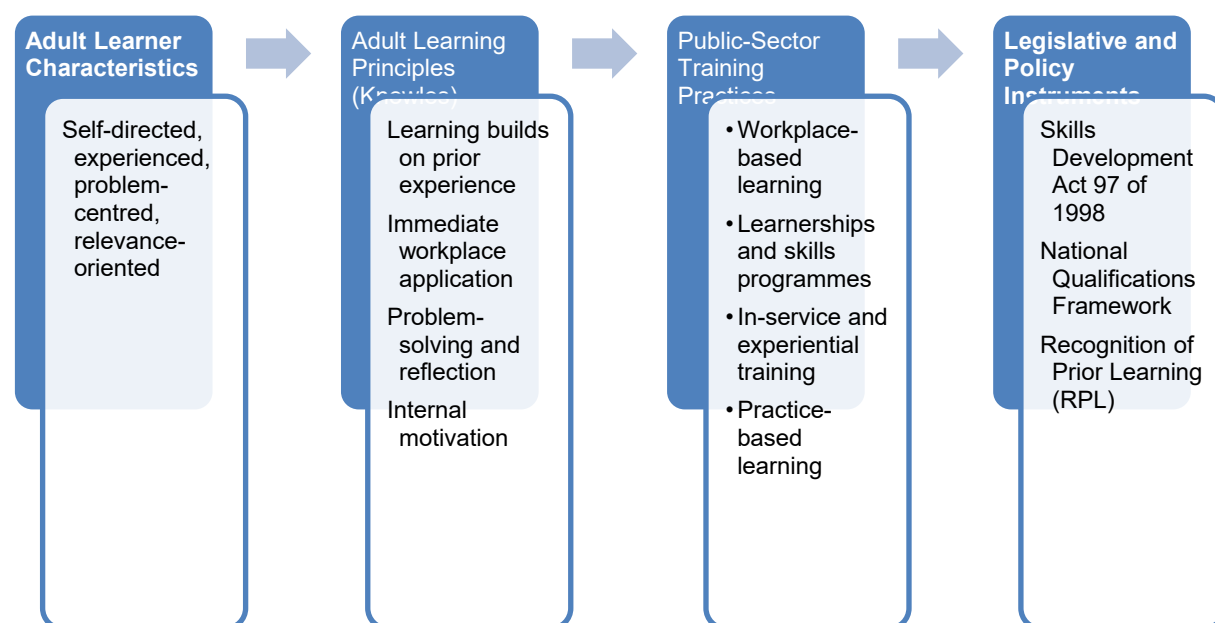
In the South African context, where many employees, especially those previously excluded from formal education, enter the workforce with incomplete or interrupted learning trajectories, Adult Learning Theory provides a critical framework for ensuring inclusivity, relevance and practical value in public-sector training interventions. It aligns directly with the SDA's transformation agenda by promoting accessible, context-appropriate learning pathways that support upskilling, professionalisation and equitable career progression (Israel, 2023:61-63; Atkinson, 2021:195).

Together, Human Capital Theory, Organisational Learning Theory and Adult Learning Theory offer comprehensive theoretical grounding for understanding the purpose, structure and implementation of the Skills Development Act of 1998 within South African Public Administration. Human Capital Theory explains the economic and developmental rationale for investing in skills. Organisational Learning Theory highlights the systemic and institutional mechanisms that enable continuous improvement and adaptive capacity. Adult Learning Theory addresses the pedagogical principles necessary to ensure that training interventions are meaningful and effective for adult public servants (Ray, Nyberg & Maltarich, 2023:315; Anand & Brix, 2022:133; Allen, Rosch & Riggio, 2022:253). These theoretical perspectives, supported by recent South African scholarship, demonstrate that the SDA is not merely a legislative measure but a multidimensional strategy aimed at transforming the workforce, enhancing institutional performance, and building a capable, developmental state.

Below Figure 2.3 illustrates how Adult Learning Theory provides a conceptual foundation for skills development within South African Public Administration. It demonstrates that public servants, as adult learners, bring prior experience, practical knowledge and a need for relevance to the learning environment. These characteristics necessitate training approaches that are problem-centred, experiential and directly applicable to workplace realities. Figure 2.3 further shows how adult learning principles inform public-sector training practices such as workplace-based learning, learnerships and in-service training, all of which emphasise the integration of theory and practice. These approaches are reinforced through legislative and policy instruments, particularly the Skills Development Act of 1998 and the NQF, which institutionalise adult-learning modalities and recognise experiential knowledge through mechanisms such as RPL.

Ultimately, Figure 2.3 highlights that when adult-learning principles are embedded within training policies and practices, they contribute to more inclusive, relevant and effective skills development outcomes. This supports the professionalisation of public servants, enhances service delivery, and strengthens state capacity, thereby aligning skills development interventions with South Africa's broader developmental and transformation objectives.

Figure 2.3: Adult Learning Theory (Andragogy) and Skills Development in South African Public Administration



Source: (Adapted from Knowles, 1973; Skills Development Act 97, 1998; National Qualifications Framework Act 67, 2008; Allen, Rosch and Riggio, 2022:253).

2.5 HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN POST-APARTHEID PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Prior to the new democratic dispensation, South Africa was under the ruling and leadership of Apartheid which, among other human rights transgressions, oppressed and prevented education, learning and skills development opportunities for black Africans. Further, the Apartheid regime favoured the employment and skills development of white people in the public service above other races. As the Apartheid government did not promote equal education and development of all South Africans prior to the 1994 elections, increasing demands were raised since the first democratic election to change the educational system and public skills development programmes. One of the results of these demands was that the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service was accepted in 1995. The 1995-White Paper enhances the redress of the Apartheid laws and policies and forms a pathway for South Africans to improve their lives in all aspects of our communities, including education and training in the public service (SAQA, 2023; WPTPS, 1995:Chapter 2(2.1-2.2)).

The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, adopted in 1995, was introduced as a foundational policy to guide the democratic reconstruction of South Africa's public administration. Its central purpose was to build a public service that could meaningfully support a new constitutional order and actively contribute to social and economic development. In doing so, it sought to dismantle the racially exclusive and bureaucratic system that had characterised the apartheid state and replace it with a democratic, representative, and citizen-centred public service. The White Paper therefore emphasised the need to transform institutional cultures, eliminate discriminatory practices, and create a workforce that reflects the diversity of South African society (SAQA, 2023; WPTPS, 1995:Chapter 2).

At the heart of the policy was a commitment to improve service delivery for all communities, especially those historically marginalised. This required shifting the public service from an inward-looking, rule-bound environment to one that prioritises responsiveness, openness, and the needs of citizens. To achieve this shift, the White Paper highlighted the importance of enhancing efficiency, accountability, and performance across all departments. It recognised that a capable and professional public service is essential for effective governance and for building public trust (Papier, Matenda & Vollenhoven, 2023:224).

The White Paper further outlined a broad scope to guide transformation. It called for the restructuring of public institutions to eliminate duplication, ensure alignment with constitutional mandates, and establish coherent systems across national and provincial government. Human resource management and development played a particularly important role, as the policy aimed to promote employment equity, affirmative action, and accessible learning and development opportunities. In this regard, it acknowledged that opening access to skills development programmes is a practical way of reducing racial imbalances in the workforce by enabling previously disadvantaged groups to advance their careers and participate fully in the public service (Papier, Matenda & Vollenhoven, 2023:226; WPTPS, 1995:Chapter 2(2.3)).

In addition, the White Paper focused on modernising management systems, improving financial and information management, and strengthening monitoring and evaluation practices. It emphasised ethical governance and the need to cultivate a culture of integrity and professionalism. Cooperative governance was also highlighted to ensure

effective coordination among the different spheres of government. Through this comprehensive approach, the White Paper provided a strategic blueprint for building a people-centred, developmental, and equitable public service that could drive transformation and support a more just society (WPTPS, 1995:Chapter 2(2.3)).

Furthermore, the SDA of 1998 was developed and implemented to, among other goals; ensure the quality of learning in the workplace. As in any other government department, the implementation of the SDA in the National Department of Employment and Labour should be sound and fruitful to the public officials to ultimately enhance and develop their skills. Against the background of the biased Apartheid educational policies, African males and females in top management should be preferred for promotion while the development of officials from other races is not neglected. In line with this notion, the post-Apartheid state ushered in a period of wide-scale reform of the country's education and training system. These reforms were proposed to redress the historical imbalances created by Apartheid's racialised labour market. Thus, a key challenge facing the new government is to develop policies that could oversee the integration of the South African economy into a capitalist economic system. This resulted in an expectation that the post-Apartheid government would develop policies that will redress the historical imbalances that occurred as a result of Apartheid (SDA, 1998:Section 2(1)-(2)).

Framed by Chapter 10 of the Constitution, which requires public administration to be broadly representative and governed by values such as equity, fairness and good human-resource management, accessibility to learning and development programmes becomes an instrument for redressing the racial inequalities entrenched by Apartheid (Constitution, 1996:Chapter 1). This involves using the SDA's tools, for example targeted SETA funding, affirmative prioritisation in WSPs, RPL to recognise non-formal skills, and outreach for unemployed and historically disadvantaged groups, to expand entry routes and remove barriers to occupationally relevant training in the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate.

2.6 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT EXPLAINED

Botha, Fischer Mogensen, Ebrahim and Brand (2023:164) explained that the survival of any organisation relies on its ability to train its human resources to be creative and

innovative. Employees are therefore the one indispensable asset and key element of any organisation, while the training of employees is the most pervasive techniques for improving employee's performance enhancing organisation productivity in the workplace. Training and development are an aspect of human resource practices that assist in enhancing employees' skills, knowledge, competence, and capable to perform more efficiently.

Training and development are indispensable strategic tools for effective individual and organisation performance. Thus, public institutions are spending money on training and development with confidence that it will enhance effectiveness and impact in public service delivery. Training is a requisite to enhancing public officials' capacity, reasoning faculty and competitive, which will improve organisational performance and maximising value and outcomes for the public. Training and development increases employees' efficiencies, innovation, invention, capacity to accept new technologies and techniques (PSETA, 2023). According to Lawana and Hompashe (2026:137), it is not negotiable for public institutions to adequately train their employees for efficient and optimal performance toward the realisation of their set goals and objectives. Employees training and development is a strategic determination to facilitate learning of the job related knowledge, skills, ability and behaviour that are crucial for efficient performance capable of enhancing organisational effectiveness.

Botha, et al. (2023:166) addressed the need for skills development and suggested that skills development in the South African public service is seen as one of the major challenges towards improving living standards of the society. Training also means to increase productivity levels needed to eventually meet the social service demands in the country. Since poor skills development may put the value of human capital in jeopardy, it's important that more investment takes place in the skills and knowledge capital of the workplace through training and development.

Training and development are the way in which an organisation uses a systematic process to modify and advance the knowledge, skills and behaviour of employees to achieve its objectives. Training and development must be task orientated based on job or task descriptions (Mvuyisi & Mapuranga, 2022:80). According to Lawana and Hompashe (2026:138), training and development at the workplace create circumstances in which an employee can acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes that

will satisfy organisational objectives. Employers must provide opportunities for learning experiences within specific time periods to bring about the possibility of performance improvement and personal growth.

Individuals should be more proactive and seek to be more creative and innovative to contribute to their organisation through their profession and skills. Employers of labour and decision makers should endeavour to create enabling training environments and favourable training policies that will give every worker opportunity to attend training. In addition, management should also take into consideration the training need of each worker and act as appropriate (Mvuyisi & Mapuranga, 2022:81-82).

According to Nama, Daweti, Lourens and Chikukwa (2022:42-43) training implies constructive development for optimum enhancement of the quality of work life of employees. Training and development programmes generally help improving employee behaviour and attitude towards a job and uplift staff morale. Training and development programmes improve employee performance, updates employee knowledge and enhances their personal skills. It also assists in avoiding managerial obsolescence. In addition, training enhances the overall performance of an organisation in various ways. Training could therefore enhance job security.

Mayombe (2024:132), emphasised that training should be a priority as there were shortcomings in the education system during the Apartheid era. Years ago, training started with literacy programmes before progressing to technical and critical skills development. Therefore, employers should invest in training and development as it is a prerequisite to quality work-service delivery and promoting education in the workplace for both individual and organisational benefit. Skills training and development is essential in every workplace – regardless of professional faculty, such as administration, medicine, engineering or industrial. Nama, et al. (2022:43) argue that post-school education and training institutions should integrate theoretical facet of education with the actual practical experiences that are needed to enhance skills. Mvuyisi and Mapuranga (2022:83) also agree that skills development can and should play a pivotal role in the promotion of human and national well-being.

Botha, et al. (2023:167) continues to express that training moulds employees' attitude and assists in achieving better cooperation and communication within an organisation. Further, training and development programmes improve the quality of work life by

creating an employee supportive workplace. Major areas of training include soft-skill development, personality development, interpersonal relationship, problem solving techniques, managerial and supervisory training programmes, quality improvement programmes, technical processes, quality circle programmes, time management skills, employee efficiency development, violence prevention, regulatory compliance, goal setting and implementation, workplace safety management and workplace communication.

2.6.1 Strengthening skills development and legislative framework in Public Administration

Effective skills development is a cornerstone of professional, ethical, and development-oriented public administration in South Africa. Significant gaps remain in the capacity of South African training providers to accelerate and improve workplace skills development in alignment with national legislation, implementation frameworks, and management criteria. For public administration to meet the ideals of efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability, it must be development-oriented. This requires public administrators to prioritise skills development and career progression for employees, ensuring that public institutions deliver services impartially, fairly, and equitably (Mayombe, 2024:134).

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, particularly Chapter 10, establishes the foundational values and principles guiding public administration. Section 195 mandates that a high standard of professional ethics be maintained, resources used economically and efficiently, and services delivered in a manner that promotes citizen participation, accountability, and transparency. Section 195 further emphasises that public service human-resources management and career-development practices must cultivate human potential while ensuring that the public service reflects the diversity of the South African population, redressing historical inequities and promoting broad representation. The Constitution therefore provides both the ethical and operational framework for skills development in public administration, highlighting the need for continuous investment in employee learning to achieve effective service delivery (Constitution, 1996:Section 195).

The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 operationalises these constitutional imperatives by promoting workplace learning, the acquisition of new skills, and opportunities for new entrants into the labour market. Major amendments to the Skills Development Act in 2008 expanded its scope, including clarifying the roles and composition of the National Skills Authority and SETAs, supporting apprenticeships, enhancing the quality and quantity of artisans, and establishing the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations. Complementary legislation, such as the Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999, provides financial mechanisms for funding training initiatives, while the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 and Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 ensure that workforce participation, equity, and fair treatment are central to skills development and career management (Erasmus, Loedolff, Mda & Nel, 2016:74-76).

2.6.2 Why do organisations offer training and development?

According to Bound, Edwards, Evans and Chia (2023:4), organisations, including public institutions, invest in the training and development of employees because such investment generates benefits for both individuals and the organisation. Through training, employees are empowered to make informed decisions, solve problems more effectively, and manage stress, tension and conflict with greater confidence. Training also internalises and operationalises key motivational factors such as recognition, achievement, growth and responsibility, thereby enhancing job satisfaction, skills acquisition and professional attitudes.

In the public sector, these benefits are further strengthened when officials are actively involved in the development of training and development programmes, as such participation ensures that learning interventions are responsive to operational realities and employee needs. Through structured training and development initiatives, employees' knowledge and competencies at all organisational levels are enhanced, contributing to improved institutional performance. This improvement may be reflected in higher-quality service delivery, strengthened workforce morale, reduced staff turnover and an enhanced public image. In addition, active employee involvement in programme design fosters positive relationships between supervisors and subordinates, promoting a collaborative and participatory organisational climate. Training and development therefore support organisational effectiveness by improving productivity, maintaining cost-efficiency, facilitating adaptation to change, and creating

a supportive environment conducive to growth, communication and continuous improvement (Bound, et al., 2023:21; Nama, et al., 2022:44).

Beyond organisational benefits, training equips employees with foundational skills for lifelong learning. It ensures that employees are literate, computer-proficient, and capable of effective communication and active listening. Training cultivates creative thinking, problem-solving abilities, motivation, and positive self-esteem. It also strengthens interpersonal skills, teamwork, leadership, organisational capability, honesty, integrity, and a strong work ethic. Collectively, these competencies enable employees to contribute meaningfully to both their personal development and the organisation's success (Bound, et al., 2023:21-22; Erasmus, et al., 2016:77).

2.7 PUBLIC INSTITUTION AS A LEARNING PLACE

According to Morphet (2025:148), the need for formal training for employees in the public service is self-evident and does not require further justification. In line with developments in other Western countries, concerted efforts were made in South Africa after the Second World War to expand the training and development of public officials. Morphet (2025:150) strongly supports skills training and development as a prerequisite for effective service delivery and emphasises that all employees, including those performing manual or operational duties, should receive appropriate training. In this regard, training and development programmes are offered equitably to officials to improve functional and job-related skills, ensuring that opportunities for skills enhancement are not limited to specific occupational categories or levels. Despite this, Oruh and Adisa (2024:33) note that resistance to investing time and financial resources in training still exists among some political office-bearers and officials. Opponents of formal training and development often argue that candidates appointed to the public service already possess the prescribed educational qualifications and that sufficient knowledge and skills can be acquired through on-the-job experience to enable performance and promotion. However, the prescription of specific educational qualifications for appointment to designated posts serves as clear evidence that structured training is regarded as a prerequisite for both appointment and advancement within the public service.

According to Oruh and Adisa (2024:32), several factors necessitate the formal training of public officials. Firstly, candidates appointed to the public service bring with them behaviours, attitudes, views and prejudices shaped by their prior environments. The public sector, however, demands behaviours and attitudes that align with the fundamental ethical principles of public administration, cultivating a morally responsible cadre of officials. All employees, including unskilled labourers, need to learn how to conduct themselves appropriately within their work environment.

In the South African context, the lack of widespread specialisation makes it challenging for schools, universities, and Technikons to fully prepare candidates for appointment to specific posts or fields of work (Yu, et al., 2025:757). While Morphet (2025:154) suggests that full preparation for specialised roles is not feasible, it can be argued that educational institutions do provide avenues for specialised training, particularly for professions such as policy analysts, political analysts, and researchers. Nevertheless, candidates are rarely recruited to remain in one specific post throughout their careers. Employees are typically required to occupy a wide variety of positions during their work-life, and even those with the most appropriate educational qualifications will still need training tailored to the distinctive demands of their work environment.

Moreover, the nature of work in public institutions is continually evolving. Purposeful and structured training enables employees to adapt to change in the most effective manner. Certain occupations exist exclusively within the public sector, such as police officers, firefighters, and judicial officers, necessitating specialised and role-specific training. Formal training also fosters the moral development and loyalty of officials, which is more effective than leaving them to navigate their roles through trial and error (Oruh & Adisa, 2024:33).

To secure employee cooperation and support, training should ensure that all personnel are well-informed about the goals, procedures, and operations of the institution to which they are attached. Employees should not have to rely on fragmented information or informal gossip. Well-informed employees are better equipped to engage with clients intelligently, thereby enhancing the public image of their institution (OECD, 2025). Particularly for new recruits, structured training in their specific fields of work is essential. Without formal provision for training, learning often degenerates into disorderly and haphazard on-the-job experiences. Therefore,

training should be deliberate, rationalised, and formalised rather than left to ad hoc or informal processes, as the latter rarely achieves clearly defined objectives (Oruh & Adisa, 2024:35).

Within the discipline of Public Administration, the idea of the public institution as a learning place is central to developing a capable, adaptable and accountable state. Public institutions such as the Department of Employment and Labour embody more than administrative structures; they function as environments where continuous learning, skills enhancement, and professional growth are expected to take place. This understanding aligns with the constitutional principles of good governance, effective human-resource management and the promotion of human potential, as outlined in Chapter 10 of the Constitution. It is also reinforced by the obligations created through the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, which positions skills development not as a peripheral activity, but as a core component of organisational performance (Morphet, 2025:150; Oruh & Adisa, 2024:35).

In the context of the Department of Employment and Labour, viewing the institution as a learning space means recognising that its employees must be equipped with the knowledge, competencies and behavioural attributes required to support labour market regulation, promote fair labour practices and contribute to effective service delivery. Continuous learning must therefore be embedded within organisational culture, operational systems and leadership practices. This includes creating opportunities for employees to participate in structured learning programmes, workplace-based training, mentoring, career development initiatives and reflective practices that enhance problem-solving and innovation (Peters, 2021:24). When these learning processes are institutionalised, the Department becomes a setting in which employees not only acquire new skills but also contribute to organisational learning, thereby improving the quality, accountability and responsiveness of public services (DEL Annual Report, 2024:9; Oruh & Adisa, 2024:35-36).

Furthermore, conceptualising the Department of Employment and Labour as a learning institution directly supports monitoring and evaluation efforts. An organisation that values learning is more likely to reflect on performance gaps, adapt to changing policy environments, and respond constructively to feedback from oversight bodies such as the Public Service Commission. In this way, learning and performance

become mutually reinforcing: staff development strengthens service delivery, and performance assessment informs new learning needs. Ultimately, by embracing the notion of the public institution as a learning place, the Department of Employment and Labour can better fulfil its constitutional and legislative mandate, while simultaneously cultivating a workforce capable of meeting the evolving demands of the South African public sector (Oruh & Adisa, 2024:36; Bound, et al., 2023:21).

2.7.1 Work environment constraints

Work environment constraints often arise from ineffective management practices. In many instances, management does not fully utilise the skills and competencies of employees, resulting in underperformance and low morale. Employees are frequently not provided with clear expectations regarding their roles and responsibilities, which contributes to confusion and inefficiency. In addition, management may supply inadequate or outdated equipment, processes, and tools, which negatively affects productivity and service delivery. Poor recruitment and placement practices further compound these challenges, as employees are sometimes appointed to positions that do not align with their qualifications, experience, or skill sets (Suravi, 2024:49; Cloete, 2024:29).

Training and development are critical organisational functions due to their positive impact on both individual performance and organisational growth. In the South African public sector, skills development is a key policy priority for addressing persistent challenges such as high unemployment, skills mismatches, and capacity constraints. National policy frameworks, including the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, emphasise the need for continuous skills development, improved workplace training, and effective human resource management to enhance state capability and service delivery (South African Government, 2024; WPTPS, 1995:Chapter 2).

South Africa's labour market continues to be characterised by high unemployment rates and severe youth labour market challenges. Recent data indicate that more than 4.8 million young people aged 15 to 34 were unemployed in early 2025, with youth unemployment rates exceeding 46 %, and a large proportion of youth not in employment, education or training. Skills mismatches persist, with many young

graduates struggling to find jobs that match their qualifications and additional barriers in technical and vocational pathways (Statistics South Africa, 2026).

Initiatives such as the Youth Development and Career Expo, led by government and stakeholders, are part of efforts to bridge these gaps by disseminating information on career pathways, training opportunities, and entrepreneurship for underprivileged youth. However, the persistent skills deficit highlights that workplace training programmes must be improved and aligned with labour market needs to support sustainable public sector development and youth employability (Statistics South Africa, 2026).

2.7.2 Factors affecting training and development

This section analyses internal and external factors influencing skills development in the public sector.

2.7.2.1 Population profile

South Africa's approach to training and development cannot be understood in isolation from the country's socio-economic and historical profile. The legacy of apartheid continues to shape patterns of inequality in education, employment and skills acquisition, resulting in persistent disparities in access to quality training opportunities. Despite political transformation, structural inequalities remain evident in the labour market, where large segments of the population, particularly Black South Africans, youth and rural communities, experience limited access to education and skills development pathways (Grelle & Hofmann, 2024:262). Francis (2019:7) argues that these inequalities translate directly into skills shortages and mismatches, as many individuals enter the labour market without the foundational competencies required for further training or meaningful employment.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2022) notes that South Africa has a substantial proportion of young people who are not in employment, education or training, which places pressure on the state to design inclusive and responsive skills development systems. Without effective training interventions, this demographic reality reinforces long-term unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. Consequently, training and development policies must be deliberately structured to

absorb and empower young people, transforming demographic pressure into economic potential.

Furthermore, the unequal quality of schooling in South Africa has a direct bearing on training outcomes. Many individuals enter training programmes with weak literacy, numeracy and technical foundations, which constrains their ability to benefit fully from workplace learning. Employees often lack both awareness of available training opportunities and the educational preparedness needed to maximise such opportunities. This highlights the interconnectedness of the broader education system and workplace-based training, and demonstrates how structural socio-economic conditions influence the implementation of skills development legislation (Salas, et al., 2019:76).

The constitutional framework of South Africa provides a normative foundation for addressing these challenges. The Constitution of South Africa of 1996 explicitly recognises education and training as fundamental rights. Section 29 guarantees everyone the right to basic education, including adult basic education, and further obliges the state to make further education progressively available and accessible through reasonable measures. In this context, training and development are constitutionally linked to the broader transformation agenda of the post-apartheid state. The principle of progressive realisation acknowledges that while immediate equality may not be feasible, deliberate and sustained efforts must be made to expand access to education and skills over time. This has significant implications for policy implementation, as it requires the state to prioritise long-term investment in skills infrastructure, including vocational education, workplace learning and adult education (Constitution, 1996:Section 29).

2.7.2.2 Supply and demand for labour

Labour supply refers to the availability of individuals willing and able to work, characterised by diverse skill levels, educational qualifications, demographic profiles, and personal attributes. Labour demand, by contrast, is determined by employers' needs, which are influenced by organisational strategies, sectoral growth patterns, productivity levels, and the overall competitiveness of the economy. From a policy perspective, understanding labour demand is critical, as it informs the planning and

alignment of education, training, and skills development interventions with current and anticipated economic needs (DHET, 2022).

The dynamics of labour supply and demand are shaped by a wide range of interrelated short-term shocks and long-term structural trends. In the South African context, these include recent global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical instability, and economic uncertainty, as well as enduring forces such as globalisation, technological change, demographic transitions, and climate change. While governments have limited direct control over many of these external and structural factors, public policy plays a crucial role in mitigating adverse impacts and leveraging positive developments to support inclusive economic growth and employment creation. Continuous monitoring of emerging skills requirements is therefore essential to ensure alignment between labour market needs and the national skills development system (DHET, 2022).

Imbalances between skills supply and demand manifest in three principal forms: skills shortages, skills surpluses, and skills mismatches. Skills shortages arise when employers are unable to fill vacancies due to an insufficient supply of appropriately skilled workers at prevailing wage levels and working conditions. Skills surpluses occur when the supply of particular skills exceeds demand, often reflected in high unemployment rates among specific occupational or educational groups. Skills mismatches refer either to situations where workers' skills are inadequate for their jobs or where individuals are overqualified relative to their current occupations, leading to inefficiencies and reduced productivity (DHET, 2022; ILO, 2022).

Labour market challenges in South Africa have far-reaching socio-economic consequences. High unemployment remains the most pressing issue, with a significant proportion of the population excluded from productive economic participation. This contributes directly to poverty and income inequality, limiting households' ability to meet basic needs such as education, healthcare and transportation. High living costs, combined with rising taxes and transport and food prices, further erode household resilience. Low labour productivity, exacerbated by skills shortages and external shocks such as climate-related disasters, also constrains economic performance (OECD, 2025).

In essence, skills supply and demand in South Africa must be understood within a broader national and global context. The interaction between these forces can generate skills imbalances that signal the need for timely and coordinated policy interventions. Figure 3.1 illustrates the dynamic interaction between skills supply and skills demand within the labour market. Skills supply is shaped by education and training systems, demographic trends, migration, and labour force participation. Skills demand is driven by economic growth, sectoral priorities, technological change, and employer requirements. Misalignment between these two forces results in skills imbalances, manifested as skills shortages, skills surpluses, and skills mismatches, which may signal the need for targeted policy intervention.

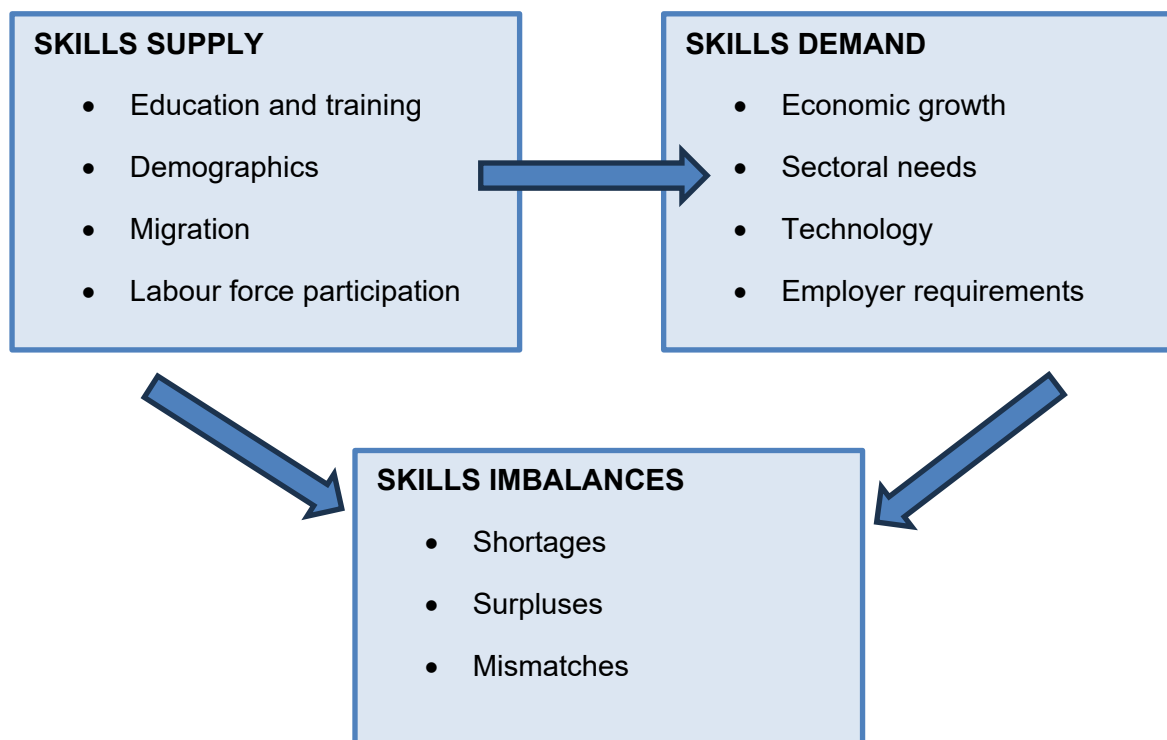


Figure 2.4: Conceptual framework for the analysis of skills supply, skills demand and skills imbalances

Source: Researcher's own interpretation.

