Assessing the causes of SMME learner drop-out and attrition in the national rollout of the Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP): A Case Study

Final Action Learning Project Research Dissertation

by

Reginald Sethole Legoabe

Supervisors: Ms. Liz de Wet & Prof. Tom Ryan

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the

**Associate in Management (AIM)
Middle Management Development
Programme (MMDP)
University of Cape Town (UCT)
Graduate School of Business**

Abstract

Assessing the causes of SMME learner drop-out and attrition in the national rollout of the Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP): A Case Study

Research by: Reginald Sethole Legoabe
Qualification: Associate in Management (AIM) MMDP Programme
University of Cape Town (UCT) Graduate School of Business
Supervisors: Ms. Liz de Wet & Professor Tom Ryan

The aim of this evaluative research study is to investigate the causes of learner dropout and attrition within the national rollout of the Productive Capacity Building Programme PCBP of the National Productivity Institute (NPI).

This study is undertaken using a case study format with particular interest in the behaviour of adult learners within the context of a learning environment as well as particular interventional measures that could be undertaken by adult educators and facilitators in retaining adult learners within contact training programmes.

The research study not only has internal validity in terms of the PCBP training programme operations but also contextual importance for long distance education, e-learning, other modes of learning delivery as well as the larger human resources development (HRD) domain. The ultimate objective is to minimize PCBP training costs resulting from adult learner attrition and the failure to meet training targets.

A survey population comprising twenty percent (20%) of a total pool of three hundred (x300) small, medium and micro enterprise (SMME) learners who attended PCBP training is selected using simple random sampling. The study is undertaken using case study format from a learning practitioner's perspective. The total survey population thus consists of sixty (x60) SMME learners who have attended PCBP training as well as SMME learners who have not passed the PCBP selection assessment.

Utilizing a questionnaire instrument and interview method, the survey population is interviewed through a qualitative research method. Historical training statistics as well as post-implementation training statistics resulting from the application of recommendations are stratified and compared. Qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview and documents are utilized. The study ends with recommendations for business application and the practical effects brought about by the implementation of initial recommendations.

The practical implementation of recommendations indicates that adult learner dropout within the PCBP training programme is minimized through the introduction of adult learning principles within the delivery of the programme.

Acknowledgements.

"*The hardest rock will yield to those who drill with determination*"- Talmud, undated.

Plagiarism Declaration.

1. I know that plagiarism is wrong.

2. I have used the Harvard convention of citation and referencing. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in this report from the work or works of other people has been attributed and has been cited and referenced.

3. This report is my own work.

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Signed:

……………………………….
Reginald S. Legoabe
Date: 31st July 2007

Summary of Key Words Used

ABET	-	Adult Basic Education and Training
ARCS	-	Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction
ASGISA	-	Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa
ASTD	-	American Society for Training and Development
BEE	-	Black Economic Empowerment
CAL	-	Characteristics of Adults as Learners
CBD	-	Central Business District
DOL	-	Department of Labour
DOE	-	Department of Education
DTI	-	Department of Trade and Industry
ETQA	-	Education, Training and Quality Assurance
ETD	-	Education Training and Development
FET	-	Further Education and Training
GET	-	General Education and Training
HET	-	Higher Education and Training
HRDS	-	Human Resource Development Strategy
IEB	-	Independent Examination Board
MOU	-	Memorandum of Understanding
NSDS	-	National Skills Development Strategy
NPI	-	National Productivity Institute
NQF	-	National Qualifications Framework
NGO	-	Non- Governmental Organization
NPO	-	Non Profit Organization
NSA	-	National Skills Authority
NSF	-	National Skills Fund
PCBP	-	Productive Capacity Building Programme
PFMA	-	Public Finance Management Act
RSA	-	Republic of South Africa
SAQA	-	South African Qualifications Authority
SEDA	-	Small Enterprise Development Agency
SETA	-	Sector Education and Training Authority
SFP	-	Single Factor Productivity
SMME	-	Small Medium and Micro Enterprise
SSP	-	Sector Skills Plan
STATS SA	-	Statistics South Africa
TFP	-	Total Factor Productivity
UNISA	-	University of South Africa
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme

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Executive Summary

This evaluative research report aims to assess the causes of small business learner drop-out and attrition in the training rollout of the Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP), a national training programme of the National Productivity Institute (NPI).