2.7.2.3 Technological acceleration and change

In the South African context, the structure of the labour market is undergoing a marked transformation driven significantly by technological change, resulting in a shift in occupational composition towards high-skill categories. Evidence from the *Skills Supply and Demand in South Africa 2022* report (PSETA, 2022:10-11) indicates that shortage levels are most acute in occupations traditionally associated with higher skill levels, such as managerial and professional roles, while lower-skill occupations face a relative surplus of labour. Between the second quarter of 2021 and the second quarter of 2022, the proportion of high-skill occupations in the employed population increased slightly, while low-skill and medium-skill categories either stagnated or declined, reflecting structural shifts in job opportunities as digital technologies become more embedded across sectors of the economy. These labour market dynamics are further underscored by persistent shortages of specialised information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Recent industry surveys show that critical technology-related areas such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence (AI)/machine learning, big data analytics and systems design are among the most difficult to fill in South Africa, with employers prioritising these competencies as essential for competitiveness. Furthermore, demand for AI skills is expanding rapidly, with AI-related job postings increasing by more than 350% since 2021, and an estimated 77% year-on-year surge in advertised roles requiring AI expertise between 2026 and 2027, illustrating the acceleration of technological demand for specialised competencies.

These trends suggest that technological change is not merely reshaping the nature of work in the abstract, but is concretely reconfiguring skills demand within the South African labour market. As digital technologies displace or augment routine tasks, employment opportunities increasingly favour those with high levels of technical and cognitive skills, including digital literacy, systems thinking and problem-solving capabilities. This growing premium on digital and technology-related skills means that individuals lacking foundational competencies, particularly those from historically disadvantaged communities with limited access to quality education, face diminished prospects in the labour market. Moreover, the inequality in foundational digital access remains a profound challenge. While technology use is rising in some formal sectors, disparities in access to computers and reliable internet at primary, secondary and

tertiary levels of education persist, deepening the digital divide and reinforcing labour market segmentation. Addressing these trends requires that South Africa's education and training systems engage proactively with technological change at all levels (PSETA, 2022:14).

2.8 DETERMINING TRAINING NEEDS

When planning training, the first step is to accurately identify the real training and development needs within an organisation (Cloete, 2024:32). Section 2 of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 outlines the purposes of the Act, with particular emphasis on its third objective, which is to use the workplace as an active learning environment, to acquire new skills, and to provide opportunities for new entrants to the labour market to gain work experience. This legislative framework underscores the importance of aligning workplace training with both organisational goals and the broader national objectives of skills development and employment creation, which remain critical in the South African context given the current youth unemployment rate exceeding 46 % in 2025 (Statistics South Africa, 2025(b); SDA, 1998:Section 2).

The determination of training needs begins with a thorough job analysis. When the tasks to be performed are described, analysed and evaluated for the creation of posts, it becomes necessary to determine the educational and other qualifications expected of post incumbents. In the contemporary South African workplace, educational qualifications serve as essential prerequisites for appointment and promotion in most positions, with candidates generally required to obtain prescribed qualifications from recognised institutions such as schools, universities. By establishing these requirements, organisations address a significant portion of their training needs at the point of appointment (Crawshaw, Budhwar & Davis, 2024:56-57). Within this context, the departmental Human Resource Skills Development Policy adequately provides for the implementation of the aims and objectives of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, as it facilitates the systematic identification of skills gaps and supports targeted learning and development interventions aligned with legislative requirements (DEL Strategic Plan, 2025:6-7).

Beyond formal qualifications, additional factors also influence training requirements. Employee behaviour, attitudes, and perspectives must align with the organisational

environment, as formal education alone cannot equip employees with the specific skills and competencies demanded by individual workplaces. Moreover, the dynamic nature of work, organisational change, and job rotation necessitate continuous training to ensure employees remain competent and adaptable throughout their careers. Training is therefore a continuous function, enabling employees to work effectively and efficiently from entry through to retirement (Crawshaw, Budhwar & Davis, 2024:57).

Orientation is an essential precursor to any training programme. New employees, as well as those transferred or promoted to new roles, must be oriented to develop the attitudes, behaviours, and perspectives required for their specific positions (Cloete, 2024:32). In South Africa, this aligns with the Skills Development Act and related policies that emphasise workplace learning as a mechanism for increasing workforce capability, enhancing productivity, and promoting social and economic inclusion. Effective orientation and training help bridge the gap between formal education and practical workplace demands, ensuring that employees are prepared to contribute meaningfully to organisational performance and national development objectives (DHET, 2023).

2.8.1 Training needs assessment

Training Needs Assessment (TNA) can be defined as the process of evaluating the organisation, individual employees, and their tasks to identify the gaps between what people currently know, do, or feel, and what they should know, do, or feel to perform competently. TNA involves analysing the differences between current organisational practices or employee performance and what is required to meet operational and strategic objectives. It is an organisational intervention aimed at identifying gaps between current outcomes and expected results (Mayombe, 2024:144).

Training needs can be categorised into four main levels: macro, meso, micro and mega. Macro-level needs are influenced by national and international political, social, economic and technological factors. These factors shape how organisations approach training and development. For example, technological advancements require organisations to adopt modern methods and techniques to remain competitive. In South Africa, national challenges such as high illiteracy and youth unemployment can be addressed through workplace literacy and skills programmes, demonstrating

corporate social responsibility while improving employee capabilities (Mayombe, 2024:134; DHET, 2023).

Meso-level assessment focuses on the organisation, considering strategic objectives, resource availability, management support, and organisational climate. Training needs may arise from performance problems such as customer complaints, delays, high maintenance costs, absenteeism, low morale, or workplace accidents. Addressing these needs ensures that employees have the skills necessary for promotion, transfer, and a broader understanding of organisational goals (Erasmus, et al., 2016:80). In the South African public sector, meso-level TNAs are particularly important for implementing policies such as the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 and the NSDS (DHET, 2023).

Micro-level needs focus on individual employees and operational work content. This involves determining the competencies required to perform a specific job and identifying gaps between current and expected performance. Micro-level assessment considers both job content and individual performance. For instance, operational needs may involve developing nurses or managers in a hospital setting. Individual performance assessment ensures that underperformance is accurately diagnosed, distinguishing between skills deficiencies and other factors such as personal or domestic challenges (Mayombe, 2024:135). Micro-level training also supports performance management by equipping employees to meet personal development goals, thereby improving organisational efficiency (Suravi, 2024:50). This aligns with one of the objectives of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, namely to develop the skills of the South African workforce, increase investment in education and training, improve return on investment, and enhance workplace learning (SDA, 1998:Chapter 1(2)).

Mega-level needs concern an organisation's contribution to society and its external stakeholders. These include measurable societal outcomes such as health, safety, well-being, environmental protection, and social justice. Organisations may address issues such as pollution, substance abuse, corruption, crime, and civil unrest while promoting positive quality-of-life outcomes. In South Africa, the National Department of Employment and Labour organises ministerial Imbizo sessions to engage communities and discuss societal and socio-economic challenges, linking training and

development interventions to broader social objectives (DEL Annual Report, 2024:9; Erasmus, et al., 2016:135). Table 2.1 lists the levels of TNA and provides a relevant example per level.

Table 2.1: Levels of Training Needs Assessment

Level	Focus and Examples
MACRO (National/Sector)	National and international trends and policy needs. Skills shortages and labour market demands. National literacy and skills development priorities. Example: Aligning training with national skills strategies.
MESO (Organisational)	Organisational alignment. Strategy implementation. Resource utilisation and climate. Performance issues (absenteeism, complaints). Example: Workplace skills development plans.
MICRO (Individual)	Individual and job/task level. Competency gaps. Knowledge, skills, attitudes. Job performance standards. Example: Competency training for specific roles.
MEGA (Societal Impact)	Societal and external outcomes Organisational value to society Broader social issues Example: Initiatives addressing community well-being

Source: (Adapted from Erasmus, et al., 2016:135-136).

2.8.2 Types of needs assessments

The starting point for any training needs analysis in the public sector is the department's strategic and operational plans, including its annual performance plan and service delivery objectives. The purpose of an organisational needs assessment is to examine the internal environment of a public institution and to identify factors that influence employee performance, service delivery and overall organisational effectiveness. Organisational needs in the public sector are shaped by legislative mandates, policy priorities and constitutional values, and are therefore aligned with strategic objectives such as improving service delivery outcomes, enhancing administrative efficiency, strengthening ethical conduct, improving employee morale and ensuring the effective utilisation of public resources (SAnews, 2025; Cloete, 2019:158). Within this context, the training and development needs of employees are systematically identified and considered when learning and development programmes are designed, ensuring that such programmes are responsive to both organisational priorities and individual competency gaps. For example, where behavioural or skills deficits, such as ineffective interpersonal communication, inadequate customer care or limited technical competence, negatively affect employee performance or citizen satisfaction, these deficiencies constitute organisational needs that must be addressed through targeted learning and development interventions (Fitzsimmons, Behan Dougherty & Myers, 2023:137).

By aligning training initiatives with strategic objectives and employee needs, public institutions are better positioned to enhance performance, accountability and the quality of services rendered to the public. An organisational needs assessment considers system-wide components, including organisational plans, available resources, internal and external constraints, and broader environmental factors such as government policies, economic realities, and societal values (Oruh & Adisa, 2024:35). In the South African public sector, such assessments are critical due to evolving policy frameworks, including the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, the Public Service Regulations, and the NSDS (DHET, 2023).

Group needs assessments focus on a number of employees performing similar functions who require the same types of skills. This level of assessment enables training practitioners to identify interventions tailored to specific job categories or

teams, such as leadership development, management training, or team-building programmes. In South Africa, group needs assessments are particularly relevant in sectors experiencing skills shortages, such as engineering, public administration, and healthcare, where coordinated training for multiple employees ensures consistency and efficiency in service delivery (Fitzsimmons, et al., 2023:137; SAnews, 2025).

Individual, or person-specific, needs assessments examine the readiness and specific requirements of an employee for training and development. This process identifies performance deficiencies, knowledge gaps, or behavioural issues that limit effectiveness in a given role. For example, a secretary who lacks basic telephone etiquette represents a gap between current competencies and the expectations of the job. Individual needs assessments consider factors such as educational background, previous training, experience, aptitude, personality and specific job requirements to determine targeted learning objectives (Cloete, 2019:159). In the South African public service, individual assessments help align employee competencies with the requirements of posts and with the broader objectives of workforce transformation and skills development as outlined in the Skills Development Act (Crawshaw, Budhwar & Davis, 2024:58).

Job needs assessments focus on the specific requirements of a role itself. They identify training needs that arise from changes in job content, systems, processes, technology, or the work environment. This type of assessment involves analysing the tasks, knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviours required for a job to determine the content of training programmes. For example, the introduction of new digital systems in government departments may require targeted IT skills development for staff. Job needs assessments are essential for ensuring that employees acquire the specific competencies required to perform their roles efficiently and effectively (Fitzsimmons, et al., 2023:138).

National and sectoral needs assessments focus on identifying skills shortages and development requirements at a broader level. In South Africa, Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) are mandated to develop sector-specific plans to address skills gaps across industries such as construction, agriculture, and public administration. These assessments align workforce capabilities with national economic priorities, improve employability, and support the strategic objectives of the

NSDS. For instance, the construction and healthcare sectors continue to experience critical shortages of qualified professionals, highlighting the need for coordinated sector-wide interventions (Fitzsimmons, et al., 2023:139; DHET, 2024).

Content analysis involves examining the documents, laws, policies, and procedures relevant to a particular job to determine the knowledge and information employees must possess. This type of assessment relies on manuals, regulations and other organisational documents, with experienced employees often acting as subject matter experts. Content analysis is particularly useful in ensuring that training programmes are aligned with statutory requirements and operational procedures, which is vital in South African public sector departments where compliance with legislation, regulations, and governance frameworks is strictly monitored (Fitzsimmons, et al., 2023:142).

2.9 MEETING TRAINING NEEDS

Educational qualifications are generally prescribed for appointment or promotion to almost all posts in the public sector. Directives regarding qualifications should be continuously revised to remain aligned with evolving duties, policy changes, and developments in the education sector, and such prescriptions should ideally be codified through regulations rather than legislative amendments. However, in South Africa, there remains a significant gap, as incumbents of administrative posts are not always required to possess specific post-matric qualifications. This situation is particularly concerning given that administrative positions are often held by senior officials and leaders within public institutions. The result is that some aspects of public service delivery continue to be conducted in a manner that can be perceived as unprofessional or inconsistent with best practices (DPSA, 2024).

New employees must be properly inducted or oriented to their roles and work environments. This responsibility primarily lies with supervisors, who must ensure that newcomers feel valued, accepted, and supported in developing a sense of purpose. Effective induction contributes to employee retention and performance by familiarising employees with the organisation's culture, systems, and expectations. Induction typically occurs in three stages. The pre-entry stage involves issuing a letter of appointment with conditions of service. The reporting stage ensures that supervisors

introduce the newcomer to colleagues and higher-level officials, creating a welcoming environment. Finally, the continuation stage gradually familiarises the employee with their duties, distinguishing orientation from functional training (Kerkhoff & Moschopoulos, 2024:76). In contemporary South Africa, structured induction programmes are increasingly recommended across public sector departments to promote inclusivity and compliance with employment equity objectives (DPSA, 2024).

In-service training provides employees with the knowledge and skills required to perform specific functional tasks and to progress from entry-level supervision to senior management positions. This type of training is essential for enhancing organisational capacity and ensuring that employees remain effective in evolving work environments. In-service training must be undertaken on a regular and structured basis (Kerkhoff & Moschopoulos, 2024:75-77). In the South African public sector, in-service training aligns with the mandates of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, which seeks to develop employee competencies and improve overall workforce performance (DPSA, 2024).

On-the-job training is prevalent across the public sector, particularly for routine and manual work performed by clerks, administrative staff and support personnel. Supervisors play a critical role in ensuring that employees acquire the practical skills needed to perform their jobs effectively. The advantage of on-the-job training lies in its contextual relevance, as employees learn directly within their work environment. This method is particularly suitable for professional officers and technicians who have acquired formal education but require workplace-specific skills to operate effectively in government institutions (Kerkhoff & Moschopoulos, 2024:75).

Apprenticeship programmes remain an effective method for skills transfer, particularly when coordinated with personnel associations, trade unions, technical colleges, and universities of technology. In South Africa, apprenticeship and learnership programmes form an integral part of public sector skills development, contributing to the objectives of the Skills Development Act and the NSDS (SAQA, 2024).

Despite the growth of workplace-based learning, classroom training continues to be necessary for certain groups, including trainee diplomats, police recruits, and clerical staff in specialised functional areas. Classroom training utilises a variety of instructional techniques, such as lectures, group discussions, case studies, role-

playing, simulations, and demonstrations. These methods are particularly effective in the South African public sector, where structured learning ensures standardisation, compliance with regulations, and the professionalisation of the workforce (SAQA, 2024).

Alignment of the types of training delivery methods with the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 and the NSDS ensures that training contributes to workforce competence, employability and social development (DHET, 2023). Table 2.2 tabulates different types of training delivery methods. These training methods are not mutually exclusive; they are often combined to maximise learning outcomes.

Table 2.2: Types of training delivery methods in the South African public sector

Training Method	Description	Advantages	Current South African Examples
Induction/Orientation	Introducing new employees to their roles, organisation culture, systems, and colleagues.	Helps employees adapt quickly, promotes engagement and retention, clarifies expectations.	New recruits in the Department of Employment and Labour, South African Police Service, and Department of Finance undergo structured induction programmes aligned with employment equity objectives.
In-Service Training	Continuous learning to develop knowledge and skills for current roles, including leadership development.	Enhances employee competence, supports career progression, ensures alignment with organisational goals.	Training on updated labour legislation for HR officials in the Department of Employment and Labour.
On-the-Job Training	Practical learning in the actual work environment for specific tasks.	Immediate application of skills, contextual relevance, cost-effective for small groups.	Clerical staff and administrative assistants in public service departments learning new digital filing systems or reporting procedures.

Training Method	Description	Advantages	Current South African Examples
Reading/Self-Directed Learning	Employees engage in literature, manuals, and regulations for self-development.	Flexible, encourages continuous professional development, reinforces compliance and knowledge.	HR officers studying updates to the Public Service Regulations or Skills Development Act.
Apprenticeship/Learnership	Formal practical training with technical colleges, universities, and trade unions.	Transfers technical skills, integrates theory and practice, supports workforce development.	Electrical apprentices in government infrastructure projects; learnerships for youth in municipal departments.
Classroom Training	Structured sessions using lectures, case studies, simulations, role-playing, and group discussions.	Standardised instruction, interactive learning, suitable for specialised skills or regulatory compliance.	Diplomatic trainees, police recruits, and clerical staff in departments like Labour and Finance undergoing functional and compliance training.

Source: (SAQA, 2024; DHET, 2023).

2.10 DETERMINING TRAINING POLICY

The training of public officials is indispensable to the effective functioning of public institutions and the delivery of quality public services. Clear policy statements are therefore required to provide guidelines for the performance of administrative and operational activities related to the implementation of training and development initiatives. The longstanding practice of prescribing specific educational requirements for appointment to designated posts confirms the widely accepted principle that public officials must meet defined knowledge and skills criteria. Meaningful progress in the training of officials can only be achieved where such training is underpinned by legislative policy. Accordingly, it should be provided by law that appropriate educational qualifications are prescribed for all posts and that structured training is offered to supplement basic qualifications. This necessitates deliberate organisational arrangements for training, as well as the allocation of adequate personnel and financial resources. Training should thus be recognised as a specialised field of work requiring specific knowledge, skills and work behaviour (Virtanen, Tammeaid & Jalonen, 2023:65).

Virtanen, Tammeaid and Jalonen (2023:68) further emphasises that accountability is central to effective training implementation, arguing that senior officials in public institutions must be held responsible for the execution of training directives. He asserts that policy statements on training should begin with a clearly articulated philosophical and value base guiding the behaviour of public officials. These values may be derived from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, particularly the principles of co-operative government, the Bill of Rights, and the oaths and solemn affirmations prescribed for executive political office-bearers. Cloete (2019:159) further argues that training policies for public officials should be strengthened through complementary training initiatives for members of legislatures and political office-bearers at all levels of government.

In determining an effective training policy, Virtanen, Tammeaid and Jalonen (2023:69) and Spink (2024:3) conclude that government departments must give due consideration to policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. Once legislative guidelines are established, these should be reinforced through regulations, procedure manuals and administrative frameworks to ensure that training becomes an integrated

component of personnel administration. All role players involved in personnel management, including central personnel institutions, departmental human resource units, executive political office-bearers, senior managers and supervisors, must collectively ensure the consistent implementation of training policies.

2.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive review of literature on training and development within the South African public administration context. It explored the historical evolution of skills development from the post-apartheid era to the present, highlighting how legislation, policies and strategic frameworks, such as the Constitution of 1996, the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, and the NSDS, had shaped workforce development and capacity building in public institutions. The chapter also examined the theoretical foundations of training and development, drawing on Human Capital Theory, Organisational Learning Theory, and Adult Learning Theory, to show how investments in employee knowledge, skills, and learning systems enhanced both individual performance and organisational effectiveness.

In addition, the chapter analysed practical aspects of training and development, including organisational and individual needs, work environment constraints, and methods for identifying and meeting training requirements. Various approaches to training, such as induction, on-the-job training, classroom instruction and apprenticeship programmes, were discussed to illustrate how public institutions fostered professional growth and service delivery. By integrating theoretical, legislative and practical perspectives, this chapter provided a strong foundation for understanding the challenges, strategies and opportunities for effective training and development in South Africa's public sector, ultimately supporting the goal of building a skilled, ethical, and representative workforce.

The research design and methodology followed in this study are elaborated on in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3:

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research design and methodology adopted to investigate the implementation of skills development within the selected case study. It provides an explanation of how the study was conceptualised, designed and executed in order to address the research objectives and questions in a methodologically sound manner. The chapter begins by outlining the overall research design, with specific reference to the mixed methods approach, followed by a discussion of the exploratory, descriptive and explanatory research approaches that guided the study.

The chapter further explains the research methodology applied in the study, including the use of a literature review, document analysis and a case study method to provide both contextual and empirical grounding. Attention is given to the analysis of official and mass media documents, as well as the role of empirical research in generating primary data. The population and sampling techniques are then described, outlining the selection of questionnaire respondents and interview participants, the sampling methods employed, and the criteria for inclusion in the study.

In addition, the chapter details the data gathering instruments used, namely structured questionnaires and semi-structured personal interviews, and explains how these instruments were aligned with the research objectives. The processes followed for data analysis are also discussed to demonstrate how both quantitative and qualitative data were systematically analysed and interpreted. The chapter further addresses issues of reliability, validity and trustworthiness to ensure the credibility and rigour of the research findings. Finally, ethical considerations underpinning the study are outlined.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design refers to the overall strategy that outlines how data will be collected, analysed, and interpreted in order to address the research problem systematically. It serves as a blueprint for the research process by specifying the methods, procedures,

and techniques that will be employed to achieve the research objectives (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2020:14).

In this study, the research design is structured to examine both the extent of the Skills Development Act of 1998 implementation and the underlying reasons influencing its effectiveness within a specific public-sector directorate. Given the complexity of skills development in a legislative and organisational context, a mixed methods research design is adopted.

3.2.1 Mixed methods research design

Mixed methods research combines qualitative and quantitative approaches within a single study to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon. Quantitative research focuses on numerical data to measure patterns, trends and relationships, while qualitative research explores participants' experiences, perceptions and contextual realities in depth. Quantitative data in this study enabled the measurement of employees' perceptions regarding the availability, relevance and effectiveness of learning and development programmes, as well as the level of alignment with the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998. Qualitative data, collected through interviews, provided deeper insight into institutional practices, implementation challenges, and contextual factors that cannot be fully captured through numerical data alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018:7).

The mixed methods approach is grounded in pragmatism, which emphasises the use of methods best suited to addressing the research problem rather than adherence to a single philosophical paradigm. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, the study achieves a more holistic understanding of skills development implementation in the public sector (Grønmo, 2024:27; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010:108).

This study followed a sequential explanatory mixed methods design (**QUAN → QUAL**). Quantitative data were collected and analysed first through a structured questionnaire, followed by qualitative data collection through semi-structured interviews. The qualitative phase was used to explain, contextualise and expand upon the quantitative findings. Both datasets were accorded equal importance during data interpretation and in the formulation of conclusions and recommendations (Poth, 2023:92).

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Research approaches guide how a study seeks to answer its research questions. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019:8) identify three primary research approaches: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. These research approaches are defined in the following sections with reference to its applicability to this study.

3.3.1 Exploratory research

Exploratory research is particularly suitable for research projects that investigate phenomena where limited prior knowledge exists, or where the problem has not yet been clearly defined. It is commonly employed when researchers seek to gain initial insights, clarify concepts and identify key variables that may later be examined in greater depth. This type of research is valuable in contexts characterised by uncertainty, complexity or insufficient empirical evidence, such as the implementation of legislative frameworks within specific organisational settings (Fadele & Rocha: 2025:12).

According to Fouché, Strydom and Roestenburg (2021:201), exploratory research often follows a sequential design, in which qualitative methods are used during the initial phase of the study to explore a phenomenon before quantitative methods are applied. In such designs, qualitative data are collected first to uncover patterns, meanings, perceptions and contextual factors. The findings from this exploratory phase are then used to inform the development of quantitative research instruments, such as questionnaires, which are designed to measure or test issues identified during the qualitative stage.

Exploratory research typically focuses on depth rather than breadth, enabling the researcher to engage in detailed and flexible inquiry. It allows for the use of open-ended data collection techniques such as interviews, document analysis and observations, which are particularly useful for uncovering institutional dynamics, implementation challenges and stakeholder perspectives. As noted by De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2011:17-18), exploratory research often embraces a bounded system, limited by time, context and place, and is commonly applied in single-case or small-scale studies that require in-depth understanding through multiple sources of evidence.

In the context of this study, exploratory research contributed to understanding the underlying institutional, organisational and contextual factors influencing skills development and the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998. Although exploratory research alone was insufficient to explain causal relationships, it played a crucial role in illuminating issues that may not be visible through purely quantitative approaches and in laying the groundwork for more structured forms of analysis.

3.3.2 Descriptive research

Descriptive research is commonly used to systematically describe and document the characteristics, processes and conditions of a particular phenomenon. Many areas of inquiry begin with a descriptive phase, as it enables researchers to identify relevant variables and establish an accurate profile of the phenomenon under investigation. The primary objective of descriptive research is to provide a clear and detailed account of what exists, rather than to determine causal relationships or explain why certain conditions occur. It focuses on accurately portraying the nature, scope and distribution of variables, often through structured data collection methods such as surveys, questionnaires, and document reviews. Descriptive research therefore plays an important role in building an empirical foundation upon which further analysis can be conducted (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2020:12-14; De Vos, et al., 2011:19).

Descriptive research can involve the intensive study of a specific case, programme or organisational unit in order to generate rich and contextualised descriptions. According to De Vos, et al. (2011:20), such studies are particularly useful when the aim is to analyse and interpret a phenomenon within its real-life context. In this regard, descriptive research allows researchers to capture existing practices, institutional arrangements, and patterns of behaviour in a systematic and objective manner. However, a key limitation of descriptive research is that it does not adequately address questions of causality. While it can indicate the presence or absence of certain characteristics and describe their extent, it does not explain how or why these characteristics emerged. As a result, descriptive research is unable to account for the underlying mechanisms or factors that give rise to observed conditions.

Within this study, descriptive research contributed to mapping the current state of learning and development practices, the extent of alignment with legislative requirements and the perceived effectiveness of skills development initiatives. These descriptive insights were essential for contextualising the research findings, but they were complemented by explanatory elements that sought to account for the reasons behind observed patterns and outcomes.

3.3.3 Explanatory research

Although elements of exploratory and descriptive research are present, this study is primarily explanatory in nature. Explanatory research seeks to explain relationships between variables and to identify the underlying causes of a phenomenon (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2020:15-16). In this study, the objective was not merely to describe existing learning and development practices, but to explain how and why the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 influences the effectiveness of learning and development programmes within a specific public-sector context. The study examined the relationship between legislative compliance and programme effectiveness, as well as the organisational and institutional factors that shape skills development implementation. The reasons why existing learning and development initiatives may fail to achieve their intended outcomes were also investigated.

Consistent with an explanatory approach, the research design began with the collection and analysis of quantitative data, followed by qualitative inquiry to explain and interpret the quantitative results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:47). This approach enabled the development of evidence-based recommendations aimed at improving policy implementation and organisational practice. While exploratory elements assist in uncovering context-specific challenges and descriptive elements provide a detailed account of current practices, the overarching purpose of the study was to explain causal and influencing factors, thereby justifying explanatory research as the most suitable approach.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the framework that guides the selection and application of methods and techniques used to collect, analyse and interpret data in

order to address the research problem (Nieuwenhuis, 2020:73). This section outlines the methodological choices underpinning the study and explains how these choices contribute to achieving the research objectives. Specifically, the section discusses the role of the literature review, document analysis, the case study method and empirical data collection in examining the implementation of skills development within the selected organisational context.

Given the complexity of skills development within a legislated public-sector environment, the study adopted a mixed methods case study methodology, allowing for both breadth and depth of analysis.

3.4.1 Literature review

The literature review formed a foundational component of this study and ensured that the research is firmly grounded within the existing body of knowledge in the field of Public Administration and public-sector human resource development. A literature review enables the researcher to identify dominant theories, key debates, legislative frameworks and empirical findings relevant to the research problem, while also highlighting gaps that justify the need for the study (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2020:7).

In this study, the literature review was conducted during the early stages of the research and continuously refined throughout the research process. It informed the formulation of the research problem, research questions, research design and data collection instruments, and later served as a benchmark against which empirical findings were analysed and interpreted. Sources consulted included Public Administration textbooks and handbooks, peer-reviewed journal articles, policy and strategy documents, government reports, legislation relevant to education, training, and skills development in South Africa, as well as completed theses and dissertations within the discipline. Particular emphasis was placed on literature addressing public-sector skills development, human capital development, legislative implementation, and transformation within the South African public service.

The literature review revealed that the transition from the apartheid era to the post-1994 democratic dispensation placed significant emphasis on transforming the public service through education, skills development and equitable career progression. The

enactment of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 formed a central pillar of this transformation agenda (Selane & Odeku, 2024:441). However, the literature also indicates persistent challenges related to ineffective implementation, skills mismatches, and unequal representation in senior public-sector positions. Studies highlight the continued underrepresentation of historically disadvantaged groups and the need for more targeted and effectively implemented skills development strategies to promote equity and organisational performance (Moraka, Mudau & Mukonza, 2021:202).

3.4.2 Document analysis

Document analysis was employed as a qualitative research method to complement the literature review and empirical data collection. Document analysis involves the systematic examination and interpretation of documents in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge. This method is particularly useful in public-sector research, where policies, reports, and official records provide valuable insights into institutional practices and decision-making processes (Gillespie, Glăveanu & Saint Lauren, 2024:47).

Both primary and secondary documents were analysed in this study. Primary documents included original materials produced within the Department of Employment and Labour, while secondary documents consisted of published materials derived from other sources. To enhance clarity and analytical rigour, documents were categorised into official documents and mass media documents (Humble & Radina, 2025:86).

3.4.2.1 Official documents

Official documents are formal records produced and maintained by organisations on a continuous basis and are generally structured, authoritative and factual in nature (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:48). In this study, official documents such as annual reports, audit reports, strategic plans, training and development policies, and government statistics relating to skills development were analysed. These documents provided objective data on institutional priorities, compliance with legislative requirements, and the extent of learning and development implementation within the Department of Employment and Labour.

3.4.2.2 Mass media documents

Mass media documents include both printed and digital materials produced for public dissemination, such as newspapers, journals, newsletters, websites, and audio-visual content (Fouché, Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:203). Selected mass media sources were consulted to contextualise skills development within broader public-sector debates and to supplement academic literature with contemporary perspectives on public administration and human resource development.

3.4.3 Case study method

The study adopts a case study methodology, focusing on the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate within the Department of Employment and Labour as a bounded system. A case study approach enables an in-depth examination of a phenomenon within its real-life context and is particularly suitable when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident (Piekkari & Welch, 2018:348). The case study method allows for the collection of rich, contextualised data through multiple sources, including documents, questionnaires and interviews. This methodological approach facilitates the testing of assumptions, policies and theoretical propositions related to skills development and legislative implementation within a specific organisational setting (Piekkari & Welch, 2018:349).

Case studies may be situated at different analytical levels, including the micro level (individuals), meso level (organisations), or macro level (communities or systems) (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). This study is primarily located at the meso level, as it examines organisational practices, institutional arrangements and policy implementation within a government department.

3.4.4 Empirical research

Empirical research forms a critical component of this study and involves the systematic collection of data from participants to capture their experiences, perceptions and perspectives. Empirical data were gathered through the use of a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, enabling both quantitative measurement and qualitative exploration. Empirical research is grounded in observable and verifiable evidence and requires that collected data be analysed in

relation to relevant theoretical frameworks and legislative provisions (Poth, 2023:94-96). In this study, empirical findings were compared against the objectives and requirements of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, as well as scholarly insights from the literature review. This approach ensured that conclusions and recommendations provided in Chapter 7 were grounded in real-life organisational experiences and evidence-based analysis.

The specific data gathering instruments and procedures employed in the study are discussed in detail in below Section 4.6 *Data Gathering Instruments*.

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

To address the research objectives, quantitative data were collected through the administration of a structured questionnaire (see Annexure E: Questionnaire) The questionnaire was distributed to officials occupying various positions within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate, including Directors, Deputy Directors, and other operational staff. The instrument was designed using a Likert-scale format to facilitate the measurement of respondents' perceptions, experiences, and views regarding learning and development practices and the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998. Quantitative data were captured and analysed using Microsoft 365 Excel to enable descriptive and inferential analysis.

Qualitative data collection complemented the quantitative phase and was conducted through semi-structured interviews (see Annexure F: Interview Schedule). This approach allowed for deeper exploration of participants' experiences and interpretations of skills development practices within the Directorate. In addition to primary data collected from participants, documentary sources such as legislation, annual audit reports, strategic plans and official statistics on training and development were analysed. These documents provided authoritative and contextual information that enriched the empirical findings and supported triangulation of data sources.

3.5.1 Questionnaire respondents

The target population for the quantitative component of the study consisted of all 160 employees within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the Department of Employment and Labour. From this population, a proportional sample

of 144 officials participated in the questionnaire survey, yielding a high response rate and ensuring robust representation across the Directorate.

Participants were drawn from various functional and operational levels within the Directorate, allowing the study to capture a comprehensive institutional perspective on learning and development practices and the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998. The survey focused on organisational and institutional processes rather than individual demographic characteristics, thereby aligning the data collected with the research problem and research questions.

3.5.2 Interview participants

In addition to the questionnaire survey, seven (7) participants were selected to participate in face-to-face semi-structured interviews. These participants were drawn from different occupational levels within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate and included senior managers, middle managers, and operational staff such as Directors, Deputy Directors, Assistant Directors, Supervisors, Clerks, Specialists and Training Facilitators.

The selection of interview participants enabled the study to capture diverse perspectives on the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 and its influence on learning and development programmes. Interviewees provided detailed insights into institutional practices, workforce responses to skills development initiatives, alignment between policy and practice, and the effectiveness of existing training interventions. Participants also reflected on challenges encountered in implementing skills development initiatives and proposed measures to strengthen the effectiveness of learning and development within the Directorate.

The designations of the targeted participants were as follows:

Table 3.1: Interviews – Designation in site population and sample sizes

#	Designation in site population	Sample size	
		Questionnaire	Interview
1	Director	1	1

#	Designation in site population	Sample size	
		Questionnaire	Interview
2	Deputy Directors	4	1
3	Assistant Directors	4	1
4	Supervisors	5	1
5	Clerks	14	1
6	Specialists	2	1
7	Training facilitators	5	1
TOTALS		35	7

Source: Author's own construct

3.5.3 Sampling techniques

Sampling was undertaken to enable meaningful analysis without requiring data collection from every member of the population. The sampling strategy adopted in this study ensured efficiency while maintaining representativeness and analytical depth.

3.5.3.1 Probability sampling

For the quantitative component, probability sampling was employed to select participants for the questionnaire survey. This approach ensured that all members of the target population within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate had an equal chance of being included in the sample. By using random selection, the study minimised selection bias and enhanced the generalisability of the findings to the broader Directorate population (Fouché, Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:198).

3.5.3.2 Non-probability (purposive) sampling

The qualitative component of the study utilised non-probability purposive sampling to select interview participants. This approach enabled the deliberate selection of

individuals who possessed relevant knowledge, experience and insight into skills development and training practices within the Directorate. Participants were chosen based on their involvement in or exposure to learning and development initiatives and their ability to articulate institutional challenges and implementation dynamics related to the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998.

3.5.3.3 Inclusion criteria

Participants included in the study met the following criteria: They were between 18 and 65 years of age; and they had a minimum of six months' relevant experience in skills development, training, education, or related functional areas within the Department. These criteria ensured that participants had sufficient exposure to organisational processes and learning and development initiatives to contribute meaningfully to the study.

3.6 DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENTS

Data gathering instruments refer to the research tools used by a researcher to collect data in order to answer the research questions (Kolstoe, Durning, Yost & Aleksandrova-Yankulovska, 2023:7). The data gathering instruments utilised to generate primary data for this study are discussed in the sections that follow.

Quantitative data may be collected using a variety of methods, including structured observation schedules, structured interview schedules, questionnaires, checklists, indexes and scales. In this study, structured questionnaires were employed as the primary quantitative data collection instrument, in line with the recommendations of Fouché, Strydom and Roestenburg (2021:207).

3.6.1 Questionnaire

According to Christensen, Johnson and Turner (2020:71-72), a questionnaire is a data collection instrument completed by willing research participants and is used to measure opinions, perceptions and self-reported demographic information. Questionnaires may consist of closed-ended items, where participants select responses from predetermined options, and/or open-ended items, where participants provide their own responses.

This study utilised a structured questionnaire to collect quantifiable data relating to the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 and the effectiveness of learning and development programmes within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate. The questionnaire consisted primarily of closed-ended items measured on a Likert scale, which enabled the systematic measurement of respondents' levels of agreement or disagreement with the statements provided.

The questionnaire was administered to public servants within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate, encompassing officials across different occupational levels, from lower-ranking officials to management, including officials from the Training Section. The data collected through the questionnaire were analysed using the Microsoft 365 Excel computer software programme, which facilitated the accurate processing, analysis and presentation of the quantitative data.

In the following section, the questionnaire statements are grouped, and aligned to the research objectives adopted in this study.

3.6.1.1 Grouped questionnaire statements aligned to research objectives

Research objective 1: Contextualisation of skills development

The following statements established the training environment and baseline context in which skills development occurs:

1. Training and development opportunities have been accessible to officials of the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate over the past five years.
2. Training is undertaken on a regular and structured basis within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate.

Research objective 3: Legislative and policy framework

The following statements assessed policy coherence, legislative compliance and perceived outcomes of the Skills Development Act of 1998.

3. The implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 has enhanced the skills and knowledge of the workforce of the Department of Employment and Labour.

4. There is a clear alignment between the departmental Human Resource Skills Development Policy and the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998.
5. The departmental Human Resource Skills Development Policy adequately provides for the implementation of the aims and objectives of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998.

Research objective 4: Implementation of learning and development programmes

The following statements measured practical implementation, participation and fairness in programme delivery.

6. The training and development needs of employees are considered when learning and development programmes are designed.
7. Officials are actively involved in the development of training and development programmes within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate.
8. Training and development programmes are offered equitably to officials to improve functional and job-related skills.

Research objective 5: Institutional and organisational context

The following statement linked skills development to organisational structures and career pathways.

9. The effective implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 contributes to improved career progression opportunities for officials within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate.

Research objective 6: Improvement and equity outcomes

The following statement directly addressed equity, redress and transformation, forming an empirical basis for recommendations.

10. Learning and development programmes contribute to addressing racial imbalances in skills development within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate.

3.6.2 Personal interviews

According to Christensen, Johnson and Turner (2020:71-72), an interview is a data collection method in which the interviewer poses a series of questions to an interviewee in order to elicit detailed information. Interviews may be conducted face-to-face, telephonically or via online platforms, and may be either synchronous, where interaction occurs in real time, or asynchronous, where interaction takes place over a period of time.

In this study, interviews were employed to enable the researcher to obtain in-depth qualitative information from workplace participants within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate, including officials from the Training Section. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were utilised, as this approach allowed the researcher to follow a predetermined set of questions while also providing flexibility to probe, clarify and explore issues that emerged from participants' responses. The semi-structured interviews were conducted after the administration of the structured questionnaire and were intentionally designed to complement and build on the quantitative findings. While the questionnaire provided measurable data on the extent of skills development implementation, access to training, policy alignment and perceived outcomes, the interviews allowed participants to elaborate on these issues by explaining how and why such outcomes occurred. This sequential use of data collection instruments strengthened the mixed-methods design by enabling triangulation and deeper interpretation of the findings.

The validity of the interview data was enhanced through triangulation, which involved cross-checking interview responses against official departmental documents and the results obtained from the structured questionnaire. Interviews were conducted with senior and key role players responsible for skills development implementation, while also including affected officials at middle management, supervisory and lower occupational levels. This inclusive approach ensured that diverse perspectives were captured, thereby improving the credibility and richness of the qualitative data.

In the following section, the interview questions are grouped, and aligned to the research objectives adopted in this study.

3.6.2 *Semi-structured interview questions aligned to research objectives*

Research objective 1: Contextualisation of skills development

The following questions explored institutional context, organisational culture and employee perceptions, providing explanatory depth to the quantitative findings on access to training and frequency of learning opportunities:

1. How would you describe the overall context and environment for skills development within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate?
2. How has the workforce responded to the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 in this Directorate?

Research objective 3: Legislative and policy framework

The following questions allowed participants to elaborate on how legislation is translated into practice, complementing the survey items that measured policy alignment and legislative compliance:

3. In your view, how effectively and efficiently is the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 implemented within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate?
4. What policies, methods or programmes are currently used to give effect to the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Department of Employment and Labour?

Research objective 4: Implementation of learning and development programmes

The following questions provided insight into processes, decision-making and perceived outcomes, enriching the quantitative data on needs assessment, participation and skills enhancement:

5. How are learning and development programmes designed and implemented to address the skills needs of officials within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate?
6. In what ways has the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 contributed to enhancing the skills and knowledge of the workforce?

Research objective 5: Institutional and organisational context

The following question deepened understanding of career pathways and institutional support, complementing the survey item measuring perceptions of promotion and career progression:

7. To what extent has the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 created career development and promotion opportunities within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate?

Research objective 6: Equity, redress and improvement

The following questions generated qualitative evidence on transformation, redress and practical improvement measures, directly supporting the development of recommendations and complementing quantitative equity-related findings:

8. How has access to learning and development programmes contributed to addressing racial and gender imbalances in skills development within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate?
9. Based on your experience, what improvements could be made to strengthen the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Department of Employment and Labour?

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESSES

Data interpretation and presentation formed a critical stage of the research process and followed the systematic preparation of data for analysis. According to Kara, Mannay and Roy (2024:23), data preparation involves the checking, editing and coding of collected data to ensure accuracy, consistency and suitability for analysis. In this study, all completed questionnaires were reviewed to verify completeness and to identify any inconsistencies or omissions prior to data capturing.

Coding was used as the primary method for organising raw quantitative data into a machine-readable format suitable for statistical analysis using Microsoft 365 Excel. As explained by Kara, Mannay and Roy (2024:24-25), coding entails the systematic transformation of responses into numerical values that can be analysed either

manually or through computer software. Where questionnaire responses were not already in numerical form, a structured coding procedure was developed and applied consistently across all responses.

Following the design of the questionnaire, selection of the sample, and completion of data collection, a code sheet was developed to guide the data capturing process. The code sheet served both as a reference and a record of how each variable and response category was coded. This ensured consistency in data entry and enhanced the reliability and validity of the quantitative analysis, particularly where multiple variables were analysed simultaneously. All responses, including non-responses, were coded and captured in the dataset. Recording non-responses was essential for ensuring data integrity and for identifying potential data entry errors (Grønmo, 2024:30). Non-responses were coded using standard conventions to distinguish between different types of missing data, such as legitimate skips and refusals to respond or unanswered questions. These conventions allowed missing values to be correctly identified and excluded from statistical calculations during analysis, as recommended by Fadele and Rocha (2025:14-15).

Quantitative data were captured and analysed using Microsoft 365 Excel, which enabled the identification of missing values, calculation of descriptive statistics, and presentation of findings through tables and figures. The analysed data were subsequently interpreted in relation to the research questions, legislative framework, and theoretical perspectives discussed earlier in the study. Quantitative findings were integrated with qualitative insights obtained from interviews and document analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of learning and development programmes and the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate.

A comparative analysis was employed to analyse qualitative data for this study. This type of analysis involves comparing data sets and examining recurring themes that surface from several data sources. This technique is frequently employed in qualitative investigations to examine the relationships between themes. To condense the interview transcripts, the researcher reviewed the responses to identify common themes and highlight terms or phrases that were repeatedly used by the participants. The researcher identified themes and categorisations in the response patterns of the

research participants after reading the transcripts. To make it easier to notice similarities and differences, the data was labelled and coded. By dividing the material into manageable pieces and creating an open file system for the data, the gathered information was reorganised and re-categorised (Humble & Radina, 2025:88-89).

Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the methods and processes in the quantitative data collection and analysis phases.

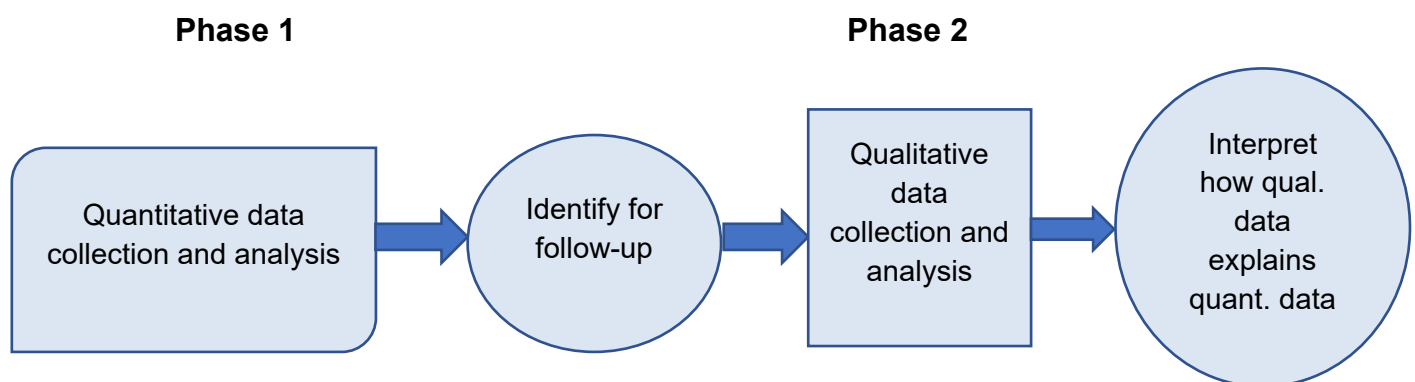


Figure 3.1: Overview of data analysis process

Source: (Humble & Radina, 2025:88-89).

3.8 RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Reliability, validity and trustworthiness were addressed to ensure the scientific rigour of the study. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining structured questionnaires with semi-structured interviews conducted with senior and key role players in training and development, as well as selected middle management and supervisory officials. The credibility of the findings was strengthened through triangulation, whereby interview data were compared and corroborated with questionnaire responses and relevant official documents (Olmsted, 2024:56).

3.8.1 Validity

Validity was ensured by confirming that the research instruments measured what they were intended to measure. The questionnaire items were aligned with the research

objectives, legislative framework, and concepts identified in the literature review, particularly those relating to skills development, learning and development programmes, and workforce capacity (Noble & Smith, 2025:208-209). Content validity was established by ensuring that the questionnaire and interview questions adequately covered all key aspects of the Skills Development Act and its implementation within the Directorate.

The questionnaires were administered uniformly and were not altered during the data collection process. Responses were accurately recorded, and electronic distribution ensured that all participants received the same instrument. Cross-validation of findings from multiple data sources further enhanced the validity of the study (Olmsted, 2024:58).

3.8.2 Reliability

Reliability was maintained through the consistent application of the research instruments and standardised data collection procedures. The structured questionnaire was used uniformly across all respondents, and clear instructions were provided to minimise ambiguity. Data capturing followed a predefined coding scheme to ensure consistency and reduce measurement error. These procedures enhanced the stability and consistency of the measurements across respondents (Noble & Smith, 2025:209).

3.8.3 Trustworthiness of qualitative data

The trustworthiness of the qualitative data was ensured through the application of established qualitative research criteria, namely credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. Credibility was enhanced through data triangulation and careful thematic analysis of interview transcripts. Dependability was addressed by maintaining a clear and transparent record of the data collection and analysis procedures. Confirmability was ensured by grounding interpretations in participants' responses rather than researcher assumptions, supported by an audit trail of analytical decisions. Transferability was facilitated through the provision of sufficient contextual detail regarding the research setting, participants and methodology, enabling readers to assess the applicability of the findings to similar contexts (Olmsted, 2024:57-59).

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are fundamental to public administration research, particularly when studies involve public officials, government institutions, and organisational processes. Research ethics provide a framework of principles that guide the design and conduct of research to ensure integrity, accountability, and respect for human dignity. Ethical research practices promote voluntary participation, informed decision-making, protection from harm, and trust between researchers, participants, and institutions. In line with these principles, this study adhered to recognised ethical standards applicable to social science and public-sector research (Kolstoe, et al., 2023:9).

3.9.1 Institutional permission and ethical clearance

Prior to the commencement of data collection, the researcher formally requested permission to conduct the study within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the Department of Employment and Labour. The request was addressed to Directorate Management and outlined the purpose, scope, and methodological approach of the study. Written permission to conduct the research was granted and is included as *Annexure B: Gatekeeper permission letter from the National Department of Employment and Labour*.

In addition, ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Public Administration and Management at the University of South Africa (UNISA), as reflected in *Annexure A: Unisa Ethics Clearance Certificate*. Institutional approval ensured that the study complied with academic standards, ethical research principles, and university regulations governing research involving human participants.

3.9.2 Informed consent

Informed consent is a cornerstone of ethical research and ensures that participation is based on a clear understanding of the study and its implications. Researchers are required to ensure that the potential benefits of the research outweigh any foreseeable risks and that participants are exposed only to risks that are necessary and minimal (Pam, 2023:193).

In this study, all prospective participants were provided with a Participant Information Sheet (see *Annexure C: Participant Information Sheet*), which explained the purpose of the research, the nature of participation, the data collection methods and the expected duration of involvement. The information sheet also clarified that participation was entirely voluntary and that participants could decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences.

Participants were afforded sufficient opportunity to ask questions and consider their involvement before agreeing to participate. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their inclusion in the study, and signed consent forms are included as *Annexure D: Informed Consent Letter*. At no stage were participants subjected to physical, psychological, professional or reputational harm.

3.9.3 Confidentiality, privacy and voluntary participation

The confidentiality and privacy of participants were safeguarded throughout the research process. Measures were implemented to ensure that information provided by participants was treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. Data were reported in an aggregated manner to prevent the identification of individual participants or specific officials. All participants were informed in advance of what was expected of them in relation to completing questionnaires and/or participating in interviews. Participation was voluntary, and no form of coercion or undue influence was applied. Participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any point without providing reasons and without any adverse consequences (Arundel, 2023:23-24).

By adhering to these ethical principles, the study ensured respect for participants, protected institutional integrity, and upheld the standards expected of research in the field of Public Administration (Arundel, 2023:24; Pam, 2023:193).

3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlined and applied the research design and methodology used to conduct the study. It explained the mixed methods research design and the exploratory, descriptive and explanatory approaches that guided the investigation. The chapter described the research methodology, including the literature review,

document analysis, case study method and empirical research, which together provided both contextual and empirical evidence for the study.

The chapter further detailed the population and sampling techniques, the data gathering instruments used, and the procedures followed for collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data. Issues of reliability, validity and trustworthiness were addressed to ensure the credibility of the findings. The chapter concluded by outlining the ethical considerations observed throughout the study, including institutional permission, informed consent, and the protection of participants' confidentiality, privacy and voluntary participation.

Chapter 4 explores the education, training and development environment in South Africa, providing context for the current skills landscape, policies and institutional practices that informed the study.

CHAPTER 4:

LEGISLATIVE AND CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a comprehensive exploration of the legislative and contextual framework governing skills development in South Africa. It begins by situating skills development within the country's constitutional and policy environment, highlighting the obligations enshrined in the Constitution of 1996 and the strategic guidance provided by national instruments such as the National Development Plan 2030. The chapter examines the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 as the central legislative instrument, detailing its objectives to promote education and training among both employed and unemployed individuals, improve productivity, and align skills development with national economic and social priorities. Within this legislative context, the Department of Employment and Labour plays a pivotal role in translating policy into practice, overseeing compliance with statutory requirements such as the submission of Workplace Skills Plans and Annual Training Reports, administering learnerships and training grants, and coordinating with Sector Education and Training Authorities and the National Skills Authority to ensure that skills development initiatives are effectively implemented and aligned with labour market needs.

The chapter further considers the supporting legislative instruments, including the National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008 which provides the governance, funding, and quality assurance mechanisms necessary to ensure that skills development interventions are coherent, standardised, and responsive to national priorities. Attention is also given to the operational instruments of skills development, including Workplace Skills Plans.

4.2 AIM AND SCOPE OF THE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACT 97 OF 1998

Skills development in South Africa is underpinned by the Constitution of 1996, which establishes the right to education, the promotion of equal opportunities in the labour market, and the development of public service capacity (Constitution, 1996:Sections

29&195). In addition, national policies, such as the National Development Plan 2030, provide strategic guidance for the systematic development of human capital, ensuring alignment between education, training and labour market needs (National Planning Commission, 2024).

4.2.1 Constitutional and Policy Context of Skills Development in South Africa

The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 must be understood within the constitutional framework established by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, which provides the normative and legal foundation for human resource development, labour regulation, and socio-economic transformation. The Constitution commits the state to building a democratic, inclusive, and developmental society through the progressive realisation of socio-economic rights and the promotion of human dignity, equality, and freedom (Constitution, 1996:Chapter 1, Section 1-6).

Section 23 of the Constitution guarantees everyone the right to fair labour practices, which includes access to opportunities that enhance employability, job security, and career progression. Skills development is therefore implicit in the constitutional protection of labour rights, as a workforce that lacks appropriate skills cannot meaningfully exercise these rights or participate effectively in the economy. In addition, Section 29 provides for the right to education, including further education, which the state must make progressively available and accessible. The Skills Development Act operationalises this provision by creating pathways for occupationally directed education and training beyond the formal schooling system (Constitution, 1996:Sections 23&29).

Section 195 of the Constitution sets out the basic values and principles governing public administration, including efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, accountability, and the optimal use of human resources. Skills development in the public and private sectors directly supports these principles by strengthening institutional capacity and improving service delivery outcomes. Furthermore, Section 195(1)(h) explicitly requires public administration to cultivate good human resource management and career development practices in order to maximise human potential, providing a direct constitutional mandate for skills development legislation (Constitution, 1996:Section 195).

The constitutional commitment to equality and redress, as articulated in Section 9, further underpins the Skills Development Act. The persistent skills deficits experienced by historically disadvantaged groups are a direct legacy of apartheid-era exclusion from education and training opportunities. The state is therefore constitutionally obliged to implement legislative and policy measures that promote substantive equality, including targeted skills development interventions. Against this constitutional backdrop, the Skills Development Act represents a key instrument through which the state fulfils its developmental obligations and advances social and economic transformation (SDA, 1996:Section 9).

4.2.2 Aim and scope of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998

The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 represents a central pillar of South Africa's post-apartheid public administration and labour market reform agenda. The Act was promulgated in response to deep-seated structural inequalities in education, training and employment that had constrained economic participation for the majority of the population. Its overarching aim is to establish an integrated national framework for skills development that enhances the employability of workers, improves labour productivity and supports inclusive economic growth (SDA, 1998:Section 2). In the context of public administration, the Act reflects a shift towards developmental governance, whereby the state actively intervenes to build human capital and address historical imbalances through coordinated policy and institutional mechanisms.

Within this framework, the effective implementation of the Skills Development Act of 1998 contributes to improved career progression opportunities for public officials, as it promotes structured learning pathways, continuous skills development and the alignment of training with occupational competencies and career frameworks. Skills development policies in the public sector play a critical role in supporting employee mobility, promotion prospects and long-term professional growth. Consequently, the Act not only strengthens organisational performance and service delivery, but also enhances individual career development and retention within the public service (OECD, 2025; DPSA, 2024).

At its core, the Skills Development Act seeks to improve the quality and relevance of skills available within the South African labour market. It aims to do so by promoting

continuous learning, facilitating access to occupationally directed education and training, and ensuring that skills acquired by individuals are transferable across employment contexts. By linking education and training more closely to labour market needs, the Act addresses both unemployment and skills shortages, recognising that economic growth and service delivery capacity are directly dependent on a competent and adaptable workforce (DEL Annual Report, 2024:12). The Act therefore positions skills development not merely as an educational concern, but as a strategic public administration function with direct implications for national competitiveness and social development (SDA, 1998:Chapter 1).

A further critical aim of the Act is to advance equity and redress. The Skills Development Act explicitly acknowledges the marginalisation of historically disadvantaged individuals, including black South Africans, women, persons with disabilities, and the unemployed. Through targeted skills programmes, learnerships, and workplace-based training opportunities, the Act seeks to broaden access to skills development and improve employment prospects for those previously excluded from formal labour markets. This redistributive focus aligns with constitutional principles of equality and social justice and reinforces the role of public institutions in promoting inclusive development outcomes (SDA, 1998:Chapter 1).

The scope of the Skills Development Act extends beyond policy intent to encompass a comprehensive institutional and operational framework. The Act establishes key governance structures to guide, coordinate, and oversee skills development initiatives at national, sectoral, and workplace levels. Central to this framework is the National Skills Authority, which advises the Minister responsible for labour on national skills strategies and policy priorities. At the sectoral level, the Act provides for the establishment of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), which are tasked with developing sector skills plans, disbursing training grants, and ensuring alignment between training provision and labour market demand. These institutions reflect a decentralised yet coordinated model of public administration, designed to enhance responsiveness to sector-specific skills needs while maintaining national policy coherence (SDA, 1998:Sections 12&13).

The Act also defines the role of employers and workers in skills development, thereby embedding learning within the workplace. Employers are encouraged to use

workplaces as active learning environments, offering opportunities for structured training, work experience, and learnerships. Workers, in turn, are enabled to acquire nationally recognised qualifications that enhance their mobility and long-term employability. This collaborative approach underscores the Act's recognition that skills development is a shared responsibility between the state, employers, organised labour, and training providers (SDA, 1998:Chapter 7).

From a financial perspective, the scope of the Skills Development Act is closely linked to the Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999, which operationalises the funding of skills initiatives through a levy-grant system. This mechanism ensures sustainable financing for training while incentivising employer participation in skills development (SDLA, 1999:Chapter 1). Funds collected through the levy are channelled to SETAs and the NSF to support priority programmes, including training for unemployed youth, public sector capacity building, and strategic national development projects. The integration of financial and institutional mechanisms illustrates the Act's systemic approach to policy implementation (National Planning Commission, 2024).