The research study not only has internal validity in terms of the PCBP programme operations and other similar large-scale SMME public training programmes but also contextual importance for the larger human resource development (HRD) domain.

The major underlying hypothesis is based on the adult learning principle that adult learners drop out of training due to loss of interest in training. The minor hypothesis is that if learners are given more control over their learning, their interest in learning will be heightened and result in lesser learner attrition rates.

The underlying assumptions are that:-

1. Lengthy training sessions lead to dropout by small business learners out of training due to being away from their businesses for extended periods.
2. Repetitive post-training rehearsals and commitment sessions cause SMME learners to become bored and loose interest in training.
3. Inferior training abilities of facilitators cause SMME learner boredom and loss of interest in learning.
4. SMME learner illiteracy and numeracy barriers cause learner demotivation and dropout.
5. Inferior post-training learner mentorship causes learner demotivation and dropout due to lack of transference and retention of learning.
6. Lack of personal motivation causes SMME learners to drop out of training.

In order to better understand the causes of adult learner attrition within publicly-funded national training programmes similar to the PCBP programme, the research study is undertaken using a case study format. A qualitative survey involving sixty (x60) randomly sampled small medium and micro enterprise (SMME) learners who have attended PCBP training is surveyed utilizing a questionnaire survey instrument and telephonic interview method. Qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview and historical documents are utilized. The total random sample of trainees comprises twenty percent (20%) of the total number of trainees who have been trained and selected on the PCBP programme, inclusive of all the SMME trainees/ learners who failed their selection assessment.

The survey population consists of randomly sampled SMME learners who have successfully completed training as well as undertook their three post-training productivity improvement projects, learners who have dropped out of training as well as learners who have attended training but failed to implement the post-training productivity improvement projects. Some of the learners who have been included in the randomly-sampled survey population have passed the initial selection test of the PCBP training programme. The randomly-sampled survey population also consists of SMME learners most of the provinces in the country where PCBP training operations take place.

For the sake of confidentiality of the respondents, the real names of the interviewees/ respondents as well as the business names of the SMME's surveyed are not included in the survey. Instead, respondents are listed in alphabetical order from Respondent A – Z. Company names are listed as Company A – Z.

The rationale for the inclusion of non-selected learners in the survey population is to be as inclusive as possible and consider all the possible various contributory causes of learner dropout in the operational delivery of the Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP).

The research questionnaire is transmitted electronically to and from the interviewees using electronic mail or the facsimile machine. In instances where electronic facilities are not available to the interviewees, snail mail is utilized to transmit questionnaires to and from interviewees. The interview itself is conducted telephonically whilst the interviewee/ learner is in possession of the questionnaire. The questionnaire itself is paper-based or electronic, depending on the circumstances of interviewee.

The above-mentioned research approach, method and instrument is utilized due to cost-effectiveness and logistical reasons. The primary objective of transmitting the questionnaire electronically and thereafter conducting the interview telephonically is to be able to explain the questionnaire requirements to interviewees as well as to allow interviewees plenty of time to add additional facts to the contents of their questionnaire responses in their own time after the telephonic interview. The secondary objective why telephonic interviews were arranged to take place in the mornings or in the afternoons was to ensure minimal inconvenience to interviewees and to cause as little disruption to the life schedules of the interviewees as possible.

The second part of the research analyses the training statistics of the Productive Capacity Building Programme as well as the stratified survey responses in order to attempt to uncover underlying statistical trends.

Although a response rate of at least half the total sampled survey population was anticipated, only thirty four (x34) interviewees out of the sixty (x60) interviewees filled in and returned the questionnaire, although fifty two (x52) interviewees were interviewed telephonically and confirmed receiving the electronic questionnaire. Eight interviewees from the survey sample declined to participate further in the telephonic interview and survey. The actual response rate from interviewees thus amounted to fifty seven percent (57%).

Literature review on the causes of adult learner dropout within learning environments indicates that the above-mentioned phenomenon is caused by a wide variety of internal factors as well as external environmental factors.