In relation to the Department of Employment and Labour, the Skills Development Act assigns a central implementation and oversight role. The Department is responsible for policy coordination, institutional governance, monitoring compliance, and ensuring that skills development initiatives align with broader labour market and socio-economic objectives. The Department's labour centres and provincial offices play a key role in facilitating access to training opportunities, registering learnerships, and supporting unemployed and retrenched workers. The effectiveness of the Act therefore depends significantly on the administrative capacity, coordination, and accountability mechanisms within the Department, making its implementation a critical area of inquiry for public administration scholarship (DEL Final Social Security Report, 2023:5).

In summary, the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 aims to transform South Africa's labour market by systematically developing human capital, promoting equity, and enhancing economic productivity. Its scope is extensive, encompassing policy objectives, institutional arrangements, funding mechanisms, and implementation responsibilities across multiple spheres of governance.

4.2.3 Sector Education and Training Authorities

In this section, SETA roles are examined in relation to their statutory responsibilities to implement sector skills plans, provide learnerships, administer grants, and ensure that training interventions address labour market and organisational needs. SETAs are statutory bodies established under Chapter 3 of the Skills Development Act of 1998 to facilitate and implement skills development within defined economic sectors. Their core mandate is to support the implementation of national skills development policy by increasing access to relevant education and training opportunities, addressing sector-specific skills shortages, and improving workforce productivity (SDA, 1998:Chapter 3).

SETAs are responsible for developing Sector Skills Plans that identify current and future skills needs within their sectors, informed by labour market analysis and stakeholder consultation. These plans guide the allocation of training funds, the design of learning programmes, and the prioritisation of occupations in high demand. SETAs are also tasked with implementing SSPs through the establishment of learnerships, skills programmes, apprenticeships, and other occupational learning pathways aligned with the NQF (SDA, 1998:Chapter 3(10)).

Quality assurance and standardisation are central to the SETA mandate. Training must be delivered in accordance with nationally recognised standards, and qualifications must be portable across sectors and provinces. This ensures that skills acquired through SETA-funded programmes are transferable and recognised within the broader labour market. SETAs therefore work closely with the QCTO and accredited providers to ensure compliance with quality assurance requirements and occupational standards (QCTO, 2023).

The Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority (PSETA) is one of the 21 SETAs and plays a critical role in supporting skills development within national, provincial, and local government. Its mandate focuses on transversal and professional skills required for effective public administration, governance, and service delivery. PSETA contributes to the development of a capable and professional public service by funding training interventions, supporting learnerships, and commissioning research to inform skills planning in the public sector (PSETA, 2022).

In terms of funding arrangements, the National Skills Development Plan 2030 revised the allocation model for the skills development levy. Approximately 20 per cent of levy

income is allocated to SETAs for mandatory and discretionary grants linked to workplace training, while around 10 per cent is used to support SETA administration. The remaining funds are transferred to the National Skills Fund to support strategic national priorities. This funding model seeks to balance decentralised sectoral responsiveness with national coordination and impact (National Planning Commission, 2024).

Learnerships established by SETAs must comply with strict regulatory conditions. These include the integration of structured theoretical learning and structured workplace experience, registration of the qualification on the NQF, and formal registration of the learnership with the Director-General of the DHET. Learnership agreements are legally binding contracts between the learner, employer, and accredited training provider, with clearly defined responsibilities for each party to ensure successful completion (SDA, 1998:Chapter 3(10)).

4.3 NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK ACT 67 OF 2008

The National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008 provides the statutory basis for the establishment, governance and coordination of the NQF in South Africa. The Act was enacted to replace the South African Qualifications Authority Act 58 of 1995 and to strengthen the regulatory framework governing education, training and qualifications across the country. Its primary purpose is to ensure coherence, comparability, and quality within the national education and training system while responding to the socio-economic and skills development priorities of the state (National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008:Chapter 1(2)).

The Act assigns responsibility to the Minister of Higher Education and Training to oversee the NQF, including consideration of advice from the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the Quality Councils before making determinations on qualifications and standards. In this regard, the NQF Act clarifies institutional roles, strengthens governance arrangements, and enhances accountability mechanisms across the education and training landscape (National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008:Chapter 2).

The overarching purpose of the NQF, as articulated in Chapter 2 of the Act, is to contribute to the full personal development of learners while simultaneously supporting

the social and economic development of the nation. This is achieved through the establishment of a nationally integrated framework that ensures that qualifications are of an acceptable and comparable quality, both domestically and internationally (National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008:Chapter 2). The NQF thus functions as a strategic public policy instrument that links education, training, and skills development to labour market needs and national development objectives, including those articulated in the National Development Plan 2030 (SAQA, 2023).

Central to the NQF Act is the creation of a single, integrated national framework for learning achievements that facilitates access to education and training, promotes learner mobility and progression, and enhances the quality of provision across all sectors. The Act further seeks to accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training, and employment opportunities by ensuring that learning pathways are transparent, flexible, and inclusive. These objectives reflect the state's broader commitment to transformation, equity, and lifelong learning (SAQA, 2023).

The NQF is structured into three coordinated sub-frameworks, each catering for different forms of learning and qualifications. The first is the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF), which is regulated under the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 and overseen by the Council on Higher Education (CHE). This sub-framework encompasses NQF Levels 5 to 10, including higher certificates, diplomas, bachelor's degrees, honours degrees, master's degrees, and doctoral qualifications. Levels 8 to 10 are particularly significant in the context of postgraduate education, as they include honours, master's and doctoral qualifications that contribute to advanced research, professional expertise, and public sector leadership development (CHE, 2023).

The second sub-framework is the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF), which covers formal schooling and adult education. It includes qualifications from NQF Levels 1 to 4, with Level 4 being equivalent to the National Senior Certificate (Grade 12). This sub-framework plays a critical role in laying the foundational knowledge and skills required for further learning and labour market entry, and it is overseen by Umalusi as the relevant Quality Council (Umalusi, 2024; CHE, 2023).

The third sub-framework is the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF), which focuses on trades and occupations and is overseen by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). This sub-framework is closely aligned with the Skills Development Act of 1998 and is designed to ensure that occupational qualifications are responsive to labour market needs and workplace competencies. It supports artisan development, occupational certification, and skills programmes that are critical for economic growth and service delivery capacity (Umalusi, 2024; SAQA, 2022).

Table 4.1 lists the sub-frameworks and qualification types and their levels from 1 to 10 of the National Qualifications Framework of South Africa.

Table 4.1: National Qualifications Framework of South Africa

Sub-Framework	Qualification Types	NQF Level
Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework under the CHE	Doctoral degree/professional	Level 10
	Master's degree/professional	Level 9
	Bachelor of Honours degree/post graduate degree/Occupational certificate	Level 8
	Bachelor degree\Advanced diploma	Level 7
	Diploma/Advanced Certificate	Level 6
	Higher Certificate	Level 5
General and Further Education and Training Sub-Framework Umalusi	National Certificate/Grade 12	Level 4
	Intermediate Certificate/Grade 11	Level 3
	Elementary Certificate/Grade 10	Level 2
	General Certificate/Grade 9	Level 1

Source: (SAQA, 2022:4).

The functions of Umalusi, the Council on Higher Education, and the QCTO in setting and monitoring qualification standards across different sub-frameworks are examined in the following section.

4.3.1 Quality Councils

Quality Councils are central to the effective functioning of the NQF, as they are responsible for ensuring the integrity, relevance and quality of qualifications within their respective sub-frameworks. Umalusi serves as the Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training, with responsibility for quality assurance in schooling and adult education. The CHE fulfils the role of Quality Council for higher education and operates within the framework of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework and related standards-setting instruments, including the Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education (CHE, 2023). Quality Councils are mandated to develop and manage qualifications, accredit providers, conduct quality assurance, and advise the relevant Minister on matters pertaining to their domains. They are also required to work collaboratively with professional bodies and education and training institutions to ensure that qualifications remain credible, responsive, and aligned with national development priorities (SAQA, 2023; DHET, 2022).

In the public sector context, the coordinated functioning of the Quality Councils supports the development of a capable state by ensuring that qualifications held by public servants meet recognised national standards. The NQF Act therefore plays a critical role in strengthening human resource development, professionalisation, and institutional capacity within public administration, complementing broader skills development and labour market policies (Umalusi, 2024; CHE, 2023).

The following section covers the funding mechanism for national skills development, including levy collection and employer obligations.

4.4 WORKPLACE SKILLS PLANS

Workplace Skills Plans (WSPs) are a central planning instrument within South Africa's skills development system and form a key mechanism through which employers align organisational human resource development with national and sectoral skills priorities. In terms of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, a Workplace Skills Plan is a formal

document that identifies an organisation's current and future skills needs and outlines the education and training interventions that will be implemented to address these needs over a defined period (SDA, 1998:Section 10(1)).

Within the public sector, including departments such as the Department of Employment and Labour, a Workplace Skills Plan serves both a compliance and a strategic function. From a regulatory perspective, the Skills Development Act requires employers to appoint a registered Skills Development Facilitator who is responsible for compiling and submitting the WSP and the Annual Training Report to the relevant Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) on an annual basis. Submission of these documents is a prerequisite for access to mandatory and discretionary SETA grants, which constitute an important source of funding for training and capacity-building initiatives (DHET, 2022; PSETA, 2023). The Annual Training Report provides evidence of progress made against the previous year's WSP and enables SETAs and oversight bodies to monitor the effectiveness of skills development interventions (SDA, 1998:Chapter 3(9)).

Beyond compliance, the Workplace Skills Plan plays a critical strategic role in organisational development and public sector performance. A well-developed WSP enables a department to systematically assess its workforce capabilities, identify skills gaps, and prioritise training interventions that are aligned with its strategic objectives, service delivery mandate, and performance plans. This approach ensures that skills development is proactive and forward-looking rather than ad hoc or reactive, thereby supporting long-term institutional capacity and sustainability. In the context of public administration, this alignment is particularly important given the state's commitment to building a capable, ethical, and developmental public service, as articulated in the National Development Plan 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2024).

The development of a Workplace Skills Plan typically begins with an assessment of the existing skills profile of the workforce. This is achieved through a structured skills audit, which is widely recognised as a foundational step in effective skills planning. A skills audit systematically identifies the qualifications, competencies, experience, and occupational profiles of employees and compares these against the skills and competencies required to fulfil current and future organisational roles. This comparison

enables the identification of critical skills shortages, skills surpluses, and areas where re-skilling or upskilling is required (PSETA, 2022).

The primary purpose of a skills audit is therefore to provide an evidence-based understanding of organisational skills capacity. By mapping current competencies against predefined occupational standards and job requirements, departments are better positioned to design targeted training interventions that address real and measurable skills gaps. This process also supports workforce planning by identifying potential career progression pathways, succession planning needs, and opportunities for redeployment or talent optimisation within the organisation (SAQA, 2023).

The benefits of conducting a skills audit and integrating its findings into the Workplace Skills Plan are well documented. Focused skills development interventions contribute to improved employee competence, higher productivity, and more efficient use of training budgets, as resources are directed towards priority areas rather than generic training programmes. In addition, effective skills planning enhances employee morale and retention by demonstrating organisational commitment to professional development and career growth. Within the public sector, these outcomes translate into improved service delivery, strengthened institutional performance, and enhanced public value creation (Auditor-General of South Africa, 2025).

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter provided an analysis of the legislative, institutional, and contextual frameworks that shaped skills development in South Africa. It examined the constitutional and policy foundations, including the Constitution of 1996 and the National Development Plan 2030, and analysed the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 as the primary legislative instrument guiding training and workforce development. The chapter highlighted the role of the Department of Employment and Labour in implementing policy through oversight of compliance, administration of learnerships and grants, and coordination with Sector Education and Training Authorities and the National Skills Authority. It further discussed supporting legislation, including the National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008 as well as operational mechanisms such as Workplace Skills Plans.

CHAPTER 5:

CASE STUDY: DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a detailed case study of the Department of Employment and Labour, currently known as the Department of Employment and Labour, in South Africa. The chapter begins with an introduction that outlines the purpose and scope of the case study, followed by background information that situates the department within the broader context of South Africa's public administration and labour governance framework. It provides a historical overview and examines the institutional transformation of the department, highlighting its evolution from the Department of Employment and Labour to its current mandate as the Department of Employment and Labour.

The chapter then analyses the legislative mandate of the department, including its regulatory responsibilities, organisational structure, and service delivery mechanisms at national, provincial, and local levels, with specific attention to operational functions such as travel and fleet management in provincial offices. It further explores the core programme functions of the department through a policy analysis lens, discussing administration, inspection and enforcement services, public employment services, and labour policy and industrial relations. Each programme is evaluated in terms of policy intent, institutional capacity, regulatory compliance, labour market activation, skills development, and evidence-based policymaking. Policy implications of the department's activities for skills development, workforce participation and broader socio-economic outcomes are also considered. The chapter concludes by evaluating skills development at the DEL.

5.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to the Director-General of the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL Annual Report, 2024:10), South Africans have become accustomed to persistently high levels of unemployment, which stabilised at approximately 25% over a four-year period from 2021 onwards. The Director-General attributes this situation to a

combination of domestic and global factors, including inadequate planning for skills evaluation, ineffective workplace skills plans, misalignment between higher education qualifications and labour market needs, and insufficient artisan skills training and development. These challenges have significantly contributed to the constraints experienced within the South African economy and the labour market during the 2023/2024 financial year. These structural weaknesses have undermined the efficiency of the South African labour market, limiting its capacity to absorb more than five million unemployed individuals. Furthermore, slow growth in the GDP has failed to adequately address the persistent challenges of high unemployment and underemployment in the country. As confirmed by (Statistics South Africa, 2025(b); DEL Final Social Security Report, 2023:5-6), prolonged low economic growth is likely to perpetuate long-term youth unemployment and deepen inequality within the labour market. In this regard, the importance of effective policy coordination and strong leadership across all sectors is emphasised as a critical foundation for sustainable job creation and inclusive economic growth.

The significance of this study is drawn from practical experience within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate as a workplace environment. A notable shortcoming identified is the lack of adequate training and development programmes aimed at enhancing scarce and critical skills. Insufficient investment in skills development remains a key contributor to labour market inefficiencies. Within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate, there has been limited structured training for employees, resulting in a skills gap that negatively affects development-oriented public administration, human resource management and career development initiatives (DEL Annual Report, 2024:11).

This gap is particularly evident when assessed against the objectives of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, which seeks to improve workforce competencies, promote employability, and support economic growth through targeted skills development (SDA, 1998:Chapter 1(2)). As explained in Chapter 1, section 1.7 *Significance of the Study*, the expected contribution of this research is to empower public servants by clarifying their rights and responsibilities in terms of the Skills Development Act, thereby contributing to improved institutional capacity and service delivery within the public sector.

5.3 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION OF DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR IN SOUTH AFRICA

The South African government department responsible for labour and employment matters has undergone significant institutional evolution since its inception in the early twentieth century. Established in 1924 as the Department of Employment and Labour, this entity assumed responsibility for labour issues previously managed by the Department of Mines, reflecting the growing complexity of industrial relations in a rapidly industrialising economy. The department's early structural history includes a brief renaming in 1935 to the Department of Employment and Labour and Social Welfare, before reverting to the Department of Employment and Labour in 1937 once social welfare functions were administratively separated. The department's mandate historically concentrated on regulating labour relations, workplace conditions, and industrial disputes, often underpinned by legislated frameworks that, during the apartheid era, entrenched racially discriminatory labour practices that shaped socioeconomic hierarchies. With the advent of democracy in 1994, the Department of Employment and Labour became central to the transformation of South Africa's labour market, administering progressive statutory reforms including, but not limited to, the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997, and Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, legislation designed to promote fair labour practices, eliminate discrimination, and establish mechanisms for collective bargaining and equitable employment standards (South African History Online, 2017).

The democratic era reorientation of the department was critical in redressing historical inequities and aligning national labour policy with constitutional rights and international labour norms. The Department's ongoing role in administering and aligning these labour statutes underscores its enduring regulatory core. The evolution of the department's mandate gained further impetus in the context of the Sixth Administration following South Africa's May 2019 general elections, when the President announced that the Department of Employment and Labour would be reconfigured and renamed the Department of Employment and Labour, signalling a broadened institutional focus that explicitly incorporated employment creation and labour market activation alongside traditional regulatory responsibilities. This shift is reflected in the department's strategic planning documents, which note that the name change and

expanded mandate were introduced after the 2019 elections to emphasise government priorities around job creation and coordination of employment efforts across government, in response to persistent unemployment challenges. The revised mandate extends the department's role from compliance enforcement to include proactive facilitation of employment services, labour market intelligence, and activation programmes that aim to reduce structural unemployment and enhance economic participation (DEL Final Social Security Report, 2023:6). The reconfiguration was envisaged as part of a phased approach to leverage existing programmes, including public employment services and the Unemployment Insurance Fund. Contemporary activities of the Department of Employment and Labour continue to reflect this dual regulatory and employment-oriented mandate, as evidenced by recent initiatives to modernise information systems, improve labour market information infrastructure, and implement labour law reforms that respond to prevailing economic conditions and labour market dynamics (DEL Final Social Security Report, 2023:9).

5.4 LEGISLATIVE MANDATE OF DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR

The Department of Employment and Labour derives its legislative mandate from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, as well as from a range of statutes that regulate labour relations, employment standards, and workplace protection in South Africa. Key legislation administered by the Department includes the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1998, the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, the Employment Services Act 4 of 2014, and the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 (DEL Publications, 2024:4).

The mandate of the Department is to regulate the labour market through policies and programmes developed in consultation with social partners, including organised labour, business, and civil society. Central to this mandate is the promotion of decent work, the enforcement of labour standards, and the protection of fundamental rights in the workplace. In addition, the Department aims to provide adequate social protection mechanisms for vulnerable workers, promote sound labour relations, eliminate inequality and discrimination, and enhance occupational health and safety awareness across all sectors of the economy. Social dialogue is recognised as a critical

mechanism for developing responsive labour legislation and policies that contribute to labour market stability and inclusive economic growth (DEL Publications, 2024:3-5).

The legislative framework of the Department is firmly grounded in Chapter 2 of the Constitution, which contains the Bill of Rights. Section 9 guarantees equality and prohibits unfair discrimination, including in employment practices. Section 10 upholds human dignity, while Section 18 affirms freedom of association, a cornerstone of collective labour relations. Section 23 specifically guarantees the right to fair labour practices and supports collective bargaining. Furthermore, Section 24 ensures that everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being, a principle that underpins occupational health and safety legislation. Sections 27 and 28 provide for social security and protect children from exploitative labour practices, respectively, while Section 34 guarantees access to courts and fair labour dispute resolution mechanisms (Constitution, 1996:Chapter 2 & Sections 9,18,23,24).

In response to the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department and its entities implemented extensive income support measures, most notably through the COVID-19 Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme administered by the Unemployment Insurance Fund. By 1 September 2020, approximately 9.5 million payments had been made to UIF beneficiaries, covering over 822,000 employers nationwide. These interventions played a crucial role in supporting retrenched and furloughed workers, sustaining household incomes, and injecting liquidity into local economies during the crisis (DEL Covid19TERS Documents, 2021:1&2). The 2020/2021 financial year was marked by severe economic contraction due to pandemic-related lockdown measures. South Africa's economic activity declined by 7.7 per cent, resulting in the loss of approximately 1.7 million jobs. Although economic growth was projected to recover to 3.3 per cent in 2021, unemployment remained critically high at 32 per cent, highlighting persistent structural weaknesses within the labour market (DEL Covid19TERS Documents, 2021:2).

The Department continues to strive towards a labour market that is conducive to investment, employment creation, and sustainable economic growth. Through its inspection, compliance monitoring, and enforcement functions, the Department ensures adherence to labour legislation and the protection of human rights within employment relations and human resource management practices. Equity, social

justice, and income protection are promoted through targeted interventions aimed at addressing historical imbalances related to race, gender, and disability (DEL Publications, 2024:7).

In summary, in administering its mandate, the Department is responsible for implementing several key pieces of legislation. These include the Employment Services Act 4 of 2014, which regulates employment services in both the public and private sectors and promotes access to work opportunities; the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, which addresses skills shortages and seeks to redress historical inequalities through education, training, and workforce development; and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1998, which gives effect to Section 23 of the Constitution by regulating minimum employment conditions and promoting fair labour practices. The Department also oversees the implementation of the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, aimed at promoting equality and fairness in the workplace through the elimination of unfair discrimination and the application of affirmative action measures, as well as the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, which advances economic development, social justice, labour peace, and workplace democracy. Furthermore, it administers the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993, which safeguards employees from workplace hazards, and the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act 130 of 1993, which provides compensation for workers who are injured, become disabled, or contract occupational diseases in the course of their employment (DEL Publications, 2024:3-6).

While the policy framework is comprehensive and constitutionally grounded, implementation effectiveness depends on institutional capacity, inter-programme coordination, and enforcement mechanisms. Fragmentation across legislative instruments presents challenges for coherent implementation, particularly in aligning skills development, employment equity, and labour market activation policies. Furthermore, the constitutional provisions establish enforceable labour rights rather than aspirational principles. However, gaps between constitutional intent and lived workplace realities persist, particularly for vulnerable and informal-sector workers. This highlights the importance of strong inspection, enforcement, and access-to-justice mechanisms within the Department (DEL Publications, 2024:3-7; South African History Online, 2017).

5.4.1 Organisational structure of the Department of Employment and Labour

This section provides an overview of the organisational structure of the Department of Employment and Labour, outlining the institutional arrangements at national and provincial levels, as well as the configuration of its service delivery sites.

The national organisational structure of the Department is headquartered in Pretoria. The Minister of Employment and Labour, accountable to Parliament, is supported by a Deputy Minister. The Director-General, as the accounting officer, reports to both the Minister and Parliament. Reporting to the Director-General are Deputy Director-Generals, followed by Chief Directors, Directors, Deputy Directors, Assistant Directors, and administrative staff (DEL Annual Performance Plan, 2025:3-4).

The Department also includes a Chief Operations Officer, under whom nine provincial offices operate, each headed by a Chief Director: Provincial Operations. The provinces include Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West, and Western Cape. In addition, the Department oversees two public entities: the Compensation Fund and the Unemployment Insurance Fund, both headed by Commissioners and supported by similar hierarchical management structures (DEL Annual Performance Plan, 2025:4).

At provincial level, Chief Director: Provincial Operations report to the Chief Operations Officer at national head office. Provincial offices are responsible for overseeing labour centres and satellite offices within their jurisdictions. Each province includes an Assistant Director responsible for Travel and Fleet Management Services, supported by junior supervisors and administrative personnel. Deputy Directors serve as heads of labour centres, ensuring effective service delivery and compliance with departmental mandates (DEL Annual Performance Plan, 2025:20; (DEL Annual Report, 2024:12).

According to the Annual Performance Plan of 2025/2026, the Department delivers services through nine provincial offices, 126 labour centres, 36 satellite offices, and 490 visiting points nationwide. Service delivery is further enhanced through the use of mobile labour centres and fully equipped service buses. The Department has also introduced digital platforms, including kiosks at labour centres and online employment services through e-government initiatives (DEL Annual Performance Plan, 2025:21).

The relevance of this information to the study lies in the requirement that all provincial offices and labour centres consolidate their training and education needs through human resource units and submit them to national head office for evaluation and approval. Delays or non-compliance with submission timelines directly hinder employee development and access to further education opportunities.

5.5 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION ANALYSIS OF CORE PROGRAMME FUNCTIONS OF DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR

Applying the theoretical perspectives on policy implementation to the core programme functions of the Department of Employment and Labour reveals the extent to which legislative intent is translated into practical outcomes. In line with Knill and Tosun (2008:499-501), policy implementation within the Department can be understood as the transformation of constitutional mandates, labour legislation and strategic policy commitments into operational programmes and service delivery mechanisms. The Department's alignment with the Constitution of South Africa of 1996 and the National Development Plan 2030 reflects governmental intent (South African Government, 2024). However, the critical issue, as O'Toole (1995:43; 2000:266 & 273) emphasises, lies in what occurs between this stated intent and tangible labour market outcomes.

From Mathebula's (2023:58-60) perspective, implementation involves executing foundational policy decisions embodied in legislation such as the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998. Within DEL, Programme 1 (Administration) constitutes the institutional mechanism through which such foundational decisions are operationalised. It establishes the organisational infrastructure (human resources, financial systems, ICT, risk management and support services) necessary to convert statutory obligations into functioning programmes (DEL Strategic Plan, 2025:7). However, centralised administrative procedures and delays in training approvals illustrate how weaknesses in bureaucratic arrangements impede the realisation of policy objectives. In McGovern's (2023:37&55) terms, implementation represents the continuation of politics through administrative action; thus, inefficiencies at this level directly compromise the substance and significance of policy.

Programme 2 (Inspection and Enforcement Services) exemplifies the implementation phase where policy outputs, such as inspection decisions and compliance directives,

are directed at target groups (DEL Strategic Plan, 2025:7-8). According to the sequential model outlined by Mathebula (2023:60), legislation is followed by agency decisions, target group compliance, and observable outcomes. In this case, workplace inspections, enforcement actions, and advocacy services represent concrete outputs intended to secure compliance with labour standards. Yet persistent capacity constraints and high inspection workloads weaken the link between legislative intent and workplace realities. As O'Toole (2000:266&273) argues, the effectiveness of implementation depends on the processes unfolding between adoption and impact; limited enforcement capacity restricts the Department's ability to achieve intended outcomes, particularly in the informal economy.

Programme 3 (Public Employment Services) illustrates implementation as a labour market activation strategy designed to convert policy objectives, such as reducing unemployment and improving skills matching, into measurable employment outcomes. The registration of work-seekers, employment counselling, and regulation of private employment agencies reflect operational instruments aimed at influencing target group behaviour (DEL Strategic Plan, 2025:9). However, as Grelle and Hofmann (2024:261) underscores, sufficient resources are indispensable for transforming policy goals into workable programmes. High unemployment, skills mismatches, and limited labour demand constrain the effectiveness of these interventions, highlighting the gap between intended objectives and real-world effects identified by O'Toole (1995:43).

Programme 4 (Labour Policy and Industrial Relations) demonstrates the dynamic and iterative nature of implementation. Beyond enforcing existing legislation, it generates research, facilitates social dialogue, and supports evidence-based policymaking (DEL Strategic Plan, 2025:10). In doing so, it contributes to the evaluative phase of implementation described by Mathebula (2023:60), where policy outcomes are assessed and may inform revisions or reforms. However, the translation of research findings into actionable reforms remains uneven, reflecting the broader implementation challenge of converting policy knowledge into institutional change.

Across all four programmes, skills development functions as a cross-cutting implementation priority (DEL Strategic Plan, 2025:7-10). Although the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 articulates clear objectives and causal logic,

implementation gaps, particularly administrative centralisation and coordination weaknesses, demonstrate that policy effectiveness depends heavily on institutional and bureaucratic capacity. As Knill and Tosun (2008:499-501) note, policy lacks meaning without an effective implementation strategy. The Department's challenges therefore confirm that successful implementation is not merely a matter of legislative design, but of organisational capability, resource sufficiency, inter-programme coordination and responsiveness to labour market conditions.

Considering public policy implementation, the Department's core programmes reveal a partial but uneven translation of policy intent into practice. While the institutional architecture for implementation is firmly established, capacity limitations, administrative inefficiencies and structural labour market constraints weaken the causal chain between policy adoption and intended socio-economic outcomes. Strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing coordination and ensuring adequate resources are therefore essential to bridge the gap between governmental intent and tangible labour market transformation (McGovern's (2023:56).

5.6 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AT THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR

As at 31 March 2024, the Department of Employment and Labour had an approved staff establishment of 9 263 employees. While progress was recorded in the filling of vacant posts during the reporting period, the Department continued to experience significant constraints in reducing its vacancy rate. These constraints were largely attributable to reduced budget allocations over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework period, compounded by cost-containment measures imposed by National Treasury. As a result, the recruitment process was halted midway through the financial year, necessitating a revision of the organisational establishment to assess affordability. This process coincided with broader structural changes within the Department, including the reconfiguration of functions and the unbundling of the Unemployment Insurance Fund and the Compensation Fund, which further affected workforce planning and staffing stability (DEL Annual Report, 2024:7).

Despite these financial and structural challenges, the Department demonstrated measurable progress in advancing transformation targets at senior management level.

During the 2023/24 financial year, women accounted for 46% of Senior Management Service positions, while persons with disabilities represented 2.5% of Senior Management Service appointments. These figures indicate a positive trajectory towards employment equity, although further progress remains necessary to fully realise inclusivity targets, particularly for persons with disabilities (DEL Annual Report, 2024:29).

Human Resource Management within the Department plays a central role in supporting skills development and organisational effectiveness. Its mandate includes the optimal utilisation and development of human capital, organisational development and transformation management, performance management, employee relations, employee health and wellness, and the provision of effective recruitment, selection, and placement services. In addition, the function is responsible for research and the development of human resource policies and practices that support sustainable skills development within the Department. Within this framework, Human Resource Development acts as the custodian of internal skills development and is responsible for implementing the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 alongside the Department's internal Human Resource Development policies (DEL Strategic Plan, 2025:14; DEL Annual Report, 2024:33).

An analysis of promotions during the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, as presented in below Table 5.1, reveals limited upward mobility within the Department. Out of a total workforce of 9 263 employees, only 120 officials (1.30%) were promoted to higher salary levels, while 24 officials (0.26%) progressed to a higher notch within their existing salary levels (DEL Annual Report, 2024:101). These figures suggest that internal career progression opportunities remain constrained, highlighting the need for more deliberate alignment between skills development initiatives and career advancement pathways.