The practical implementation of recommendations indicates that adult learner dropout within the PCBP training programme is minimized through the introduction of adult learner involvement, shortening the training schedule and post-training activities, increasing the facilitation skills of the training providers, selecting committed, literate and numerate learners, applying reinforcement of learned concepts, ensuring learning transfer through the practical application of theoretical concepts by SMME learners into their daily lives as well as generally applying the principles of andragogy within the PCBP training environment.

1. Project Definition and Motivation

Title:

Assessing the causes of SMME learner-drop out and attrition in the national rollout of the Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP): A Case Study.

Summary Description

The objective of the research project is to address the problems that the organisation currently experiences within the national rollout of the PCBP programme. Small business entrepreneurs who attend the PCBP training course drop out of the programme prior to completing all their productivity improvement projects in their businesses and before becoming certificated. This has a major training cost implication to the organisation and the failure to meet training targets.

The researcher's employer, the National Productivity Institute is a public service organization that reports to the Minister of Labour. Its mandate is to champion productivity and economic development in the private and public sectors of the South African economy.

The researcher's unit within the NPI trains small, medium and micro enterprises (SMME's) and municipal staff on productivity through a national entrepreneurship training programme called the Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP), a two year training programme that is managed by the unit in conjunction with the client in the form of the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), a publicly owned subsidiary of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

The main problems experienced in the rollout of the programme is:-

1. The fifty percentage (50%) turnover of potential small business trainees (SMME)'s who fail the selection assessment and cannot be trained.
2. The twenty five percentage (25%) turnover rate of current trainees who drop out of the PCBP training programme and do not complete their three mandatory productivity improvement projects within their businesses post-training.

The above-mentioned problems are interlinked and are mostly caused by the unit's intention to maintain the high quality of training yet include as many small business trainees as possible. The second contributory cause is the very basic mathematical and literacy skills of the potential trainees as well as their continued commitment to implement the productivity improvement projects in their own businesses.

Value to the Organisation

The PCBP Programme Action Plan commits the organisation to train nine hundred and sixty (x960) small businesses by the end of the 2007 financial year. This will enable SEDA to also be able to reach its training targets in terms of its government mandate. Currently, the unit has been able to train only three hundred and five (x305) small businesses during the initial year of the programme (2006).

The failure of the unit to attain the above-mentioned training target indicates a lack of efficiency and the risk of possibly loosing potential government training contracts and reliability in the eyes of strategic public sector management. Also the unit has already made commitments to the division to earn and invoice an annualised total income of R6 million rands from the client's (SEDA)'s programme budget during the 2007 financial year. Currently, the unit has only claimed R3 million rands of the budgeted funds only.

The success of the above-mentioned research study will assist the organisation to meet its objectives of fighting unemployment and improving the economy of the country through fostering a productivity mindset in the hearts and minds of South Africans. The study will also assist in improving the resource utilisation, effectiveness and efficiency with which the organisation manages publicly-funded state training programmes.

Discussions have been held with the Executive Manager regarding the above-mentioned project and support in the form of access to programme minutes and training statistics, minutes and reports of the Steering Committee as well as permission to contact trainees for survey purposes was granted.

Value to own learning process

From the above-mentioned research project, the researcher intends to learn from the practical application of behavioural theories into the learning process and how learner motivation and commitment may be affected by the planning and execution of training programmes. The researcher intends to learn through studying the behaviour of adult learners in an environment of self-directed learning. The objective is to consolidate and improve on best training practices in the filed of human resources development. The research study not only has internal validity in terms of the PCBP programme operations but also contextual importance for the human resources development (HRD) domain.

Research Methodology

In order to be able to develop a well-informed understanding of the problem, a qualitative research method will be utilised to obtain information by conducting a survey of the trainees utilising a questionnaire instrument and interview method. Using simple random sampling, the researcher plans to select a random sample of current small business trainees who have been successfully selected into the PCBP programme, those who have already dropped out of the training programme as well as small business trainees who have failed the selection assessment and subject them all to an interview utilising the above-mentioned research instrument. The total random sample of trainees and selectees shall comprise twenty percent (20%) of the total number of trainees who have been trained and selected on the PCBP programme, inclusive of all the selectees who failed their selection assessment. This totally amounts to approximately sixty (x60) interviewees.
The questionnaire shall be transmitted electronically to and from the interviewees using electronic mail or the facsimile machine. In instances where electronic facilities are not available, snail mail will be utilised to transmit questionnaires to and from interviewees.
The interview itself shall be conducted telephonically whilst the learner is in possession of the questionnaire which shall accordingly be paper-based or electronic.