Table 5.1: Promotions by salary band for the period 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024

Salary Band	Employees 1 April 2023	Promotions to another salary level	Salary bands promotions as a % of employees by salary level	Progressions to another notch within a salary level	Notch progression as a % of employees by salary bands
Skilled (Levels 3-5)	1 182	7	0.59%	9	0.76%
Highly skilled production (Levels 6-8)	6 597	80	1.21%	3	0.05%
Highly skilled supervision (Levels 9-12)	1 340	28	2.09%	12	0.90%
Senior Management (Level 13-16)	144	5	3.47%	0	0.00%
Total	9 263	120	1.30%	24	0.26%

Source: (DEL Annual Report, 2024:9).

Further disaggregation of promotion data indicated in below Table 5.2 indicates that a total of 120 officials received promotions during the reporting period, including two employees with disabilities. Of these promotions, 73 were awarded to male employees (comprising 69 African males, 3 Coloured males, and 1 White male), while 48 promotions were awarded to female employees, including 39 African females, 3 Coloured females, 3 Indian females, and 3 White females. While the data reflects progress in gender representation, the relatively low number of promotions overall reinforces concerns regarding limited internal mobility and skills-driven progression (DEL Annual Report, 2024:103).

Table 5.2: Promotions for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

Occupational band	MALE				FEMALE				TOTAL
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White	
Top Management	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Senior Management	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	5
Professionally qualified and experienced specialists and mid-management	21	0	0	0	5	1	1	0	28
Skilled technical and academically qualified workers, junior management, supervisors, foreman and superintendents	38	2	0	0	24	1	2	1	68
Semi-skilled and discretionary decision making	6	1	0	1	9	1	0	1	19
Unskilled and defined decision making	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	69	3	0	1	39	3	3	2	120
Employees with disabilities	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2

Source: (DEL Annual Report, 2024:102-103).

With regard to skills development participation, the Department recorded a total of 860 skills development requests during the 2023/24 financial year (see below Table 5.3). These requests comprised 336 male employees and 510 female employees, indicating higher participation by women in education and training initiatives. Participation included 304 African males, 14 Coloured males, 11 Indian males, and 7 White males, as well as 462 African females, 26 Coloured females, 7 Indian females, and 15 White females. Notably, only six employees with disabilities participated in skills development activities, consisting of three African males and three White females. While overall participation levels appear moderate, the data points to the need for improved inclusivity and targeted interventions for employees with disabilities (DEL Annual Report, 2024:104).

Table 5.3: Skills development for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

Occupational band	MALE				FEMALE				TOTAL
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White	
Legislators, senior officials and managers	98	1	10	1	152	6	0	9	277
Professionals	99	5	1	2	130	9	2	3	251
Technicians and associate professionals	33	3	0	4	61	5	1	2	109
Clerks	29	5	0	4	61	5	1	2	109
Service and sales workers	10	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	128
Skilled agriculture and fishery workers	20	0	0	0	22	0	0	0	42
Craft and related	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Occupational band	MALE				FEMALE				TOTAL
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White	
trades workers									
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	15	0	0	0	13	1	1	0	30
Elementary occupations	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	304	14	11	7	462	26	7	15	860
Employees with disabilities	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	6

Source: (DEL Annual Report, 2024:104).

An assessment of training needs identification, as tabled in below Table 5.4, further highlights limitations in skills planning. At the start of the reporting period, training needs were identified for only 355 employees, representing a small proportion of the total workforce of 9 263 employees. No learnerships or alternative forms of structured training were identified during this period, with the identified needs limited primarily to skills programmes and short courses. This suggests that training needs analysis within the Department may not be sufficiently comprehensive or strategically aligned to workforce development requirements (DEL Annual Report, 2024:111).

Table 5.4: Training needs identified for the period 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024

Occupational category	Gender	Number of employees as at 1 April 2023	Training needs identified at start of the reporting period			
			Learnerships	Skills Programmes & other short courses	Other forms of training	Total
Legislators, senior officials and managers	Female	76	0	94	0	94
	Male	68	0	50	0	50
Professionals	Female	275	0	26	0	26
	Male	274	0	15	0	15
Technicians and associate professionals	Female	1 930	0	58	0	58
	Male	1 876	0	26	0	26
Clerks	Female	2 415	0	50	0	50
	Male	2 138	0	19	0	19
Service and sales workers	Female	n/a	0	6	0	6
	Male	n/a	0	1	0	1
Skilled agriculture and fishery workers	Female	n/a	0	5	0	5
	Male	n/a	0	4	0	4
Craft and related trades workers	Female	n/a	0	0	0	0
	Male	n/a	0	0	0	0
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	Female	n/a	0	0	0	0
	Male	n/a	0	0	0	0
Elementary occupations	Female	118	0	0	0	0
	Male	93	0	1	0	1
Sub Total	Female	4 814	0	239	0	239
	Male	4 449	0	116	0	16

Occupational category	Gender	Number of employees as at 1 April 2023	Training needs identified at start of the reporting period			
			Learnerships	Skills Programmes & other short courses	Other forms of training	Total
Total		9 263	0	355	0	355

Source: (DEL Annual Report, 2024:111).

As tabled in below Table 5.5, training provision during the same period reflected slightly higher activity levels but remained limited in scope. Of the total workforce, 437 employees participated in skills programmes and short courses, while 93 employees received other forms of training. As with training needs identification, no learnerships were implemented during the 2023/24 financial year. Although the number of training interventions exceeded the number of identified needs, the overall reach of training remained low relative to the size of the workforce (DEL Annual Report, 2024:112).

Table 5.5: Training provided for the period 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024

Occupational category	Gender	Number of employees as at 1 April 2023	Training needs identified at start of the reporting period			
			Learnerships	Skills Programmes and other short courses	Other forms of training	Total
Legislators, senior officials and managers	Female	76	0	16	4	20
	Male	68	0	19	7	26
Professionals	Female	275	0	15	2	17
	Male	274	0	26	3	29
Technicians and associate professionals	Female	1 930	0	27	13	40
	Male	1 876	0	35	18	53

Occupational category	Gender	Number of employees as at 1 April 2023	Training needs identified at start of the reporting period			
			Learnerships	Skills Programmes and other short courses	Other forms of training	Total
Clerks	Female	2 415	0	96	32	128
	Male	2 138	0	84	14	98
Service and sales workers	Female	n/a	0	0	0	0
	Male	n/a	0	0	0	0
Skilled agriculture and fishery workers	Female	n/a	0	0	0	0
	Male	n/a	0	0	0	0
Craft and related trades workers	Female	n/a	0	0	0	0
	Male	n/a	0	0	0	0
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	Female	n/a	0	0	0	0
	Male	n/a	0	0	0	0
Elementary occupations	Female	118	0	47	0	47
	Male	93	0	71	0	71
Sub Total	Female	4 814	0	202	51	253
	Male	4 449	0	235	42	277
Total		9 263	0	437	93	530

Source: (DEL Annual Report, 2024:112).

The above analysis in section 5.6, *Skills Development at the Department of Employment and Labour*, demonstrates a clear and interdependent relationship between skills development outcomes, effective policy implementation and service delivery performance within the Department of Employment and Labour. The limited scope of training coverage, low levels of promotion and the absence of structured learning pathways, such as learnerships, suggest that the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 has not yet translated into sufficiently strong institutional capability. Where skills development interventions are narrow or inconsistently aligned with identified organisational needs, the Department's ability to operationalise policy objectives, respond to labour market demands and deliver services efficiently is constrained.

In addition, uneven access to learning and development opportunities may perpetuate historical and structural disparities in skills acquisition, thereby limiting the Department's capacity to address racial imbalances in skills development. In contrast, targeted and well-planned learning and development programmes not only enhance employee competence and improve career progression, but also contribute to redressing racial inequalities by broadening access to skills development opportunities for historically disadvantaged groups within the Department. Such programmes strengthen managerial and technical capacity across all occupational levels, supporting both equity and performance objectives.

Consequently, strengthening the alignment between skills planning, training implementation and performance management is critical for improving service delivery outcomes. Equally important is ensuring that learning and development programmes are deliberately leveraged as instruments for transformation, enabling the Department of Employment and Labour to build a skilled, representative and capable workforce. In doing so, skills development can function as a strategic enabler of a responsive, equitable and developmental state.

5.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 5 provided a comprehensive case study of the Department of Employment and Labour, presently known as the Department of Employment and Labour, in South Africa. It began by presenting background information and situating the department

within the broader framework of public administration and labour governance. The chapter examined the historical evolution and institutional transformation of the department, alongside its legislative mandate and organisational structure at national, provincial, and service delivery levels. It further conducted a detailed analysis of the department's core programme functions, including administration, inspection and enforcement, public employment services, and labour policy and industrial relations, with particular emphasis on policy intent, institutional capacity, regulatory compliance, and labour market activation. The implications of the department's policies and programmes for skills development, workforce participation, and socio-economic outcomes were also addressed. The chapter concluded by evaluating skills development at the Department of Employment and Labour. The subsequent chapter presents the data analysis and findings of the study, providing empirical evidence to inform the research objectives.

CHAPTER 6:

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 6 presents the analysis and discussion of the empirical findings derived from the primary data collected for this study. The analysis is guided by the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2 and is contextualised by the legislative and policy environment discussed in Chapter 3. In addition, the institutional and operational context of the case study, as described in Chapter 5, provides an essential foundation for the interpretation of the findings.

The chapter is driven by the central research question, which seeks to determine the extent to which learning and development programmes and strategies can be strengthened through the effective implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, with the ultimate objective of enhancing the skills of the workforce within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the National Department of Employment and Labour.

The Department of Employment and Labour is mandated to ensure effective and efficient compliance with labour legislation across all provinces in South Africa. This mandate is operationalised through the daily deployment of inspectors and other law-enforcement officials, which places significant demands on fleet management to sustain productivity, operational efficiency, and safety for vehicle drivers and equipment operators (DEL Publications, 2024:4-6). In the post-COVID-19 period, the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate introduced new operational mechanisms to adapt to changing work conditions. Although both new and existing employees received initial guidance, the findings reveal that structured and continuous training is required to adequately address skills gaps and to enhance the knowledge and competencies of officials.

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected for the study in relation to the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Department of Employment and Labour. It translates quantitative and qualitative

evidence into findings aligned with the research objectives. The chapter outlines the mixed-methods approach, recaps the data collection process, and profiles the respondents to contextualise the sample. It analyses questionnaire data across themes such as contextualisation of skills development, the legislative and policy framework, programme implementation, organisational context, and equity outcomes. Interview data are then examined. The chapter concludes with a consolidated summary of key quantitative and qualitative findings, which inform the conclusions and recommendations that follow.

6.2 RECAP OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches, to guide the data collection process. Prior to the commencement of data collection, the researcher formally requested access to the National Department of Employment and Labour through the Office of the Director-General. This procedural step was necessary to ensure institutional approval and to facilitate ethical and systematic engagement with participants. According to Dean and Hogg (2022:145), such a request is essential as it clarifies the purpose and objectives of the research and sets the context within which the study is conducted. Ethical considerations were addressed through assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Respondents were not required to disclose their names, and only their occupational positions were recorded, thereby safeguarding their identities and promoting honest and unbiased responses.

In pursuit of the study objectives outlined in Chapter 1, Section 1.6 *Research Design and Methodology*, a structured questionnaire was administered to selected officials within the Department of Employment and Labour, including Directors, Deputy Directors and other relevant officials. The quantitative component of the study employed the questionnaire designed for analysis using Microsoft 365 Excel. A Likert-scale format was utilised to facilitate the systematic measurement of respondents' perceptions and experiences related to learning and development practices.

To complement the quantitative data, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. This approach enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth insights and to explore participants' experiences and perspectives within the workplace

context. In addition, official documents including government legislation, annual audit reports, and government statistics on training and development, were analysed as primary data sources. These documents provided authoritative, objective, and factual information relevant to the study.

6.3 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

This section presents the demographic profile of the respondents who participated in the study. It provides an overview of the characteristics of both the questionnaire respondents and the interview participants in order to contextualise the findings and enhance an understanding of the composition of the research sample.

6.3.1 Questionnaire respondents

The target population for the study comprised all 160 employees within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the Department of Employment and Labour. A proportional sample of 144 officials participated in the questionnaire survey, representing a high response rate and ensuring adequate representation of the Directorate. The respondents were drawn from across the Directorate and included officials occupying different functional and operational roles. The survey therefore reflects a broad institutional perspective on the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Directorate.

No personal or identifying information (such as names, identity numbers, age, race or gender) was requested in the questionnaire. The study focuses on institutional processes, legislative implementation, organisational context, and programme effectiveness rather than individual demographic characteristics. Personal data was therefore not relevant to the research problem or the research questions. Furthermore, the decision not to collect personal details aligns with the provisions of the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 (POPIA), which emphasises the lawful and minimal processing of personal information. By limiting data collection to information strictly necessary for addressing the research questions, the study ensured compliance with POPIA principles, protected participant anonymity, and minimised potential risks related to confidentiality.

6.3.2 Interview participants

In addition to the questionnaire, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven participants from the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate. The participants represented a range of positions within the Directorate, including the Director, Deputy Directors, Assistant Directors, Supervisors, Clerks, Specialists, and Training Facilitators. The interviews provided in-depth insights into the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 and its influence on the design, implementation, and effectiveness of learning and development programmes. Participants shared their perspectives on the skills development environment, workforce responses to the Act's implementation, and the alignment of policies and programmes with legislative requirements. They further reflected on how learning initiatives contribute to addressing skills gaps, enhancing employee competencies, promoting career progression, and advancing equity objectives within the Directorate. Recommendations were also offered to strengthen the effective implementation of the Act within the Department.

As with the questionnaire, no personal identifying details were collected during the interviews. The focus of the study is institutional and policy-oriented rather than individual or demographic. Collecting personal data would not have contributed to answering the research questions related to legislative implementation and organisational effectiveness. The exclusion of personal information also ensured adherence to POPIA, safeguarded confidentiality, and upheld ethical research standards.

The research problem centres on the ineffective implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 and its impact on learning and development within the Directorate. None of the main or supporting research questions require analysis based on personal demographic variables. Instead, the emphasis is on contextual, institutional, legislative, and organisational factors. Therefore, personal details were not necessary to address the research objectives.

6.4 ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATIONS AND FINDINGS OF QUANTIFIABLE DATA: QUESTIONNAIRE

The data analysis and interpretation in this section follows the sequence of the questionnaire from Statement 1 to 10. (See Annexure E: Questionnaire). Microsoft Excel was used to organise, process, and analyse the quantitative data collected from participants. Survey responses were entered into structured spreadsheets, allowing for sorting, filtering and coding of data. Each statement is presented with its purpose and analysis of the responses.

The analysis of the follow-up interviews is presented in the second part of the chapter.

6.4.1 Contextualisation of skills development

As discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.2.2 *Aim and Scope of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998*, the Skills Development Act seeks to improve the relevance of skills available within the South African labour market. It aims to promote continuous learning, facilitating access to training, and ensuring that skills acquired by individuals are transferable across employment contexts (Republic of South Africa, 1998). Statement 1 (*Training and development opportunities have been accessible to officials of the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate over the past five years*) sought to establish whether officials had equitable access to training opportunities, providing a baseline understanding of the contextual environment (Research Objective 1). As illustrated in Figure 6.1, the results indicate that the majority of respondents disagreed that officials applied and attended relevant training. Specifically, 80% strongly disagreed with the statement, while 20% agreed.

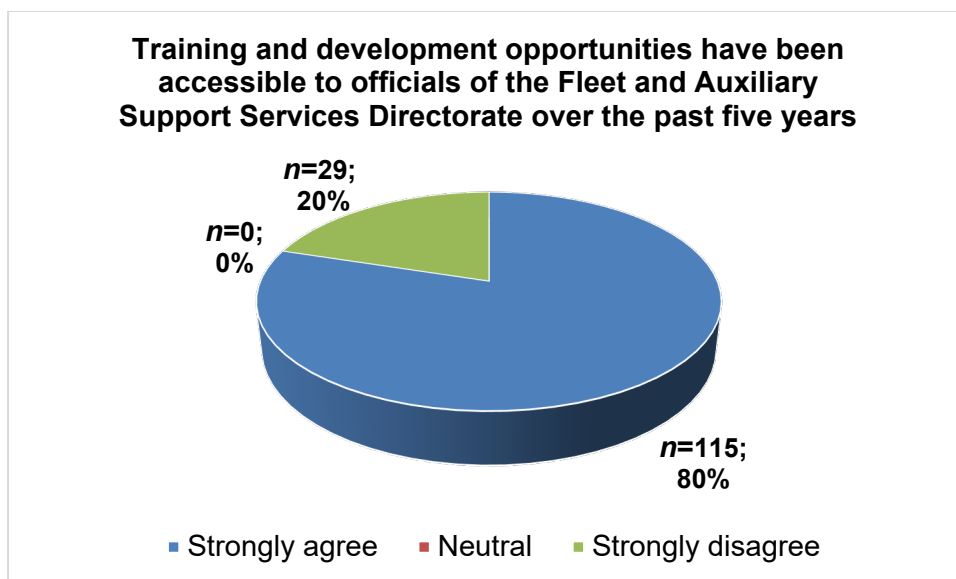


Figure 6.1: Contextualisation of skills development – Responses to Statement 1

Source: Author's own construct

The results illustrated in Figure 6.1 suggest that access to formal training and education within the Directorate was limited. It can be inferred that potential gaps existed in the availability and promotion of learning opportunities within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate over the study period. As discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.2.2 *Aim and Scope of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998*, by effectively implementing the Skills Development Act, the employability of workers and the service delivery capacity (Department of Employment and Labour, 2001).

In-service training provides employees with the knowledge and skills required to perform specific functional tasks and to progress from entry-level supervision to senior management positions. This type of training is essential for enhancing organisational capacity and ensuring that employees remain effective in evolving work environments (Kerkhoff & Moschopoulos, 2024:75). As highlighted in Chapter 2, section 2.8 *Meeting Training Needs*, in-service training must be undertaken on a regular and structured basis. Statement 2 (*Training is undertaken on a regular and structured basis within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate*) sought to determine whether training occurs consistently and systematically, informing the contextual understanding of the Directorate's learning environment (Research Objective 1). As illustrated in Figure 6.2, approximately 60% of respondents agreed that training is undertaken periodically, 30% remained neutral, and 10% strongly disagreed.

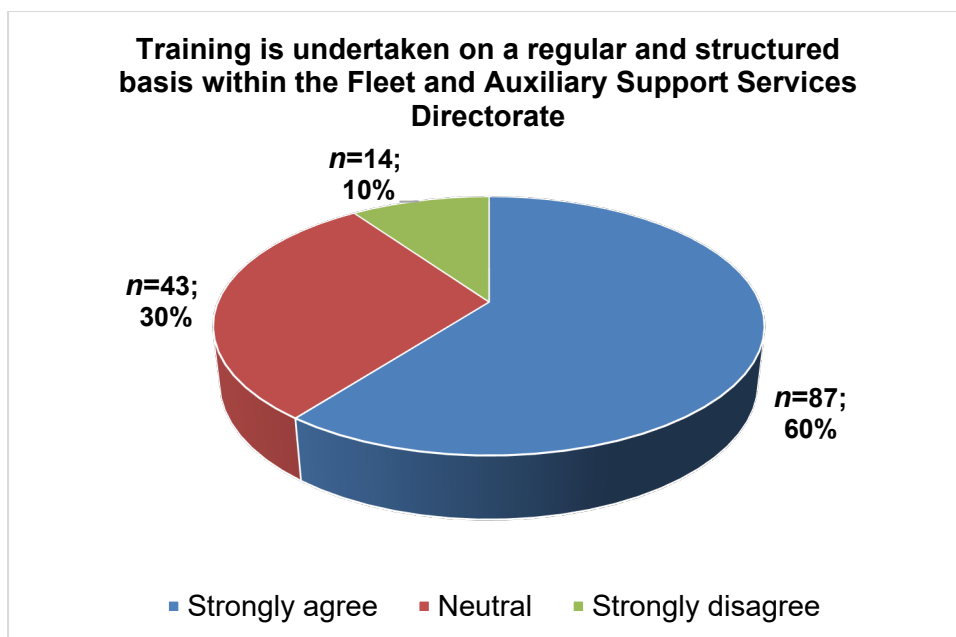


Figure 6.2: Contextualisation of skills development – Responses to Statement 2

Source: Author's own construct

The results illustrated in Figure 6.2 indicate that while training occurs periodically, it may not be fully structured or consistent across all officials, suggesting room for improvement in scheduling and planning. Conducting training on a regular and structured basis, could particularly benefit professional officers and technicians of the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate who have acquired formal education but require workplace-specific skills to operate effectively in government institutions (Kerkhoff & Moschopoulos, 2024:77).

6.4.2 Legislative and policy framework

Effective implementation of skills development, supported by monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, ensures accountability, transparency and performance enhancement. By aligning the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 with Chapter 10 constitutional principles, and leveraging supporting legislation and strategies, South Africa can continue to build a skilled, ethical, and representative public service capable of meeting the developmental needs of its citizens (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.1 *Strengthening skills development and legislative framework in Public Administration*).

Statement 3 (*The implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 has enhanced the skills and knowledge of the workforce of the Department of Employment and Labour*) sought to assess the perceived effectiveness of the Skills Development Act in enhancing workforce competencies (Research Objective 3). As illustrated in Figure 6.3, respondents displayed varied perceptions regarding skills enhancement: 45% agreed, 22% strongly disagreed, 22% remained neutral, and 11% strongly agreed.

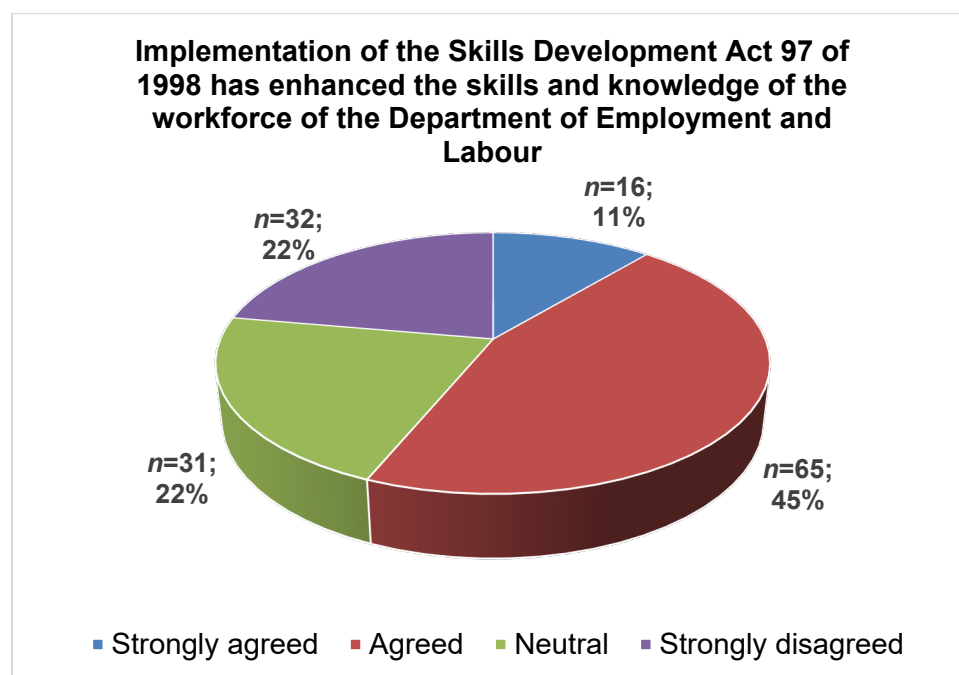


Figure 6.3: Legislative and policy framework – Responses to Statement 3

Source: Author's own construct

The mixed responses illustrated in Figure 6.3 suggest differing experiences and interpretations of the Act's impact on skills development, indicating a need for clearer communication and monitoring of outcomes. This finding underscores the need for strengthened monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, clearer communication of skills development objectives and outcomes, and closer alignment between the Skills Development Act and Chapter 10 constitutional principles to ensure accountability, transparency, and improved performance within the public service.

It was highlighted in Chapter 2, section 2.9 *Determining Training Policy*, that training and development should be regarded as lifelong processes to which every employee is subjected, either through organisational programmes or personal initiative. In this context, the training and development needs of employees must be systematically identified and explicitly considered when learning and development programmes are designed, ensuring relevance, effectiveness and alignment with organisational objectives (Virtanen, Tammeaid & Jalonen, 2023:65-69). Statement 4 (*There is a clear alignment between the departmental Human Resource Skills Development Policy and the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998*) sought to determine whether departmental policy aligns with legislative requirements, ensuring the Act is effectively implemented (Research Objective 3). Figure 6.4 shows uncertainty among officials, namely 50% were not sure, 20% disagreed, 20% strongly disagreed, and only 10% agreed.

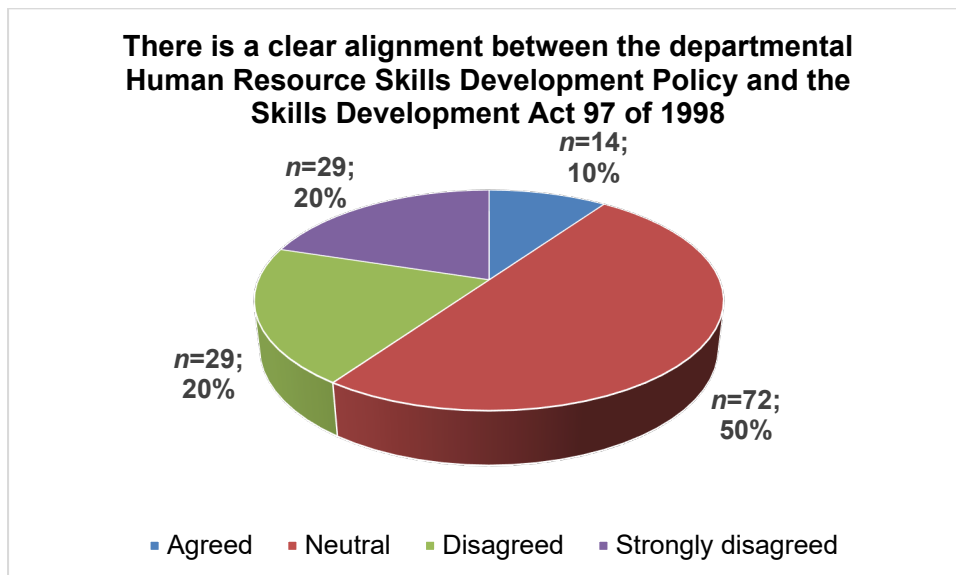


Figure 6.4: Legislative and policy framework – Responses to Statement 4

Source: Author's own construct

The responses illustrated in Figure 6.4 demonstrate a lack of awareness or clarity regarding policy alignment, suggesting that the HR policy may not be fully integrated with legislative objectives. This pattern suggests that the departmental HR Skills Development Policy may not be sufficiently communicated, operationalised or visibly linked to the legislative objectives of the Skills Development Act. Consequently, the

intended integration of employee training needs into learning and development programme design appears weakened, potentially undermining the relevance, effectiveness and strategic coherence of skills development initiatives within the department.

It was stated in Chapter 2, section 2.7 *Determining Training Needs*, that the departmental Human Resource Skills Development Policy adequately provides for the implementation of the aims and objectives of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, as it facilitates the systematic identification of skills gaps and supports targeted learning and development interventions aligned with legislative requirements (Crawshaw, Budhwar & Davis, 2024:56). Statement 5 (*The departmental Human Resource Skills Development Policy adequately provides for the implementation of the aims and objectives of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998*) sought to evaluate whether HR policy sufficiently supports the implementation of the Act (Research Objective 3). As illustrated in Figure 6.5, the majority of respondents were neutral (60%) about the adequacy of HR policy, while 30% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed.

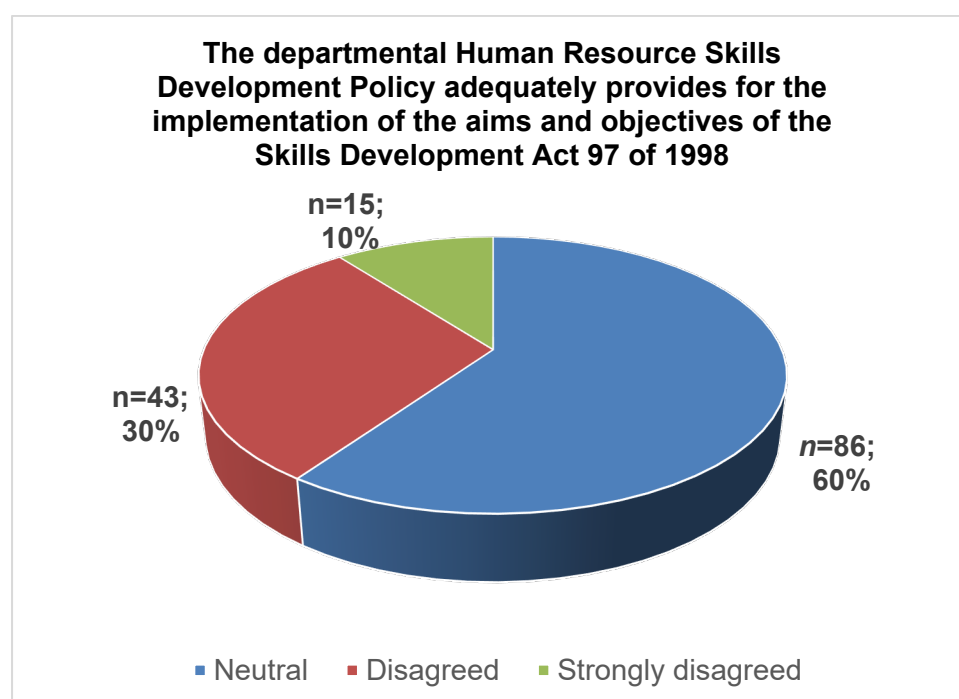


Figure 6.5: Legislative and policy framework – Responses to Statement 5

Source: Author's own construct

The responses illustrated in Figure 6.5 highlight perceived insufficiencies in institutional support for the Act's objectives, suggesting that policy implementation may require strengthening. The absence of any agreement responses suggests limited confidence in the policy's effectiveness in facilitating the systematic identification of skills gaps and the implementation of targeted learning and development interventions (Crawshaw, Budhwar & Davis, 2024:57). These results point to perceived insufficiencies in institutional support for the Act's objectives and imply that the practical implementation, communication and operationalisation of the HR Skills Development Policy may require strengthening to ensure that legislative intentions are translated into meaningful and visible skills development outcomes.

6.4.3 Implementation of learning and development programmes

As stated in Chapter 2, section 2.7.2 *Types of Needs Assessments*, organisational needs in the public sector are shaped by legislative mandates, policy priorities and constitutional values, and are therefore aligned with strategic objectives such as improving service delivery outcomes, enhancing administrative efficiency, strengthening ethical conduct, improving employee morale and ensuring the effective utilisation of public resources. Within this context, the training and development needs of employees are systematically identified and considered when learning and development programmes are designed, ensuring that such programmes are responsive to both organisational priorities and individual competency gaps (Fitzsimmons, et al., 2023:137). Statement 6 (*The training and development needs of employees are considered when learning and development programmes are designed*) sought to assess whether training is needs-driven and responsive to employee requirements (Research Objective 4). As shown in Figure 6.6, half of the respondents (50%) agreed that employees' needs are considered, 30% were neutral, and 20% disagreed.

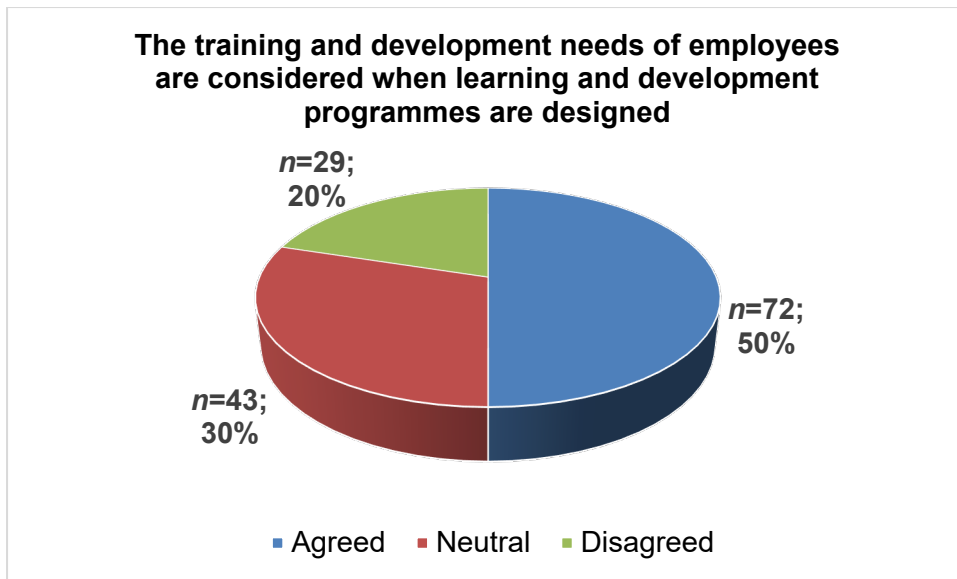


Figure 6.6: Implementation of learning and development programmes – Responses to Statement 6

Source: Author's own construct

The responses illustrated in Figure 6.6 show that while needs assessment occurs for some programmes, there is inconsistency in how training needs are identified and addressed across the Directorate. This distribution suggests that, although needs-driven training practices are evident in certain instances, they are not applied consistently across the Directorate. The presence of neutrality and disagreement points to variability in how training needs assessments are conducted and translated into learning interventions (Fitzsimmons, et al., 2023:142). Consequently, the intended alignment between legislative mandates, organisational priorities and individual competency gaps is uneven, which may limit the overall effectiveness of learning and development programmes in supporting service delivery, administrative efficiency and optimal use of public resources.

It was explained in Chapter 2, section 2.5.2 *Why do organisations offer training and development?*, that public institutions invest in the training and development of employees because such investment generates benefits for both individuals and the organisation. Through training, employees are empowered to make informed decisions, solve problems more effectively, and manage stress, tension and conflict

with greater confidence. Training also internalises and operationalises key motivational factors such as recognition, achievement, growth and responsibility, thereby enhancing job satisfaction, skills acquisition and professional attitudes. In the public sector, these benefits are further strengthened when officials are actively involved in the development of training and development programmes, as such participation ensures that learning interventions are responsive to operational realities and employee needs (Bound, et al., 2023:21. Statement 7 (*Officials are actively involved in the development of training and development programmes within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate*) sought to evaluate employee participation in programme design and implementation (Research Objective 4). Figure 6.7 shows that 60% of respondents agreed that officials are involved in programme development, 20% disagreed, and 20% strongly disagreed.

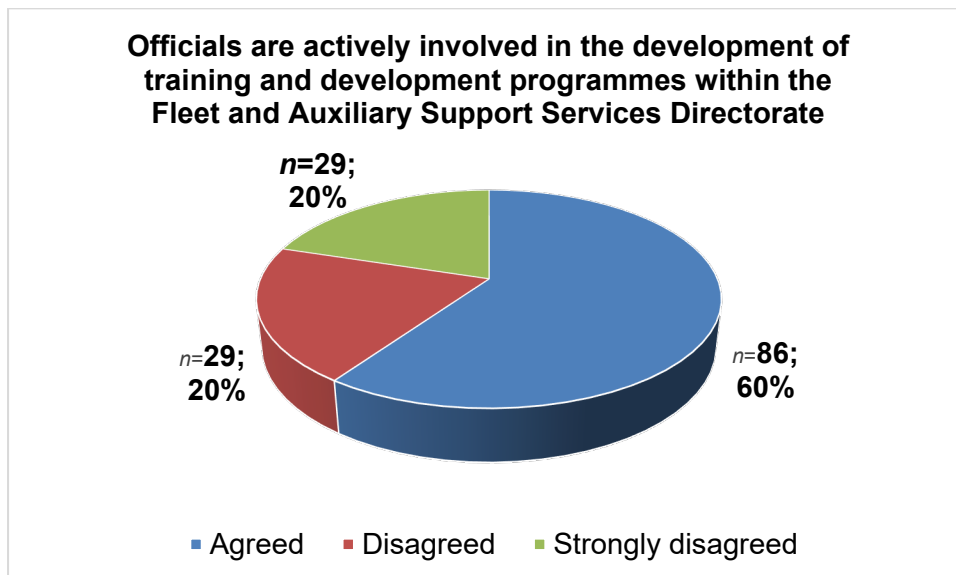


Figure 6.7: Implementation of learning and development programmes – Responses to Statement 7

Source: Author's own construct

The responses illustrated in Figure 6.7 suggest a moderate level of participatory involvement, which may contribute positively to ownership and relevance of training programmes, though further inclusion is needed. This disparity suggests that while participatory approaches are implemented in some areas, they are not consistently

applied throughout the organisation. Limited inclusion of all officials in programme development may reduce the potential benefits of training, including employee empowerment, motivation and alignment with operational needs (Bound, et al., 2023:22). Strengthening participatory mechanisms could therefore enhance the effectiveness and impact of training and development initiatives in supporting individual performance and organisational outcomes in the public sector.

It was noted in Chapter 2, section 2.6 *Public Institution as a Learning Place*, that skills training and development are prerequisites for effective service delivery. All employees, including those performing manual or operational duties, should receive appropriate training. In this regard, training and development programmes are offered equitably to officials to improve functional and job-related skills, ensuring that opportunities for skills enhancement are not limited to specific occupational categories or levels (Morphet, 2025:150-152). Statement 8 (*Training and development programmes are offered equitably to officials to improve functional and job-related skills*) sought to measure perceptions of fairness and equity in training delivery (Research Objective 4). As seen in Figure 6.8, an equal proportion of respondents agreed (40%) or remained neutral (40%), while 10% strongly disagreed and a further 10% disagreed.

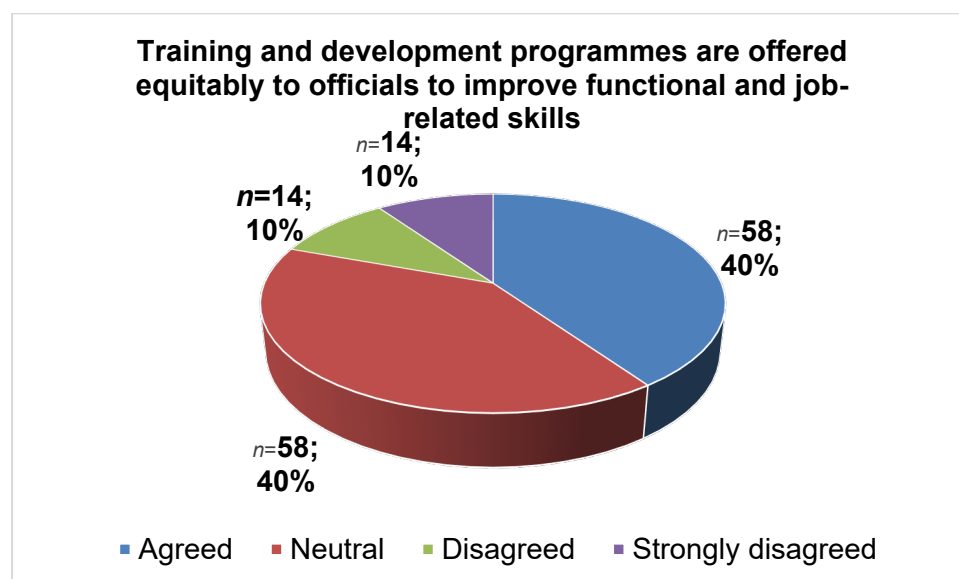


Figure 6.8: Implementation of learning and development programmes – Responses to Statement 8

Source: Author's own construct

The responses illustrated in Figure 6.8 indicate partial inequity in programme access, suggesting that some officials may not receive equivalent opportunities for skills development. This distribution suggests that, although equity in training provision is evident for some officials, it is not consistently experienced across all occupational categories or levels. The high level of neutrality further points to limited visibility or awareness of how training opportunities are allocated. Overall, the findings indicate partial inequity in access to training and development programmes, which may undermine the institution's objective of functioning as a learning organisation and ensuring inclusive skills development to support effective service delivery (Morphet, 2025:152).

6.4.4 Institutional and organisational context

It was confirmed in Chapter 4, section 4.2.2 *Aim and Scope of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998*, that the effective implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 contributes to improved career progression opportunities for public officials, as it promotes structured learning pathways, continuous skills development and the alignment of training with occupational competencies and career frameworks (SDA, 1998:Section 2). Statement 9 (*The effective implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 contributes to improved career progression opportunities for officials within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate*) sought to examine the link between skills development and career growth (Research Objective 5). The results shown in Figure 6.9 reflect that the majority of respondents (70%) agreed that the Act promotes career progression, while 20% were neutral and only 10% disagreed.

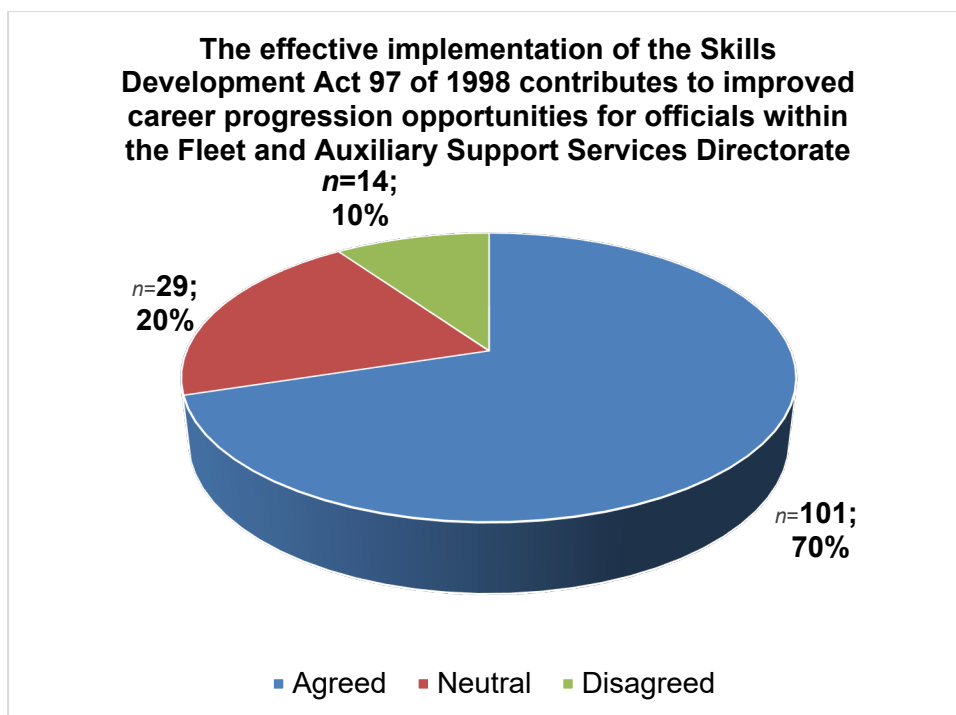


Figure 6.9: Institutional and organisational context – Responses to Statement 9

Source: Author's own construct

The presence of neutral responses (20%) indicates that some officials may not have directly experienced these benefits or may be uncertain about the career-related outcomes of skills development initiatives. However, the relatively low level of disagreement (10%) reinforces the overall positive perception that the Act has facilitated career development and promotion opportunities within the Directorate, thereby supporting its intended legislative objectives.

6.4.5 Improvement and equity outcomes

As described in Chapter 5, section 5.6 *Skills Development at the Department of Employment and Labour*, targeted and well-planned learning and development programmes not only enhance employee competence and improve career progression, but also contribute to redressing racial inequalities by broadening access to skills development opportunities for historically disadvantaged groups within the Department. Such programmes strengthen managerial and technical capacity across all occupational levels, supporting both equity and performance objectives (DEL

Annual Report, 2024:103-105). Statement 10 (*Learning and development programmes contribute to addressing racial imbalances in skills development within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate*) sought to determine whether training contributes to equity, transformation, and redress of historical disadvantages (Research Objective 6). The results shown in Figure 6.10 illustrate that the majority of respondents (60%) agreed that programmes contribute to redressing past imbalances, while 20% strongly disagreed and a further 20% disagreed.

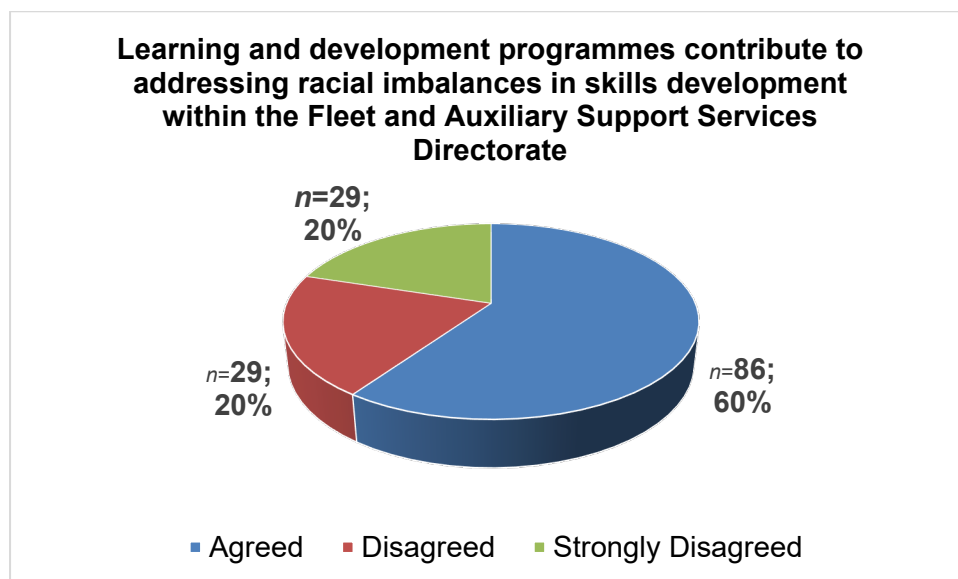


Figure 6.10: Improvement and equity outcomes – Responses to Statement 10

Source: Author's own construct

The responses illustrated in Figure 6.10 suggest that the Skills Development Act is having a positive impact on transformation, though some respondents perceive that more progress is required to fully achieve equity goals. This divergence highlights ongoing challenges in fully realising the equity and redress objectives of skills development programmes and suggests the need for more deliberate, targeted and consistently applied learning and development strategies to strengthen transformation outcomes within the Directorate (DEL Annual Report, 2024:105).

In general, the quantifiable data indicate that while the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 and associated learning and development programmes have positively influenced skills, career development, and equity, there are gaps in accessibility, consistency, policy awareness and equitable programme delivery. These insights provide a solid empirical basis for the qualitative interviews, which explored the underlying reasons behind mixed perceptions, inconsistencies and areas for improvement.

6.5 ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATIONS AND FINDINGS OF QUALITATIVE DATA: INTERVIEWS

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven individuals from the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate, including the Director, Deputy Directors, Assistant Directors, Supervisors, Clerks, Specialists and Training Facilitators. (See Annexure F: Interview Schedule). Participants provided informed perspectives on the skills development environment within the Directorate, including workforce responses to the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, the effectiveness of its application, and the policies and programmes supporting skills development. They also reflected on how learning initiatives address skills needs, enhance employee knowledge, create career development opportunities, and promote racial and gender equity. Participants further offered recommendations for strengthening the implementation of the Act within the Department of Employment and Labour.

The data acquired from the interviews is presented per theme below:

- **Contextualisation of Skills Development:** This objective sought to contextualise skills development within the institutional and organisational environment of the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate. The questions explored organisational culture, institutional context, and employee perceptions, thereby providing explanatory depth to the quantitative findings relating to access to training and the frequency of learning opportunities. The following interview questions informed this objective:

How would you describe the overall context and environment for skills development within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate?

How has the workforce responded to the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 in this Directorate?

- **Legislative and Policy Framework:** This objective examined how the legislative and policy framework governing skills development is translated into practice within the Directorate. The interview questions enabled participants to elaborate on issues of policy alignment, legislative compliance, and operationalisation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, complementing the quantitative data on policy implementation. The following questions were addressed:

In your view, how effectively and efficiently is the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 implemented within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate?

What policies, methods or programmes are currently used to give effect to the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Department of Employment and Labour?

- **Implementation of Learning and Development Programmes:** This objective focused on the practical implementation of learning and development programmes, including processes, decision-making mechanisms, and perceived outcomes. The qualitative data enriched the quantitative findings on training needs assessment, participation levels, and skills enhancement. The following questions guided the discussion under this objective:

How are learning and development programmes designed and implemented to address the skills needs of officials within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate?

In what ways has the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 contributed to enhancing the skills and knowledge of the workforce?

- **Institutional and Organisational Context:** This objective aimed to deepen understanding of career pathways, institutional support, and organisational structures influencing skills development outcomes. The qualitative responses complemented survey findings on perceptions of promotion and career progression. The following question was addressed:

To what extent has the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 created career development and promotion opportunities within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate?

- **Equity, Redress and Improvement:** This objective focused on issues of equity, transformation, and continuous improvement in skills development. The interview questions generated qualitative evidence on racial and gender redress, as well as practical measures to strengthen implementation. These insights directly informed the development of recommendations and complemented the quantitative equity-related findings. The following questions were explored:

How has access to learning and development programmes contributed to addressing racial and gender imbalances in skills development within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate?

Based on your experience, what improvements could be made to strengthen the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Department of Employment and Labour?

The sequence of themes above was established by the research questions formulated in Chapter 1, section 1.3 *Problem Statement and Research Questions*. Given the relatively small sample size, simple descriptive analysis was employed to interpret the responses (Hoda, 2024:48).

6.5.1 Contextualisation of skills development

This subsection addresses Research Objective 1 and draws on Interview Questions 1 and 2. Participants were asked to reflect on the overall skills development environment and workforce responses to the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998. Several participants described the skills development environment as uneven and constrained, particularly in relation to access and communication. Participant 1 noted:

“There is an intention to develop people, but in practice the opportunities are not always visible or evenly distributed across the Directorate.”

Similarly, Participant 3 indicated that although training opportunities exist, access remains limited:

“Training does happen, but it’s not something that everyone can easily apply for or attend. Often only certain sections benefit.”

Workforce responses to the implementation of the Skills Development Act were described as mixed, reflecting varying levels of awareness and engagement. Participant 5 explained:

“Some officials are eager to attend training, but others feel discouraged because they don’t see consistent follow-through or outcomes.”

Participant 6 added:

“There is support for skills development in principle, but staff become demotivated when applications are delayed or feedback is not given.”

These qualitative insights confirm the quantitative findings presented under Statements 1 and 2, where the majority of respondents disagreed that training opportunities were accessible and only moderate agreement existed regarding structured training. The interviews provide explanatory depth by revealing that limited access, uneven distribution, and poor communication contribute to negative perceptions of the skills development environment. This alignment confirms that contextual constraints significantly affect the effectiveness of skills development within the Directorate. The findings are conceptually consistent with Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2 *Organisational Learning Theory*, which emphasises that learning effectiveness depends not only on the availability of training interventions but also on organisational culture, communication systems, and feedback mechanisms. As argued in Section 2.3.2, weak knowledge-sharing practices and limited institutionalisation of learning undermine the development of learning organisations in the public sector (Argyris & Schön, 1978). The uneven access and poor communication described by interview participants therefore reflect deficiencies in organisational learning processes rather than the absence of legislative intent.

6.5.2 Legislative and policy framework

This subsection addresses Research Objective 3 and is informed by Interview Questions 3 and 4. Participants reflected on the effectiveness of the Skills Development Act's implementation and the role of departmental policies and programmes. Participants generally acknowledged the importance of the Skills Development Act but expressed concern about weak operationalisation. Participant 2 stated:

“The Act provides a good framework, but implementation is inconsistent. It depends on management commitment and available resources.”

Participant 4 echoed this sentiment:

“There are policies in place, but many officials are not familiar with them, or they don't see how they link to actual training opportunities.”

Regarding policy alignment, Participant 7 observed:

“The HR Skills Development Policy exists, but it's not always clear how it guides decisions on who gets trained and why.”

These responses directly support the quantitative findings in Statements 3, 4 and 5, where respondents showed mixed perceptions and high levels of uncertainty regarding policy alignment and legislative effectiveness. The interviews confirm that ambiguity, limited awareness, and inconsistent application of policy weaken the practical impact of the Skills Development Act. This triangulation validates the conclusion that stronger communication and operational alignment are required to translate legislative intent into practice. This finding aligns strongly with Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1 *Human Capital Theory*, which conceptualises training as a strategic investment requiring deliberate and systematic implementation to yield returns in institutional performance (Schultz, 1960). As discussed in Section 2.3.1, although the Skills Development Act embeds human-capital principles through instruments such as Workplace Skills Plans and SETAs, uneven implementation erodes the investment logic of skills development. The uncertainty expressed by participants therefore

reflects a gap between the theoretical rationale for skills investment and its operational execution, rather than a rejection of the legislative framework itself.

6.5.3 Implementation of learning and development programmes

This subsection addresses Research Objective 4 and draws on Interview Questions 5 and 6. Participants discussed how learning programmes are designed and the extent to which they enhance workforce skills. Several participants indicated that training needs assessments are conducted, but not consistently. Participant 1 explained:

“In some cases, needs are identified through performance reviews, but this does not always translate into actual training.”

Participant 3 added:

“Programmes are often designed at departmental level, and officials are consulted, but not always in a meaningful way.”

Despite these challenges, participants acknowledged positive outcomes where training was well aligned. Participant 6 noted:

“Where training is relevant to the job, it definitely improves confidence and technical skills.”

Participant 2 stated:

“Skills development has improved compliance knowledge and operational efficiency in certain units.”

These findings align closely with the quantitative results under Statements 6, 7 and 8, which reflected moderate agreement but notable inconsistency in needs-based design, participation, and equity. The interviews confirm that while learning and development programmes do enhance skills, their impact is uneven due to variability in needs assessment practices and employee involvement. This supports the conclusion that implementation mechanisms require standardisation and improved coordination. The findings corroborate the principles outlined in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.3 *Adult Learning Theory*, which emphasises that adult learners require training that is relevant, participatory, and directly applicable to their work context. As highlighted

in Section 2.3.3, adult learning is most effective when employees are meaningfully involved in programme design and when learning responds to identified workplace needs (Knowles, 1973). The reported inconsistencies in needs assessment and participation therefore explain why training outcomes vary, despite the existence of formal learning programmes.

6.5.4 Institutional and organisational context

This subsection addresses Research Objective 5 and is informed by Interview Question 7, focusing on career development and promotion opportunities linked to skills development. Most participants agreed that skills development has the potential to support career progression, but emphasised structural limitations. Participant 4 stated:

“Training helps you prepare for promotion, but it doesn’t guarantee it because posts are limited.”

Participant 5 added:

“There are opportunities to grow, but movement is slow, and training alone is not enough.”

Participant 1 explained:

“Skills development improves readiness, but organisational structures still determine actual promotion.”

These insights confirm the quantitative findings in Statement 9, where the majority of respondents agreed that skills development supports career progression, though some uncertainty remained. The interviews clarify that while skills development enhances employability and preparedness, promotion outcomes are influenced by broader institutional constraints. This reinforces the interpretation that skills development contributes indirectly to career advancement. This interpretation is theoretically supported by Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1 *Human Capital Theory*, which posits that skills development enhances individual productive capacity but does not automatically translate into upward mobility unless organisational structures and opportunities exist. As discussed in Section 2.3.1, human capital investment increases

readiness and performance potential; however, institutional factors such as post availability and organisational design ultimately mediate career progression (Schultz, 1960). The qualitative findings therefore validate the theory's distinction between capacity development and structural advancement opportunities.

6.5.5 Equity, redress and improvement

This subsection addresses Research Objective 6 and draws on Interview Questions 8 and 9. Participants reflected on equity, transformation, and recommendations for improvement. Participants acknowledged progress in addressing racial and gender imbalances but indicated that challenges persist. Participant 6 stated:

“Training has opened doors for previously disadvantaged groups, but access is still not equal across all levels.”

Participant 7 added:

“Some programmes promote equity, but more targeted interventions are needed.”

Regarding improvement, participants consistently recommended better planning, transparency, and monitoring. Participant 2 suggested:

“Clear criteria for training selection and regular feedback would improve trust in the system.”

Participant 3 recommended:

“There should be stronger monitoring and evaluation to measure the real impact of training.”

These responses corroborate the quantitative findings in Statement 10, where a majority agreed that training contributes to redress, but significant disagreement remained. The interviews confirm that while equity objectives are being addressed, implementation gaps limit their full realisation. Participants' recommendations directly inform practical improvement measures, strengthening the policy relevance of the study. This pattern resonates with the historical and theoretical discussion in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1 *Human Capital Theory* and Chapter 2, Section 2.3.3 *Adult Learning*

Theory, which jointly frame skills development as a tool for redress, inclusion and transformation in post-apartheid public administration. As noted in Section 2.3.1, the Skills Development Act was designed to redress historical inequalities in access to skills, while Section 2.3.3 underscores the importance of inclusive, context-appropriate learning pathways for previously disadvantaged groups (Knowles, 1973). The persistence of implementation gaps identified in the interviews therefore highlights a disconnect between transformative policy intent and operational practice, rather than a failure of the theoretical or legislative framework itself.

Overall, the qualitative findings confirm and contextualise the quantitative results, explaining why perceptions of skills development effectiveness, accessibility, and equity vary among officials. Through thematic content analysis, the interviews provided explanatory insight into inconsistencies identified in the survey data, thereby strengthening the study's validity through methodological triangulation. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings offers a comprehensive understanding of skills development implementation within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate.

6.6 ALIGNMENT BETWEEN QUESTIONNAIRE STATEMENTS AND COMPLEMENTARY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

To strengthen the validity of the quantitative findings, selected interview questions were used to complement and interrogate specific statements contained in the questionnaire. The qualitative follow-up interviews provided contextual explanation and confirmation of trends observed during the quantitative data analysis.

Interview Question 5

“How are learning and development programmes designed and implemented to address the skills needs of officials within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate?”

Complementary questionnaire statements:

- Statement 2: Training is undertaken on a regular and structured basis within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate.

- Statement 6: The training and development needs of employees are considered when learning and development programmes are designed.
- Statement 7: Officials are actively involved in the development of training and development programmes within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate.

The quantitative results indicated moderate to positive agreement that training is structured and that employee needs are considered during programme design. The follow-up interviews confirmed these findings by illustrating how training needs analyses, operational requirements, and departmental priorities inform programme design. Participants acknowledged that while formal processes exist, employee involvement varies across units, thereby validating the survey results while adding explanatory depth regarding implementation consistency.

Interview Question 6

“In what ways has the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 contributed to enhancing the skills and knowledge of the workforce?”

Complementary questionnaire statements:

- Statement 1: Training and development opportunities have been accessible to officials over the past five years.
- Statement 3: The implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 has enhanced the skills and knowledge of the workforce of the Department of Employment and Labour.