The researcher has chosen the above-mentioned method and research instrument due to cost-effectiveness and logistical reasons. The objective of transmitting the questionnaire and thereafter conducting the interview is to be able to explain the questionnaire contents to interviewees as well as allow interviewees plenty of time to add more facts to the contents of their questionnaire answers in their own time after the telephonic interview. Discussions have already been held and permission received from the Executive Manager of the division to contact the trainees as well as source information from official training sources.

The second part of the research will rely exclusively on an analysis of the training statistics of the Productive Capacity Building Programme, broken down into national, provincial, as well as individual localities where training takes places in order to attempt to uncover underlying trends.

The researcher plans to interview the following persons who are all part of a random sample of current small business trainees who have been successfully selected, those who have already dropped out of the training programme as well as small business trainees who have failed the selection assessment. Care will be taken to ensure that the sample includes all the trainees from provinces where PCBP is trained and that the sample is inclusive in terms of demographics.

The researcher will be satisfied to at least receive a ten percent (10%) response rate from interviewees. In order to ensure buy-in and prompt response; interviewees have already been contacted telephonically to convey requests for participation as well as to convey the researcher's ntention to supply them with Postage-Paid envelopes to ensure that they post the paper-based questionnaires back. In cases where an interviewee has access to information technology facilities, the questionnaire can be filled in MS-Word format and e-mailed back. The telephonic interviews shall take place either in the morning or in the afternoon to ensure minimal inconvenience to interviewees. Monitoring of the project progress shall be done through my allocated MMDP group reports as indicated in the group plan. For the sake of confidentiality of the respondents, the real names of the interviewees/ respondents as well as the business names of the SMME's surveyed are not included in the survey. Instead, respondents are listed in alphabetical order from Respondent A – Z. Company names are listed as Company A – Z.

	INTERVIEWEE NAME	BUSINESS NAME	GENDER	LOCATION	PROVINCE
1.	Respondent A	SMME A	Male	Nelspruit	Mpumalanga
2.	Respondent B	SMME B	Female	Witbank	Mpumalanga
3.	Respondent C	SMME C	Male	Malelane	Mpumalanga
4.	Respondent D	SMME D	Male	Secunda	Mpumalanga
5.	Respondent E	SMME E	Male	Kwa-Mhlanga	Mpumalanga
6.	Respondent F	SMME F	Male	Embalenhle	Mpumalanga
7.	Respondent G	SMME G	Female	Evander	Mpumalanga
8.	Respondent H	SMME H	Male	Atteridgeville	Gauteng
9.	Respondent I	SMME I	Male	Mamelodi	Gauteng
10.	Respondent J	SMME J	Female	Mabopane	Gauteng
11.	Respondent K	SMME K	Male	Garankuwa	Gauteng
12.	Respondent L	SMME L	Male	Soweto	Gauteng
13.	Respondent M	SMME M	Male	Brakpan	Gauteng