Quantitative data reflected general agreement that skills development initiatives have contributed positively to workforce capacity. The qualitative interviews confirmed this perception, with participants citing improved technical competencies, compliance awareness, and job-specific skills resulting from training interventions. The interviews further clarified that the perceived benefits are more pronounced in areas where training is closely aligned with operational functions, thereby corroborating and contextualising the survey findings.

Interview Question 7

“To what extent has the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 created career development and promotion opportunities within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate?”

Complementary questionnaire statements:

- Statement 9: The effective implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 contributes to improved career progression opportunities for officials within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate.
- Statement 10: Learning and development programmes contribute to addressing racial imbalances in skills development within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate.

Survey responses suggested cautious agreement regarding the role of skills development in supporting career progression and redress. The follow-up interviews confirmed these findings by indicating that training has the potential to support advancement and transformation, although promotion outcomes are also influenced by structural and post availability constraints. Participants further confirmed that learning and development programmes contribute to equity objectives, thereby reinforcing the quantitative evidence while highlighting contextual limitations.

The qualitative follow-up interviews confirmed the trends identified in the quantitative data analysis by validating respondent perceptions and providing explanatory insight into how skills development is experienced in practice. This triangulation strengthened the credibility of the findings and ensured alignment between the questionnaire results and the lived experiences of officials within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate.

6.7 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section lists a consolidated overview of the study's findings, integrating quantitative, qualitative, and departmental analyses to provide a comprehensive

understanding of the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate of the Department of Employment and Labour.

6.7.1 Comprehensive list of quantitative findings

This section summarises the findings drawn from the quantitative data, highlighting insights related to accessibility, participation, policy alignment and the impact of skills development initiatives across the Directorate.

- The findings show that training and development opportunities were generally not easily accessible to officials in the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate. Many respondents reported limited availability or difficulty accessing learning interventions, indicating weaknesses in the communication, promotion and accessibility of training, which undermines the intent of the Skills Development Act (Research Objective 1).
- Although some training activities occurred, implementation was uneven and insufficiently structured. Variations in responses point to inconsistent planning and coordination, limiting the effectiveness of in-service training in supporting sustained skills development across levels (Research Objective 1).
- Respondents expressed mixed views on whether the Skills Development Act has strengthened workforce competence. While some perceived positive outcomes, others were uncertain or unconvinced, suggesting uneven impact and the need for clearer objectives, monitoring and demonstrable outcomes (Research Objective 3).
- The findings indicate uncertainty regarding alignment between the Human Resource Skills Development Policy and the Skills Development Act. This suggests inadequate communication and weak operational visibility of policy alignment, reducing confidence in implementation (Research Objective 3).
- The departmental HR Skills Development Policy was not widely seen as effectively supporting the Act's objectives. Limited confidence in the policy points to gaps in implementation, communication and practical application (Research Objective 3).

- Training needs were considered inconsistently in programme design. Variability in needs assessment practices resulted in uneven alignment between organisational priorities, legislative requirements and individual development needs (Research Objective 4).
- Employee participation in training design was moderate but inconsistent. Limited involvement may reduce relevance, ownership and motivation, weakening the overall impact of training initiatives (Research Objective 4).
- The findings reflect partial inequity in access to training, with uneven experiences across occupational levels. Limited transparency in allocation processes may contribute to perceptions of unfairness and weaken inclusive skills development (Research Objective 4).
- Skills development was generally perceived as supporting career growth, but not all respondents experienced these benefits equally. This suggests uneven career development outcomes within the Directorate (Research Objective 5).
- Learning and development programmes were viewed as contributing to equity and transformation, particularly in addressing racial imbalances. However, divergent views indicate that further targeted efforts are required to fully realise these objectives (Research Objective 6).

Overall, the quantitative findings reveal progress alongside significant gaps in accessibility, consistency, policy awareness and equitable delivery. These results informed the qualitative phase, which explored underlying implementation challenges in greater depth.

6.7.2 Comprehensive list of qualitative findings

This section lists the findings derived from semi-structured interviews and narrative data, providing context, explanations and insights that help to interpret and explain the patterns observed in the quantitative analysis.

- Participants described a skills development environment marked by uneven access, weak communication and limited visibility of opportunities, contributing to frustration despite clear legislative intent (Research Objective 1).
- Workforce engagement with the Skills Development Act varied, shaped by inconsistent implementation, limited follow-through and unclear benefits, affecting morale and trust (Research Objective 1).
- Delays and limited feedback on training applications were repeatedly highlighted, weakening organisational learning and explaining perceptions of ineffective training initiatives (Research Objective 1).
- Many participants lacked clarity on how skills development policies guide training decisions, contributing to perceptions of inconsistency and arbitrariness (Research Objective 3).
- Needs assessments were applied inconsistently and did not always lead to training interventions, resulting in uneven programme outcomes (Research Objective 4).
- Where training aligned with job requirements, participants reported improved competence, confidence and operational efficiency (Research Objective 4).
- Training improved preparedness for advancement but did not guarantee promotion, which remained dependent on structural factors (Research Objective 5).
- Limited promotional opportunities and slow staff movement constrained the career benefits of skills development (Research Objective 5).
- Training contributed to redress and inclusion, but access remained uneven, limiting full transformation outcomes (Research Objective 6).
- Improved planning, transparent selection criteria, feedback and monitoring were identified as critical for strengthening trust and fairness (Research Objective 6).

The qualitative data confirmed and contextualised quantitative results, demonstrating that implementation and organisational factors drive uneven outcomes.

6.7.3 Comprehensive list of findings: Skills development at the Department of Employment and Labour

Below is a list of findings derived from Chapter 5, Section 5.6 *Skills Development at the Department of Employment and Labour* and the associated statistical analysis.

- The findings indicate that the Department continues to experience significant staffing constraints, despite an approved establishment exceeding nine thousand employees. Reduced budget allocations over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework period, together with National Treasury cost-containment measures, resulted in halted recruitment processes and revised organisational structures. These constraints negatively affected workforce stability, planning and the Department's ability to strategically deploy and develop skills, thereby weakening institutional capacity.
- The Department demonstrated measurable progress in transformation at Senior Management Service level, with increased representation of women and some inclusion of persons with disabilities. These trends reflect positive movement towards employment equity objectives. However, representation of persons with disabilities remains below desired levels, indicating that transformation gains are uneven and require sustained, targeted interventions to achieve full inclusivity.
- Human Resource Management and Human Resource Development are positioned as central custodians of skills development, responsible for implementing the Skills Development Act alongside internal policies. However, the effectiveness of this role is constrained by budget limitations, staffing pressures and competing organisational priorities, which limit the translation of policy mandates into comprehensive skills development outcomes.
- The analysis reveals very low levels of upward mobility within the Department. Only a small proportion of employees progressed to higher salary levels or higher notches during the reporting period. This finding indicates that career progression opportunities are constrained, reducing the incentive value of skills development and weakening the link between learning, performance and advancement.

- While promotion data reflect progress in gender representation, with women receiving a substantial share of promotions, the overall number of promotions remains extremely low relative to the size of the workforce. This reinforces the finding that skills-driven career advancement is structurally constrained, regardless of demographic improvements.
- Training needs were identified for only a small fraction of employees at the start of the reporting period. The absence of identified learnerships or alternative structured learning pathways indicates that training needs analysis is limited in scope and depth, focusing mainly on short courses and skills programmes rather than long-term capacity development.
- No learnerships were implemented during the reporting period, representing a significant gap in structured skills development. This absence undermines the Department's ability to build sustainable pipelines of critical skills, support career mobility, and align learning interventions with long-term organisational and labour market needs.
- Although the number of training interventions exceeded the number of formally identified training needs, the overall reach of training remained low relative to the workforce size. This suggests misalignment between skills planning and training implementation, raising concerns about the strategic coherence and impact of learning interventions.
- Where skills development initiatives are targeted, well-planned and aligned with organisational needs, they contribute positively to employee competence, managerial capacity and career progression. Such interventions also support equity objectives by broadening access for historically disadvantaged groups, reinforcing the dual role of skills development as both a performance and transformation instrument.

The analysis confirmed that skills development has the potential to function as a strategic enabler of a capable, equitable and developmental state, but only if it is deliberately leveraged, adequately resourced and systematically aligned with transformation, performance and service delivery objectives.

6.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the analysis and interpretation of the data collected for the study. It examined both quantitative and qualitative findings in relation to the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Department of Employment and Labour, and translated the empirical evidence into meaningful findings aligned with the research objectives.

The chapter began by outlining its purpose and recapping the data collection methods, explaining the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews within a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analysed across key thematic areas, including the contextualisation of skills development, the legislative and policy framework, the implementation of learning programmes, the institutional and organisational environment, and equity and improvement outcomes. Statistical patterns and levels of agreement were interpreted to identify strengths, gaps and inconsistencies in implementation.

Qualitative interview data were subsequently analysed according to the same themes, providing deeper insight into employee experiences and perceptions. The chapter further compared questionnaire responses with interview findings to ensure alignment and strengthen the credibility of the results through triangulation. The chapter concluded with a consolidated summary of quantitative and qualitative findings, which formed the empirical basis for the conclusions and recommendations presented in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the culminating synthesis of the study by drawing together the empirical findings, theoretical insights and policy analysis undertaken throughout the research. It reflects on the extent to which the research objectives were achieved and consolidates the key conclusions regarding the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Department of Employment and Labour, with specific reference to the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate. The chapter demonstrates how the evidence generated contributes to understanding the institutional, legislative and organisational dynamics shaping skills development in the public service context.

The chapter begins by presenting conclusions aligned with each of the research objectives. It contextualises the skills development challenges experienced within the Directorate, highlighting issues of limited access to training opportunities, inconsistent implementation, communication gaps, staffing constraints and structural reconfigurations that collectively influence employee participation and perceptions. It further consolidates insights drawn from the theoretical and literature review, demonstrating how Human Capital Theory and organisational learning perspectives informed interpretation of the empirical findings and provided a conceptual lens for understanding training as a strategic investment in workforce capability.

The discussion then turns to the legislative and policy environment governing skills development. It reflects on the alignment between departmental policies and the Skills Development Act, examining levels of awareness, perceived coherence, and the gap between policy intent and operational practice. Attention is also given to the implementation of learning and development programmes, including the adequacy of training needs assessments, employee participation in programme design, equity of access, the absence of structured learnerships, and the integration of training with workforce planning and performance management systems. The analysis

acknowledges that well-aligned, job-relevant training yields measurable benefits, while fragmented implementation limits broader institutional impact.

The institutional and organisational context is further examined to assess how structural factors such as limited promotional posts, low upward mobility and staffing constraints affect the translation of skills development into career progression. The chapter emphasises that although skills development enhances employee readiness and competence, organisational opportunities ultimately determine advancement outcomes. Consideration is also given to equity and transformation imperatives, including the participation of historically disadvantaged groups and employees with disabilities, and the need for deliberate, targeted interventions to strengthen inclusive skills development.

Building on these conclusions, the chapter applies Human Capital Theory as a strategic framework for strengthening skills development within the Department. It demonstrates how deliberate investment in knowledge, competencies and structured learning pathways can enhance institutional capacity, service delivery and transformation outcomes when systematically integrated into workforce planning and performance management systems.

The chapter concludes by presenting practical recommendations aimed at improving the effective implementation of the Skills Development Act and by identifying areas requiring further scholarly investigation. In doing so, it positions skills development not merely as a compliance requirement, but as a strategic enabler of a capable, equitable and developmental public service.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS

The primary conclusions of the study are presented below per research objective.

7.2.1 Research Objective 1: Contextualise the skills development challenge within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate

The findings indicate that training and development opportunities were largely inaccessible to officials within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate during the period under review. Most respondents did not perceive training as readily available or accessible, suggesting that officials experienced barriers to applying for

or attending relevant learning interventions. This conclusion points to gaps in the availability, communication and promotion of training opportunities, which weakens the Directorate's learning environment and constrains the realisation of the objectives of the Skills Development Act.

The data reveal that training is undertaken on a periodic basis but lacks consistency and structure across the Directorate. While some respondents acknowledged the occurrence of training, others expressed uncertainty or disagreement, indicating uneven implementation. This conclusion suggests shortcomings in systematic planning, scheduling and coordination of in-service training, limiting its effectiveness in supporting continuous skills development and progression across occupational levels.

The qualitative findings reveal that the skills development environment within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate is uneven and constrained, particularly in relation to access, communication and visibility of training opportunities. Participants consistently indicated that although there is an institutional intention to develop employees, training opportunities are not evenly distributed across sections. Limited communication, delayed feedback on applications and inconsistent access contribute to perceptions of exclusion and frustration. This conclusion confirms that contextual barriers, rather than the absence of legislative intent, significantly undermine the effectiveness of skills development initiatives.

Interviews indicate that workforce responses to the implementation of the Skills Development Act are mixed and shaped by lived experience. While some officials are motivated and eager to participate in training, others feel discouraged due to inconsistent implementation, limited follow-through and unclear outcomes. This divergence in engagement reflects varying levels of awareness, access and perceived benefit, reinforcing the view that inconsistent implementation negatively affects employee morale and trust in the skills development system.

A recurring qualitative conclusion is that poor communication and limited feedback mechanisms weaken organisational learning processes. Participants highlighted delays in responding to training applications and insufficient feedback on outcomes, which contribute to demotivation. This conclusion explains why training initiatives are not always perceived as effective, despite their formal existence, and aligns with

organisational learning theory, which emphasises communication and feedback as prerequisites for sustainable learning cultures.

The Department continues to experience significant staffing constraints, despite an approved establishment exceeding nine thousand employees. Reduced budget allocations over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework period, together with National Treasury cost-containment measures, resulted in halted recruitment processes and revised organisational structures. These constraints negatively affected workforce stability, planning and the Department's ability to strategically deploy and develop skills, thereby weakening institutional capacity.

The unbundling of the Unemployment Insurance Fund and the Compensation Fund, together with broader functional reconfigurations, introduced additional complexity into workforce planning. These structural changes disrupted staffing continuity and contributed to uncertainty in role definition, skills requirements and training prioritisation, further complicating the effective implementation of skills development initiatives.

7.2.2 Research Objective 2: Analyse theories and literature on training and development in Public Administration relevant to workforce skills enhancement

No specific empirical conclusions were attributed directly to Research Objective 2. The theoretical and literature review outlined in Chapters 2 and 3 informed understanding of theories on training and development in Public Administration relevant to workforce skills enhancement. See below section 7.3 *Application of Human Capital Theory to Skills Development at DEL* for details on the Application of Human Capital Theory.

7.2.3 Research Objective 3: Examine the legislative and policy framework governing the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 in South Africa

The findings show divergent perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the Skills Development Act in enhancing skills and knowledge within the workforce of the Department of Employment and Labour. While some respondents viewed the Act as contributing positively to workforce competence, others disagreed or were uncertain.

This variation reflects inconsistent experiences of skills development outcomes and suggests the need for clearer articulation of objectives, stronger monitoring mechanisms and more visible impact of skills development initiatives.

The analysis reveals a lack of clarity and awareness regarding alignment between the departmental Human Resource Skills Development Policy and the Skills Development Act. A considerable proportion of respondents were uncertain or disagreed that such alignment exists. This conclusion suggests that the HR policy may not be sufficiently communicated, operationalised or visibly linked to legislative requirements, weakening effective implementation and reducing confidence in the policy framework.

The findings indicate that the departmental HR Skills Development Policy is not widely perceived as adequately supporting the aims and objectives of the Skills Development Act. The predominance of neutral and negative perceptions suggests limited confidence in the policy's ability to facilitate systematic skills gap identification and targeted learning interventions. This points to weaknesses in policy implementation, communication and practical application, which may undermine the translation of legislative intent into tangible skills development outcomes.

Participants broadly acknowledged the importance and relevance of the Skills Development Act, but expressed concern about its inconsistent operationalisation within the Directorate. Implementation was described as dependent on management commitment, resource availability and local decision-making practices. This conclusion indicates that the Act provides a strong conceptual framework, but its impact is diluted by uneven execution, reinforcing the need for stronger institutional coordination.

The qualitative data show that many officials are not sufficiently familiar with existing skills development policies, or do not clearly understand how these policies guide training decisions. Participants reported uncertainty regarding how the Human Resource Skills Development Policy informs selection criteria, prioritisation and programme design. This lack of visibility weakens confidence in policy coherence and contributes to perceptions of arbitrary or uneven training allocation.

Interviews revealed a perceived disconnect between policy intent and practical implementation. While policies exist to support the Skills Development Act within the

Department of Employment and Labour, their application in day-to-day training decisions is not always evident. This inconsistency undermines the strategic value of skills development as a human capital investment and explains the uncertainty observed in the quantitative findings regarding policy alignment and effectiveness.

Human Resource Management and Human Resource Development are positioned as central custodians of skills development, responsible for implementing the Skills Development Act alongside internal policies. However, the effectiveness of this role is constrained by budget limitations, staffing pressures and competing organisational priorities, which limit the translation of policy mandates into comprehensive skills development outcomes.

7.2.4 Research Objective 4: Assess the implementation of learning and development programmes aligned with the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998

The results show that training and development needs are considered in the design of learning programmes only to a limited and inconsistent extent. While some respondents acknowledged the consideration of employee needs, others expressed uncertainty or disagreement. This conclusion indicates variability in how training needs assessments are conducted and translated into learning interventions, resulting in uneven alignment between organisational priorities, legislative mandates and individual competency requirements.

The findings suggest a moderate level of employee involvement in the development of training and development programmes, though participation is not consistent across the Directorate. While some officials experience involvement in programme design, others do not, indicating uneven application of participatory approaches. Limited inclusion may reduce ownership, relevance and motivation, thereby constraining the potential benefits of training initiatives for both individuals and the organisation.

The analysis reveals partial inequity in access to training and development opportunities. Although some respondents perceived training provision as equitable, others expressed uncertainty or disagreement, suggesting that equitable access is not uniformly experienced across occupational categories or levels. Limited transparency and visibility in the allocation of training opportunities may contribute to these

perceptions, potentially undermining inclusive skills development and the Directorate's capacity to function as a learning organisation.

Participants confirmed that training needs assessments are conducted inconsistently across the Directorate. In some cases, needs are identified through performance reviews or operational requirements, but these assessments do not always translate into actual training interventions. This conclusion clarifies why learning and development programmes yield uneven outcomes, despite formal needs assessment processes being in place.

The qualitative findings indicate that employee participation in the design of learning and development programmes is uneven. While consultation occurs in some instances, it is not always meaningful or inclusive. This variability limits the relevance and ownership of training interventions and reduces their potential impact, particularly in relation to adult learning principles that emphasise participation and relevance.

Despite implementation challenges, participants consistently reported that well-aligned and job-relevant training produces tangible benefits. These include improved technical competence, enhanced confidence, better compliance knowledge and increased operational efficiency. This conclusion confirms that skills development interventions are effective when properly aligned with workplace needs, supporting the value of targeted and context-specific learning.

Training needs were identified for only a small fraction of employees at the start of the reporting period. The absence of identified learnerships or alternative structured learning pathways indicates that training needs analysis is limited in scope and depth, focusing mainly on short courses and skills programmes rather than long-term capacity development. As a result, no learnerships were implemented during the reporting period, representing a significant gap in structured skills development. This absence undermines the Department's ability to build sustainable pipelines of critical skills, support career mobility, and align learning interventions with long-term organisational and labour market needs.

Although the number of training interventions exceeded the number of formally identified training needs, the overall reach of training remained low relative to the workforce size. This suggests misalignment between skills planning and training

implementation, raising concerns about the strategic coherence and impact of learning interventions. The limited training coverage, low promotion rates and absence of structured learning pathways indicate that implementation of the Skills Development Act has not yet resulted in sufficiently strong institutional capability. Skills development interventions remain fragmented and insufficiently embedded within performance management and workforce planning systems.

7.2.5 Research Objective 5: Analyse the institutional and organisational context as it relates to skills development implementation

The findings indicate that skills development initiatives are generally perceived to contribute positively to career progression opportunities within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate. This supports the view that structured learning pathways and continuous skills development enhance professional growth and promotion prospects. However, the presence of uncertainty among some respondents suggests that these benefits are not experienced uniformly, pointing to uneven career development outcomes.

The qualitative data indicate that skills development improves readiness for career advancement, but does not automatically result in promotion. Participants emphasised that organisational structures, post availability and institutional constraints ultimately determine promotion outcomes. This conclusion explains the cautious optimism reflected in the quantitative results and highlights the indirect role of skills development in career progression.

Participants identified institutional and structural limitations, such as slow staff movement and limited promotional posts, as key factors that constrain career progression. While skills development enhances employability and preparedness, these structural factors mediate actual advancement. This conclusion reinforces the distinction between capacity development and organisational opportunity. The analysis reveals very low levels of upward mobility within the Department. Only a small proportion of employees progressed to higher salary levels or higher notches during the reporting period. This conclusion indicates that career progression opportunities are constrained, reducing the incentive value of skills development and weakening the link between learning, performance and advancement.

While promotion data reflect progress in gender representation, with women receiving a substantial share of promotions, the overall number of promotions remains extremely low relative to the size of the workforce. This reinforces the conclusion that skills-driven career advancement is structurally constrained, regardless of demographic improvements.

The combined analysis of promotion, training and skills participation data indicates weak integration between skills development initiatives and career progression mechanisms. Training does not consistently translate into advancement opportunities, reducing its perceived value and limiting its effectiveness as a human capital investment.

7.2.6 Research Objective 6: Propose recommendations for improving the effective implementation of the Skills Development Act

The results demonstrate that learning and development programmes are perceived to contribute to addressing racial imbalances and supporting equity and transformation objectives within the Directorate. While many respondents acknowledged progress in redressing historical disadvantages, others perceived that further efforts are required. This divergence highlights ongoing challenges in fully realising equity goals and suggests the need for more deliberate, targeted and consistently implemented skills development strategies to strengthen transformation outcomes.

The interviews confirm that learning and development programmes contribute to addressing racial and gender imbalances, particularly by expanding access to skills for historically disadvantaged groups. However, participants also indicated that access remains uneven across levels and that transformation outcomes are not yet fully realised. This conclusion highlights partial success alongside persistent gaps in equitable implementation.

Participants emphasised that equity outcomes require more targeted, deliberate and sustained interventions. General training programmes were viewed as insufficient to fully address historical imbalances, underscoring the need for focused strategies that explicitly prioritise redress and inclusion in skills development planning.

A strong qualitative conclusion relates to clear recommendations for improvement, including better planning of training interventions, transparent selection criteria, regular feedback to applicants and stronger monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Participants viewed these measures as essential for improving trust, accountability and the perceived fairness of skills development processes.

The findings highlight extremely low participation of employees with disabilities in skills development initiatives. This pattern suggests persistent barriers to inclusion and indicates that current learning and development strategies are not sufficiently responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities, undermining transformation and equity objectives. The results suggest that uneven access to learning opportunities may perpetuate historical and structural disparities in skills acquisition. Without deliberate targeting, skills development initiatives risk benefiting a limited segment of the workforce, thereby constraining the Department's ability to address racial and occupational inequalities.

Where skills development initiatives are targeted, well-planned and aligned with organisational needs, they contribute positively to employee competence, managerial capacity and career progression. Such interventions also support equity objectives by broadening access for historically disadvantaged groups, reinforcing the dual role of skills development as both a performance and transformation instrument. The results underscore the necessity of stronger alignment between skills planning, training implementation and performance management. Without such integration, skills development cannot effectively support service delivery improvement, policy implementation or institutional responsiveness.

7.3 APPLICATION OF HUMAN CAPITAL THEORY TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AT DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR

The recommendations for improving skills development within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate, as provided in below section 7.4 *Recommendations*, can be effectively grounded in the Human Capital Theory that is explained in Chapter 2, section 2.3.1 *Human Capital Theory*, which asserts that individuals' knowledge, skills, and competencies constitute productive assets that generate social and economic returns. Human Capital Theory provides a practical and strategic rationale

for treating training and development as an investment in workforce capacity rather than merely a cost, highlighting the long-term benefits of equipping public servants with the competencies necessary to enhance institutional performance, service delivery, and national development outcomes. In the context of the DEL, this perspective justifies the deliberate allocation of resources toward structured training, learnerships, workplace-based learning, and targeted skills development programmes, particularly for historically disadvantaged employees who were previously excluded from equitable access to education and training opportunities.

Applying Human Capital Theory at DEL requires translating these principles into practical, systematic interventions. Managers should actively participate in drafting, monitoring and implementing employees' personal development plans to ensure that learning opportunities align with operational requirements and individual growth trajectories. Comprehensive training needs assessments, workplace skills planning, and annual training analysis reports will allow the Department to identify critical skills gaps, measure the effectiveness of training interventions, and optimise resource allocation. Moreover, structured learnerships, in-service training, and RPL mechanisms serve as channels to formalise and enhance employees' existing competencies, transforming experiential knowledge into certified qualifications that increase both individual employability and organisational capability.

Human Capital Theory also supports strategic prioritisation and equity-focused interventions within DEL. By deliberately targeting historically disadvantaged groups, women, and employees with disabilities, the Department invests in expanding the skills base while addressing structural inequalities entrenched by Apartheid-era policies. Transparent planning, clear selection criteria, and robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms ensure that these investments generate measurable returns in workforce competence, operational efficiency, and service delivery. For example, aligning training programmes with performance management systems ensures that acquired skills translate into tangible outcomes, such as enhanced operational efficiency, improved compliance, and greater career progression opportunities. In this way, Human Capital Theory operationalises a developmental approach to public administration: by equipping employees with the knowledge and competencies required to perform effectively, DEL not only strengthens institutional capacity but also contributes to a capable, equitable, and transformation-oriented public service.

The practical application of Human Capital Theory at DEL involves systematically investing in employees' learning, linking training to organisational priorities, ensuring equitable access to development opportunities, and monitoring outcomes to optimise both individual and institutional returns. By embedding these principles into workforce planning, programme design and policy implementation, the Department can maximise the effectiveness of the Skills Development Act, improve institutional capability, and support the dual objectives of service excellence and socio-economic transformation.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the research to provide recommendations of how to improve the implementation of the Skills Development Act, is realised in the following recommendations:

7.4.1 Research Objective 1: Contextualise the skills development challenge within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate

To address the limited accessibility and inconsistent structure of training opportunities within the Directorate, it is recommended that senior and junior managers become more actively involved in drafting, implementing, and monitoring employees' personal development plans. The Human Resources Development Unit should systematically compile quarterly and annual training analysis reports to identify gaps in participation and understand barriers preventing employees from accessing learning interventions. Communication and feedback mechanisms must be strengthened, ensuring that training opportunities are clearly advertised, timely feedback is provided on applications, and employees are informed of upcoming interventions across all sections. Management should also leverage the workplace as a learning environment, providing on-the-job training to ensure functional skills are developed in real-time operational contexts. Furthermore, addressing persistent staffing constraints and the effects of structural reconfiguration requires deliberate workforce planning, ensuring that training is integrated into staffing strategies and aligned with role definitions and operational priorities to maintain continuity and stability in skills development efforts.

7.4.2 Research Objective 2: Analyse theories and literature on training and development in Public Administration

The theoretical insights obtained in Chapter 2, sections 2.3.1 to 2.3.3, indicate that systematic, structured and participatory approaches to adult learning are critical for sustainable skills development. It is recommended that the Directorate adopt evidence-based training models informed by organisational learning theory, ensuring that learning initiatives are contextually relevant, participatory, and aligned with organisational goals. Details on the application of Human Capital Theory to skills development at DEL are provided in directly above section *7.3 Application of human capital theory to skills development at the Department of Employment and Labour*.

7.4.3 Research Objective 3: Examine the legislative and policy framework governing the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998

To strengthen the alignment between HR policies and the legislative framework, it is recommended that the Department appoint a dedicated policy analyst to conduct a comprehensive review of Skills Development Policies, identifying gaps and proposing necessary policy adjustments. Advocacy sessions on the Skills Development Act and the Departmental Skills Development Operational Policy should be conducted regularly, with senior management actively participating to reinforce awareness and commitment. Clear articulation of the Act's objectives and stronger monitoring mechanisms should be introduced to ensure the visible impact of learning and development programmes. Human Resource Management should be supported with adequate resources, authority, and training to consistently operationalise policies, ensuring alignment between policy intent and practical implementation. Strengthening internal capacity may include appointing additional staff within the Training and Development Committee and institutionalising procedures for transparent communication of policy requirements.

7.4.4 Research Objective 4: Assess the implementation of learning and development programmes aligned with the Skills Development Act

Implementation of learning programmes should be standardised, with consistent application of needs-based training approaches across all levels. Managers should ensure meaningful employee participation in programme design, enhancing ownership, relevance, and motivation. Training needs assessments must be comprehensive, structured, and translated into actionable learning interventions,

including the development of learnerships and structured learning pathways to support long-term capacity development. Training provision should match identified workforce needs, and accredited service providers should be appointed where necessary, with supply chain processes strengthened to facilitate outsourced training. Transparent Workplace Skills Plans should be developed in consultation with employees to ensure equitable access, and performance management systems should be monitored to link training outcomes with operational and career objectives. The process of standardised learning programme implementation is illustrated in Figure 7.1.



Figure 7.1: Effective learning programme implementation at Department of Employment and Labour

Source: (Adapted from PSETA, 2024).