14.	Respondent N	SMME N	Female	Tembisa	Gauteng
15.	Respondent O	SMME O	Female	Mmabatho	Northwest
16.	Respondent P	SMME P	Female	Mafikeng	Northwest
17.	Respondent Q	SMME Q	Female	Borakalla	Northwest
18.	Respondent R	SMME R	Female	Coligny	Northwest
19.	Respondent S	SMME S	Female	Brits	Northwest
20.	Respondent T	SMME T	Male	Mafikeng	Northwest
21.	Respondent U	SMME U	Male	Ficksburg	Northwest
22.	Respondent V	SMME V	Male	Bloemfontein	Free State
23.	Respondent W	SMME W	Female	Mangaung	Free State
24.	Respondent X	SMME X	Male	Sasolburg	Free State
25.	Respondent Y	SMME Y	Male	Botshabelo	Free State
26.	Respondent Z	SMME Z	Male	Welkom	Free State
27.	Respondent A2	SMME A2	Female	Kroonstad	Free State
28.	Respondent B2	SMME B2	Male	Kestell	Free State
29.	Respondent C2	SMME C2	Male	Umtata	Eastern Cape
30.	Respondent D2	SMME D2	Female	Qumbu	Eastern Cape
31.	Respondent E2	SMME E2	Female	Port Elizabeth	Eastern Cape
32.	Respondent F2	SMME F2	Female	East London	Eastern Cape
33.	Respondent G2	SMME G2	Male	Qunu	Eastern Cape
34.	Respondent H2	SMME H2	Female	Mount Frere	Eastern Cape
35.	Respondent I2	SMME I2	Male	Umtata	Eastern Cape
36.	Respondent J2	SMME J2	Female	Kimberley	Northern Cape
37.	Respondent K2	SMME K2	Female	Warrenton	Northern Cape
38.	Respondent L2	SMME L2	Female	Galeshewe	Northern Cape
39.	Respondent M2	SMME M2	Female	Kuruman	Northern Cape
40.	Respondent N2	SMME N2	Female	Barkley West	Northern Cape
41.	Respondent O2	SMME O2	Male	Kutlwanong	Northern Cape
42.	Respondent P2	SMME P2	Male	Kimberley	Northern Cape
43.	Respondent Q2	SMME Q2	Male	Polokwane	Limpopo
44.	Respondent R2	SMME R2	Male	Moletlane	Limpopo
45.	Respondent S2	SMME S2	Male	Thohoyandou	Limpopo
46.	Respondent T2	SMME T2	Female	Appelcross	Limpopo
47.	Respondent U2	SMME U2	Female	Marble Hall	Limpopo
48.	Respondent V2	SMME V2	Female	Tzaneen	Limpopo
49.	Respondent W2	SMME W2	Female	Durban	Kwa-Zulu Natal
50.	Respondent X2	SMME X2	Female	Port Shepstone	Kwa-Zulu Natal
51.	Respondent Y2	SMME Y2	Female	Kwamakutha	Kwa-Zulu Natal
52.	Respondent Z2	SMME Z2	Male	Pietermaritzburg	Kwa-Zulu Natal
53.	Respondent A3	SMME A3	Female	Richards Bay	Kwa-Zulu Natal
54.	Respondent B3	SMME B3	Male	Stanger	Kwa-Zulu Natal

Action Research Project Plan

Action	Timeframes	Cost	Stakeholders	Potential Problems
1. Design and Submit Project Plan to Lecturers	6 April 2007	None	MMDP Group Members Michael Gcabashe and Joyce McCabe to be consulted for advice	Submission deadline (6th April 2007) already surpassed due to work commitment and PCBP conference.
2. Design Questionnaire	2 - 6 April 2007	None	None	Inefficient questionnaire, misleading questions
3. Communicate with Executive Manager regarding research project	3 April 2007	None	Executive Manager	Executive Manager's concern regarding confidentiality of PCBP project information.
4. Conduct random sample of interviewees	10 April 2007	None	Executive Manager	Potential denial of access and permission to utilise official PCBP training statistics by Executive Manager
5. Compile list of total interviewees	10 April 2007	None	Executive Manager	Potential denial of permission to utilise official PCBP training statistics by Executive Manager
6. Contact interviewees telephonically to request participation	13 April 2007	Estimated cost of R5.00 per interviewee. Total telephonic cost of R300.00 to be borne by myself through private telephonic usage	PCBP Trainees and Executive Manager	Potential denial of permission to utilise official PCBP training statistics by Executive Manager. Non-interest, scepticism and suspicions from potential interviewees.
7. Conduct literature review	16- 20 April 2007	R15.00 for UNISA library books x11 books = R165.00	UNISA or Pretoria University Library	Non-availability of HRD textbooks in UNISA or Pretoria University libraries. Limitations on total textbooks to be booked out by non-students. Early closure of libraries in the afternoons weekdays
8. Collate PCPB project training data	23 -24 April 2007	None	Executive Manager	Potential denial of permission to utilise official PCBP training statistics by Executive Manager
9. Procure x22 postage paid A5 envelopes from Post Office	21 April 2007	R8.00 per A5 postage paid return envelopes x 22 = R176.00 R1.00 per ordinary A5 envelopes x22 interviewees = R22.00	None	None
10. Compile e-mail and physical address databases of interviewees	14- 15 April 2007	None	None	Wrong spelling of interviewee e-mail and postal addresses
11. Arrange for proper appointments with interviewees for telephonic survey	24–25 April 2007	Estimated cost of R5.00 per interviewee. Total telephonic cost of R300.00 to be borne by myself through private telephonic usage	PCBP Trainees	Non-interest, scepticism and suspicions from potential interviewees.