7.4.5 Research Objective 5: Analyse the institutional and organisational context as it relates to skills development implementation

To address structural constraints limiting career progression, it is recommended that managers actively consider career opportunities and promotions for deserving employees, while aligning skills development initiatives with potential career paths. Job profile evaluations and promotion planning should be undertaken to ensure that training translates into tangible advancement where possible. Organisational structures should be reviewed to reduce bottlenecks in staff movement, and employees' readiness for career progression should be acknowledged through performance-linked development opportunities. Continuous skills development should be positioned as a strategic enabler of career growth, supported by transparent and fair HR practices that integrate training, performance management, and career advancement mechanisms.

7.4.6 Research Objective 6: Propose recommendations for improving the effective implementation of the Skills Development Act

Equity and transformation outcomes can be strengthened by deliberately targeting historically disadvantaged groups and employees with disabilities, ensuring that training opportunities are inclusive and responsive to their specific needs. General programmes should be supplemented with targeted, deliberate interventions that prioritise redress and inclusion. Transparent planning, selection criteria, and monitoring mechanisms are critical for building trust, accountability, and fairness in skills development. The Department should strategically align skills planning, training delivery, and performance management to maximise institutional responsiveness and service delivery outcomes. Finally, the Department should recognise the strategic role of skills development as an enabler of a capable, equitable, and developmental state, and invest in adequate resources, systematic planning, and deliberate integration of training, career advancement, and organisational transformation objectives to achieve long-term impact.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

There are many aspects that must be scientifically researched to provide further clarity of implementation of the Skills Development Act (97 of 1998) at the Department of Employment and Labour. Hence, the following proposals are recommended:

- Future research should adopt longitudinal approaches to assess the long-term impact of training on employee performance, promotion, retention and institutional capacity. Tracking outcomes over time would provide stronger empirical evidence of whether skills development initiatives under the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 produce measurable human capital returns within the Department.
- Future studies should explore structural barriers affecting employees with disabilities and other historically disadvantaged groups. An equity-focused analysis would assess whether current interventions effectively promote inclusive participation and transformation objectives.
- Further research should examine the gap between policy intent and operational implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Department of Employment and Labour. An implementation-focused approach would identify governance weaknesses and propose mechanisms to strengthen accountability and policy coherence.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Allen, S.J., Rosch, D.M., and Riggio, R.E. 2022. Advancing Leadership Education and Development: Integrating Adult Learning Theory. *Journal of management education*, 46(2): 252-283.
- Anand, A., and Brix, J. 2022. The learning organization and organizational learning in the public sector: a review and research agenda. *The learning organization*, 29(2): 129-156.
- Argyris, C., and Schön, D.A. 1978. *Organizational learning*. Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.
- Arundel, A. 2023. *How to design, implement and analyse a survey*. Edward Elgar Publishing Limited: Cheltenham, UK.
- Atkinson, C.L. 2021. Significant learning and public administration education: The impact of short-term courses. *Teaching public administration*, 39(2): 192-209.
- Auditor-General of South Africa. 2025. *Strategic Plan and Budget*. Available at [Strategic plan & Budget | AGSA](#) (accessed 2 December 2025).
- Bhorat, H., Goga, S., and Stanwix, B., 2013. *Occupational shifts and shortages: Skills challenges facing the South African economy*. Labour Market Intelligence Partnership (LMIP). Available at [Occupational shifts and shortages: Skills challenges facing the South African economy | Labour Market Intelligence Partnership](#) (accessed 28 May 2026).
- Botha, M., Fischer Mogensen, K., Ebrahim, A., and Brand, D. 2023. In search of a landing place for persons with disabilities: A critique of South Africa's skills development programme. *International journal of discrimination and the law*, 23(1-2): 163-180.
- Bound, H., Edwards, A., Evans, K., and Chia, A. 2023. *Workplace learning for changing social and economic circumstances*. Abingdon, New York: Routledge.
- Carlbäck, M., Nygren, T., and Hägglund, P. 2024. Human Resource Development in Restaurants in Western Sweden - A Human Capital Theory Perspective. *Journal of human resources in hospitality & tourism*, 23(2): 289-314.

CHE – Council on Higher Education. 2023. *Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education*. Available at <https://www.che.ac.za/publications/frameworks/framework-qualification-standards-higher-education-5> (accessed 16 April 2024).

Christensen, L.B., Johnson, R.B., and Turner, L.A. 2020. *Research methods, design, and analysis*. 13th ed. Pearson: Boston.

Cloete, F. 2019. *Public administration and management in South Africa*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Cloete, F. 2024. *Improving Public Policy: For Sustainable Development Impact in the Digital Era*. 5th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Constitution – Republic of South Africa. 1996. *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Crawshaw, J.R., Budhwar, P.S., and Davis, A. 2024. *Human resource management: strategic and international perspectives*. 4th ed. SAGE Publications Ltd: Thousand Oaks.

Creswell, J.W., and Creswell, J.D. 2018. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 5th ed. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Creswell, J.W., and Plano Clark, V.L. 2018. *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. 3rd ed. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Dean, J., and Hogg, E. 2022. *Researching voluntary action: innovations and challenges*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

DEL Annual Performance Plan – Republic of South Africa. 2025. *Annual Performance Plan 2025/2026*. Available at [Department of Employment and Labour Annual Performance Report 2025 2026.pdf](#) (accessed 4 January 2026).

DEL Annual Report – Republic of South Africa. 2024. *Department of Employment and Labour and Employment Annual Report: 2023/2024*. Available at [Department of Employment and Labour Annual Report 2023/2024](#) (accessed 20 November 2025).

DEL Covid19TERS Documents. – Republic of South Africa. 2021. *Easy-guide-for-employers-on-covid19*. Available at [Covid19TERS Documents](#) (accessed 11 July 2025).

DEL Final Social Security Report – Republic of South Africa. 2023. *Social Security Coverage among the Working-Age Population in South Africa*. Available at [Final Social Security Report.pdf](#) (accessed 29 November 2025).

DEL Publications – Republic of South Africa. 2024. *Department of Employment and Labour at a Glance*. Available at [2024 Employment and Labour at a glance updated.pdf](#) (accessed 23 September 2025).

DEL Strategic Plan – Republic of South Africa. 2025. *Department of Employment and Labour Strategic Plan 2025/26 – 2029/30*. Available at [Department of Employment and Labour Strategic Plan 2025 2026 2029 2030.pdf](#) (accessed 20 October 2025).

De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B., and Delport, C.S.L. 2011. *Research at grass roots: For the social sciences and human service professions*. 4th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

DHET – Department of Higher Education and Training. 2022. *Skills Supply and Demand in South Africa*. Pretoria: DHET. Available at [Report on Skills Supply and Demand in South Africa - 2022 \(1\).pdf](#) (accessed 8 May 2025).

DHET – Department of Higher Education and Training. 2023. *Skills Development*. Available at [Department of Higher Education and Training - SkillsDevelopmentNew](#) (accessed 29 October 2025).

DHET – Department of Higher Education and Training. 2024. *List of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs)*. Available at [Department of Higher Education and Training - SETALinks](#) (accessed 21 August 2025).

DoE – Department of Education, 1997. *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education in South Africa*. DoE: Pretoria. Available at [Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education: Education White Paper 3: Draft | South African Government](#) (accessed 4 January 2026).

DPSA – Department of Public Service and Administration, 2024. *Service Delivery Improvement Plan*. Available at [dpsa.gov.za/dpsa2g/videos/omf/Service_Delivery_Improvement_Plan.mp4](#) (accessed 11 July 2025).

EEA – Republic of South Africa. 1998. *Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998*. Pretoria: Government Printers. Available at [Employment Equity Act \[No. 55 of 1998\]](#) (accessed 4 January 2026).

Elven, J. 2025. *Potentials of Convention Theory in the Analysis of Organizational Learning: The Empirical Case of Negotiating Student Roles in Co-Productive*

Sustainability Development at Universities. *Historical social research (Köln)*, 50(3): 74-102.

Erasmus, B., Loedolff, P., Mda, T., and Nel, P. 2016. *Managing Training and Development*. Oxford University Press: Cape Town.

Fadele, A.A., and Rocha, A. 2025. *The Art and Science of Quantitative Research*. Cham: Springer.

Fialho, E., Sousa, M.J., and Palma-Moreira, A. 2025. Validation of a talent acquisition and development scale for the Portuguese public administration. *European journal of training and development*, 51(3): 830-404).

Fitzsimmons, T.J., Behan Dougherty, M., and Myers, A.L. 2023. *Coaching in government: stories and tips for coaching professionals*. New York: Routledge.

Fouché, C.B., Strydom, H., and Roestenburg, W.J.H. 2021. *Research at grass roots*. 5th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Francis, D. 2019. Poverty and inequality in South Africa: critical reflections. *Journal of Development Studies*, 55(12): 1–15.

Gary, T. 2025. *How to do your literature review*. Thousand Oaks, Sage: London.

Gillespie, A., Glăveanu, V.P., and Saint Laurent, C.D. 2024. *Pragmatism and methodology: doing research that matters with mixed methods*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Grelle, S., and Hofmann, W. 2024. When and Why Do People Accept Public-Policy Interventions? An Integrative Public-Policy-Acceptance Framework. *Perspectives on psychological science*, 19(1): 258-279.

Grønmo, S. 2024. *Social research methods: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. 2nd ed. Sage: London.

Hoda, R. 2024. *Qualitative Research with Socio-Technical Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide to Qualitative Data Analysis and Theory Development in the Digital World*. Cham: Springer International Publishing AG.

Holy Bible. 2017. *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. Hendrickson Publishers: Peabody, MA.

Humble, A., and Radina, M. 2025. *How qualitative data analysis happens: Moving beyond "themes emerged"*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

ILO – International Labour Organization. 2022. *State of skills, employment and education in South Africa*. Geneva: ILO. Available at [State of skills. South Africa - International Labour Organization](#) (accessed 16 February 2024).

Israel, S.V. 2023, A Leadership Model to Facilitate the Implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning in Higher Education Institutions. Unpublished Doctor of Education thesis. University of South Africa: Pretoria.

Jha, A.S. 2024. *Social research methodology: qualitative and quantitative designs*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group: Oxon, New York.

Kara, H., Mannay, D., and Roy A. 2024. *The handbook of creative data analysis*, Policy Press: Bristol.

Kerkhoff, T., and Moschopoulos, D. 2024. *The Education and Training of Public Servants: Systems and Practices from the Nineteenth Century to the Present*. Springer: International Publishing.

Knill, C. and Tosun, J. 2008. *Policymaking: Comparative Politics*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Knowles, M.S. 1973. *The adult learner: A neglected species*. Houston: Gulf Publishing Company.

Kolstoe, S.E., Durning, J., Yost, J., and Aleksandrova-Yankulovska, S. 2023. Ranking Research Methodology by Risk – a cross-sectional study to determine the opinion of research ethics committee members. *Systematic Reviews*, 12(1): 1-11.

Lawana, N., and Hompashe, D. 2026. Rural–urban migration and skill development in South Africa: a propensity score matching analysis. *International journal of social economics*, 53(1): 136-148.

LRA – Republic of South Africa. 1995. Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995. Pretoria: Government Printers. Available at [OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT](#) (accessed 4 January 2026).

Mathebula, F.L. 2023. South African Public Administration: Who is the Public in Public Administration? *SAIPA*, 58(1): 57-68.

Mayombe, C. 2024. Promoting youths' skills acquisition through experiential learning theory in vocational education and training in South Africa. *Higher education, skills and work-based learning*, 14(1): 130-145.

McGovern, K. 2023. *A public sector journey to operational excellence: applying lean principles to public policy*. Productivity Press: New York.

Moraka, S., Mudau, J., and Mukonza, R. 2021. Public Administration and Management Training in South African Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges: Unpacking Its Relevance in the Contemporary Time. *African Journal of Development Studies* (formerly *AFFRIKA Journal of Politics, Economics and Society*), (1): 199-218.

Morphet, J. 2025. *The British Civil Service: Current Issues and Future Challenges*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Mvuyisi, M., and Mapuranga, M. 2022. Reimagining training and development programmes in municipalities of South Africa: A qualitative enquiry. *International journal of research in business and social science*, 11(10): 78-84.

Nama, K., Daweti, B., Lourens, M., and Chikukwa, T. 2022. The impact of training and development on employee performance and service delivery at a local municipality in South Africa. *Problems and perspectives in management*, 20(4): 42-51.

National Planning Commission. 2024. *National Development Plan: VISION 2030*. Available at [National Development Plan](#) (accessed 10 November 2025).

Nieuwenhuis, J. 2020. *Qualitative research designs and data gathering techniques*. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Noble, H., and Smith, J. 2025. Ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence-based nursing*, 28(4): 206-208.

Noe, R.A. 2020. *Employee training and development*. 8th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2025. *Skills Outlook 2025: Building the Skills of the 21st Century for All*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available at [OECD Skills Outlook 2025 | OECD](#) (accessed 21 November 2025).

O'Toole, L.J. 1995. Rational Choice and Policy Implementation. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 25(1): 43-57.

O'Toole, L.J. 2000. Research on Policy Implementation: Assessment and Prospects'. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 10(2): 263-88.

Olmsted, J. 2024. Research Reliability and Validity: Why do they matter?" *Journal of dental hygiene*, 98(6): 53-57.

Oruh, E.S., and Adisa, T.A. 2024. *Employee Wellbeing in the Global South: A Critical Overview*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pam, J. 2023. 'It's All Public Anyway': A Collaborative Navigation of Anonymity and Informed Consent in a Study with Identifiable Parent Carers. *Ethics and social welfare*, 17(2): 191-205.

Papier, J., Matenda, S., and Vollenhoven, G. 2023. Mid-level skills development in South Africa: An evolving post-apartheid landscape. *Sustainable and Dynamic Graduate Employability*, 223-240.

Peters, B.G. 2021. *Institutional theory in political science: The new institutionalism*. 4th ed. London: Bloomsbury.

Piekkari, R., and Welch, C. 2018. *The case study in management research: beyond the positivist legacy of Eisenhardt and Yin?* London: SAGE Publications.

Poth, C.N. 2023. *The Sage handbook of mixed methods research design*. SAGE Publications: London.

PSETA – The Public Service Education and Training Authority. 2022. *A Critical Review of Skills Demand and Supply in the Public Service Sector*. Available at [Final-Report-Critical-Review-of-Skills-Demand-and-Supply.pdf](#) (accessed 31 October 2025).

PSETA – The Public Service Education and Training Authority. 2023. *Learning Programmes*. Available at [Learning Programmes Overview - PSETA](#) (accessed 14 March 2025).

PSETA – The Public Service Education and Training Authority. 2024. *Stages of Learning and Development*. Available at [learning programme implementation - Search](#) (accessed 4 January 2026).

QCTO – Quality Council for Trades and Occupations. 2023. *Empowering SDPs nationwide*. Available at [Mandate](#) (accessed 29 November 2024).

Ray, C., Nyberg, A.J., and Maltarich, M.A. 2023. Human Capital Resources Emergence Theory: The Role of Social Capital. *The Academy of Management review*, 48(2): 313-335.

Reddy, V., Bhorat, H., and Powell, M. 2018. *Skills supply and demand in South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Republic of South Africa. 1993. Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa. 1995. Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa. 1997. Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa. 1997. Higher Education Act 101 of 1997. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa. 1998. Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa. 2008. National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa. 2014. Employment Services Act 4 of 2014. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Rossman, G., and Rallis, S. 2017. *An introduction to qualitative research*. London: SAGE Publications, Inc. Available at <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781071802694>. (accessed 7 December 2025).

Salas, E., Tannenbaum, S.I., Kraiger, K., and Smith-Jentsch, K.A. 2019. The science of training and development in organizations. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 20(2): 74-101.

SAnews, 2025. *Youth empowerment focusing on education and skills development*. Pretoria: SAnews. Available at <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/youth-empowerment-focusing-education-and-skills-development> (accessed 17 August 2025).

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., and Thornhill, A. 2019. *Research methods for business students*. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson.

SAQA - South African Qualifications Authority. 2022. *SAQA NQF BOOKLET*. Available at [NQF-Booklet-Digital v1.pdf](#) (accessed 12 September 2025)

SAQA – South African Qualifications Authority. 2023. *30 Years of Democracy: SAQA and the NQF*. (Available at [30 Years of Democracy: SAQA and the NQF - SAQA](#) (accessed 4 January 2025).

SAQA – South African Qualifications Authority. 2024. *NQF history and objectives*. Available at <https://saqa.org.za/about-saqa/a-brief-history/> (accessed 21 June 2025).

Schultz, W. 1960. *Kant als Philosoph des Protestantismus*. Hamburg: H. Reich.

SDA – Republic of South Africa. 1998. Skills Development Act 97 of 1998. Pretoria: Government Printers. Available at [Skills Development Levies Act \[No 9 of 1999\]](#) (accessed 4 January 2026).

SDLA – Republic of South Africa. 1999. Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Selane, C.B.D., and Odeku, K.O. 2024. Critical Analysis of Post-1994 Progressive and Transformative Legislative Instruments Introduced to Build Skills and Capacities in South Africa. *Perspectives of Law and Public Administration*, 13(3): 439-449.

Senge, P.M. 1990. *The fifth discipline: the art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Doubleday.

Simsek, Z., Fox, B., and Heavey, C. 2023. Systematicity in Organizational Research Literature Reviews: A Framework and Assessment. *Organizational research methods*, 26(2): 292-321.

Statistics South Africa. 2025(a). *Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), Quarter 1: 2025*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa. Available at [Statistics South Africa on Quarterly Labour Force Survey \(QLFS\) – Q1: 2025 | South African Government](#) (accessed 21 May 2026).

Statistics South Africa. 2025(b). *Economic wrap-up for November 2025*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa. Available at <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=19035> (accessed 10 December 2025).

Statistics South Africa. 2026. *Economic wrap-up for January 2026*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa. Available at https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=735&id=1 (accessed 24 January 2026).

South African Government. 2024. *National Development Plan 2030*. Available at [National Development Plan 2030 | South African Government](#) (accessed 16 September 2024).

South African History Online. 2017. *South African Labour history*. Available at <https://sahistory.org.za/article/south-african-labour-history> (accessed 20 November 2025).

Spink, P.K. 2024. Issues of cross-sector service delivery in complex settings: Does the 'public policy–implementation' framework help?" *Australian journal of public administration*. Available at [Issues of cross-sector service delivery in complex settings: Does the 'public policy–implementation' framework help?](#) (accessed 4 April 2025).

Suravi, S. 2024. Training and development in the hybrid workplace. *The learning organization*, 31(1): 48-67.

Tashakkori, A., and Teddlie, C. 2010. *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Umalusi. 2024. *Comparing NQF Levels*. [Umalusi – Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training](#) (accessed 19 April 2024).

Virtanen, P., Tammeaid, M., and Jalonen, H. 2023. *Public Sector Leadership: A Human-Centred Approach*. Oxford: Routledge.

WPTPS – Republic of South Africa, 1995. White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service. Available at [White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service](#) (accessed 24 December 2025).

Xaba, J. 2023. Examining the Role of Vocational Education and Training within Black Economic Empowerment: The Case of a Steel Producing Company in Pre-and Post-apartheid South Africa. *Nordic journal of African studies*, 32(4): 402-406.

Xu, T., Wang, Z., and Song, Y. 2025. Serving for social benefits: socially responsible human resource management drives civil servants' public service motivation and volunteering. *The International journal of public sector management*, (1):1-20.

Yu, F., Guo, H., Hu, C., and Fu, S. 2025. Can teaching help me get promoted?' A qualitative study of the career development of pre-tenure faculty in China. *Higher education research and development*, 44(3): 753-768.

ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Unisa Ethics Clearance Certificate

	
College of Economic and Management Sciences_ERC Public Administration and Management	
Date: 17/04/2023 Dear: Mr Canuel Nhlapo	NHREC Registration # : (if applicable) Ref #: 0476 Name: Mr Canuel Nhlapo Student #: 48156884
Decision: Ethics Approval from 17/04/2023 to 17/04/2026	
Researcher: Mr Canuel Nhlapo Compensation Fund Delta Heights Building 167 Thabo Sehume Street Pretoria 0001 Pretoria 48156884@mylife.unisa.ac.za 079 904 5027	
Supervisor: Dr Corlia Alers alersc@unisa.ac.za	
MPA dissertation: Critical analysis in the implementation of the Skill Development Act 97 of 1998: Case of the Department of Labour	
Qualification: MPA	
Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the College of Economic and Management Sciences_ERC Public Administration and Management for the above mentioned research study Ethics approval is granted for three years	
The low risk application was reviewed by College of Economic and Management Sciences_ERC Public Administration and Management on 24 February 2023 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that: 1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics. 2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College of Economic and Management Sciences_ERC Public Administration and Management . 3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application. 4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.	
Page 1 of 2	

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date (17/04/2026). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal, for Ethics Research Committee approval.

Additional Conditions

1. Disclosure of data to third parties is prohibited without explicit consent from Unisa.
2. De-identified data must be safely stored on password protected PCs.
3. Care should be taken by the researcher when publishing the results to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the university.
4. Adherence to the National Statement on Ethical Research and Publication practices, principle 7 referring to Social awareness, must be ensured: "Researchers and institutions must be sensitive to the potential impact of their research on society, marginal groups or individuals, and must consider these when weighing the benefits of the research against any harmful effects, with a view to minimising or avoiding the latter where possible." Unisa will not be liable for any failure to comply with this principle.

Note

The reference number 0476 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,



Mr Decent Baloyi
Chair of College of Economic and Management Sciences_ERC Public Administration and Management
E-mail: ebaloynd@unisa.ac.za



Prof Mathukhu Thomas Mogale
Executive Dean / By delegation from the Executive Dean of College of Economic and Management Sciences_ERC Public Administration and Management
E-mail: mogalmnt@unisa.ac.za

Annexure B:

Gatekeeper permission letter from the National Department of Employment and Labour



labour

Department:
Labour
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X117, PRETORIA, 0001. Laboria House, 215 Francis Baard Street, PRETORIA.
Tel: (012) 309 4000, Fax: (012) 320 5129, www.labour.gov.za

Enquires : TN DIRE
Telephone : 012 3094186
Date : 10/09/2018

Dear Mr. Nhlapho

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR HEAD OFFICE

The attached correspondence from Unisa dated 07 August 2018 refers.

Please be advised that your request to conduct research in the Department of Labour's Head Office has been approved in principle. The final approval letter signed by the Director-General will only be offered to you when the Clearance Certificate/University's Ethics Committee's Approval as well as the Structured Questionnaire/Interview/Survey or any other method of data collection has been received by our legal department and they are satisfied that your research information will not be used for the purpose of victimizing the Department of Labour in any way whatsoever.

This is not the final approval but as mentioned above an indication to your institution of learning that the department will indeed approve your request to conduct research in the Department of Labour.

We trust that the above is in order.

Yours faithfully

DEPUTY DIRECTOR: HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT
SEBOTSE MALATJI

Date: 11/09/2018

Annexure C:
Participant Information Sheet

23 September 2024

Dear Prospective Participant

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACT (97 OF 1998): CASE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR

My name is Mr Canuel Nhlapo, and I am conducting research under the supervision of Prof C Alers, an Associate Professor in the Department of Public Administration and Management, towards a Master of Public Administration degree at the University of South Africa (UNISA). You are hereby invited to participate in a study entitled **Implementation of the Skills Development Act (97 of 1998): Case of the Department of Employment and Labour**.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to critically analyse and describe the learning and development programmes and strategies aimed at ensuring the effective and efficient implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the National Department of Employment and Labour, with specific reference to the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You have been selected to participate in this study because you are an official within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate or the Training Section of the Department of Employment and Labour and have either attended training or are directly involved in the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Participation in this study will involve the following:

- Completion of a structured questionnaire, which will take approximately 20 minutes.
- Participation in a semi-structured, face-to-face interview, with an expected duration of approximately one hour.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate, and if you choose to take part, you will be asked to sign a written consent form and provided with a copy of this information sheet. You may withdraw from the study at any stage without providing a reason and without any negative consequences.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The significance of this study arises from practical experiences within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate as a workplace environment. Currently, there is a shortage of training and development programmes aimed at enhancing skills in demand, resulting in a skills gap within the Directorate. This gap affects development-oriented public administration, human resource management, and career development initiatives in relation to the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998.

The study seeks to contribute to addressing skills shortages within the public service, enhance knowledge in the field, and raise awareness among public servants regarding their rights in terms of the Skills Development Act. Furthermore, the study aims to provide recommendations to improve the effective and efficient implementation of the Act within the National Department of Employment and Labour.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY?

There are no known risks or negative consequences associated with participation in this study.

WILL THE INFORMATION I PROVIDE AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Your identity will remain confidential at all times. Your name will not be recorded, and no information will be used that could identify you personally. Responses will be assigned a code or pseudonym and will be used in data analysis, publications, and other research outputs such as conference presentations.

Data may be accessed by individuals responsible for ensuring ethical research conduct, including the transcriber and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Any published reports will not contain identifiable information.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER ENSURE DATA SECURITY?

Hard copies of data will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet for a minimum period of five years for academic and research purposes. Electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer. After five years, all hard copies will be securely shredded, and electronic data will be permanently deleted using appropriate data destruction software. Any future use of the data will be subject to further ethics approval where applicable.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

No payment, incentives, or inducements will be provided for participation in this study.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Public Administration and Management at UNISA. A copy of the approval letter may be obtained from the researcher upon request.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY?

Should you wish to receive feedback on the findings of the study, you may contact Mr C Nhlapo at Tel: 012 309 4543 or via email at Canuel.Nhlapo@labour.gov.za.

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research, you may contact Prof C Alers at Tel: 012 429 6286 or email alersc@unisa.ac.za.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for considering participation in this study.



Mr Canuel Nhlapo

Student number: 48156884

Annexure D:
Informed Consent Letter



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

**CRITICAL ANALYSIS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
SKILL DEVELOPMENT ACT 97 OF 1998:
A CASE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR**

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential **benefits** and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

- I have read and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty.
- I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential.
- I agree to complete the questionnaire and/or to the recording of the interview/.
- I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname..... (please print)

Participant Signature.....Date.....

Researcher's Name & Surname: Mr Canuel Nhlapo

Researcher's signature:

Mr CANUEL NHLAPO

Date: 23 September 2022



University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

Annexure E:

Questionnaire

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. You have been invited to participate in this study because of your relevant experience and knowledge related to the topic under investigation.
2. You are kindly requested to complete the questionnaire as honestly and comprehensively as possible.
3. The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.
4. Participation in this study is anonymous. You are not required to disclose your identity, and your privacy will be fully respected.
5. No individual will be able to link you to the responses you provide.
6. All information collected will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used solely for research purposes.
7. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences.
8. You will not receive any payment or reward, financial or otherwise, and participation in the study will not result in any undue costs to you.
9. Data will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet, while electronic data will be protected by password-secured access. All data will be retained for a period of five years and thereafter securely destroyed once it no longer holds functional value.
10. A copy of the completed mini-dissertation will be made available online through the University of South Africa (UNISA) library.

INSTRUCTIONS

It is expected of you to evaluate each of the statements and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement by placing a cross (X) in the selected box.

There is no right or wrong answer. Tick only one option.

Question number	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Training and development opportunities have been accessible to officials of the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate over the past five years.					
2	Training is undertaken on a regular and structured basis within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate					
3	The implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 has enhanced the skills and knowledge of the workforce of the Department of Employment and Labour					
4	There is a clear alignment between the departmental Human Resource Skills Development Policy and the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998.					
5	The departmental Human Resource Skills Development Policy adequately provides for the implementation of the aims and objectives of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998.					

Question number	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
6	The training and development needs of employees are considered when learning and development programmes are designed.					
7	Officials are actively involved in the development of training and development programmes within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate					
8	Training and development programmes are offered equitably to officials to improve functional and job-related skills.					
9	The effective implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 contributes to improved career progression opportunities for officials within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate.					
10	Learning and development programmes contribute to addressing racial imbalances in skills development within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate.					
COMMENT						

Annexure F:

Interview Schedule

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. You have been invited to participate in this study because of your relevant experience and knowledge related to the topic under investigation.
2. You are kindly requested to complete the questionnaire as honestly and comprehensively as possible.
3. The interview is expected to take approximately 60 minutes.
4. Participation in this study is anonymous. You are not required to disclose your identity, and your privacy will be fully respected.
5. No individual will be able to link you to the responses you provide.
6. All information collected will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used solely for research purposes.
7. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences.
8. You will not receive any payment or reward, financial or otherwise, and participation in the study will not result in any undue costs to you.
9. Data will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet, while electronic data will be protected by password-secured access. All data will be retained for a period of five years and thereafter securely destroyed once it no longer holds functional value.
10. A copy of the completed mini-dissertation will be made available online through the University of South Africa (UNISA) library.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe the overall context and environment for skills development within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate?

2. How has the workforce responded to the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 in this Directorate?

3. In your view, how effectively and efficiently is the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 implemented within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate?

4. What policies, methods or programmes are currently used to give effect to the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Department of Employment and Labour?

5. How are learning and development programmes designed and implemented to address the skills needs of officials within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate?

6. In what ways has the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 contributed to enhancing the skills and knowledge of the workforce?

7. To what extent has the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 created career development and promotion opportunities within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate?

8. How has access to learning and development programmes contributed to addressing racial and gender imbalances in skills development within the Fleet and Auxiliary Support Services Directorate?

9. Based on your experience, what improvements could be made to strengthen the implementation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 within the Department of Employment and Labour?

Thank you for your participation and your effort towards making this study a success.

Mr Canuel Nhlapo

Email: Canuel.Nhlapo@labour.gov.za

Telephone: 012 309-4543, **Cell:** 079 904-5027