12. Post questionnaires to snail mail-based interviewees	21 April 2007	R2.80 stamps per A5 envelope x60 =R168.00	None	Wrong spelling of interviewee postal addresses resulting in returned mail. Non-collection of mail by interviewees.
13. E-mail questionnaire to e-mail based interviewees	23 April 2007	None	None	Long e-mail database might cause e-mail traffic jams on the IT server at work.
14. Call interviewees and remind them to check post boxes or electronic mailboxes	30 April 2007	Estimated cost of R5.00 per interviewee. Total telephonic cost of R300.00 to be borne by myself through private telephonic usage	None	Non-interest, scepticism and suspicions from potential interviewees.
15. Conduct telephonic survey & filling of questionnaire per appointment for e-mail based interviewees	2 – 4 May 2007	Estimated cost of R5.00 per interviewee. Total telephonic cost of R300.00 to be borne by myself through private telephonic usage	PCBP Trainees	Change of minds, suspicion from interviewees, non-cooperation or lack of understanding of questionnaire
16. Conduct telephonic survey & filling of questionnaire per appointment for snail mail based interviewees	7 – 18 May 2007	Estimated cost of R5.00 per interviewee. Total telephonic cost of R300.00 to be borne by myself through private telephonic usage	PCBP Trainees	Change of minds, suspicion from interviewees, non-cooperation or lack of understanding of questionnaire
17. Receive and sort responses	21 -30 May 2007	None	None	Overloaded e-mailbox. Improperly completed questionnaires. Illegible handwriting by respondents
18. Call interviewees and thank them for participation	31 May 2007	Estimated cost of R5.00 per interviewee. Total telephonic cost of R300.00 to be borne by myself through private telephonic usage	PCBP Trainees	None
19. Apply theoretical understanding from literature review in analysis of responses and training data	1 - 4 June 2007	None	None	None
20. Document and forward recommendations to Executive Manager for implementation	5 -6 June 2007	None	Executive Manager	Rejection, scepticism of recommendations by Executive Manager. Operationally impossible recommendations. Lengthy implementation timeframes required to gauge proper impact of recommendations.
21. Monitor and document	11- 22 June 2007	None	Executive Manager	Denial of permission to implement

Action	Timeframes	Cost	Stakeholders	Potential Problems
implementation				recommendations by Executive Manager. Lack of funding to implement recommendations. Lengthy implementation timeframes to gauge proper impact of recommendations.
22. Discuss Final Implementation Report with MMDP Group members	22 June 2007	None	MMDP Group Members Michael Gcabashe and Joyce McCabe	Non-availability of group members.
23. Compile Final Implementation Report to lecturer via Instructor and submit copy to Executive Manager	25 -30 June 2007	None	Executive Manager and Liz De Wet (Lecturer)	None

Monitoring of Project Progress via MMDP Group (Reginald Legoabe, Michael Gcabashe and Joyce McCabe)

Action	Timeframes	Cost	Stakeholders	Potential Problems
Submission of group Plan to the Facilitator	2 April 2007	None	MMDP Group Members Michael Gcabashe and Joyce McCabe	Non-availability of group members. Submission deadline already surpassed.
Submission of Group Progress Report to Lecturer (Liz de Wet)	5 April 2007 20 April 2007 4 May 2007 18 May 2007 1 June 2007 15 June 2007	None	MMDP Group Members Michael Gcabashe and Joyce McCabe	Non- availability of group members for discussions
Compilation of Project Definition and Motivation & Discussion with Team Members	5 April 2007	None	MMDP Group Members Michael Gcabashe and Joyce McCabe	Non-availability of group members for discussions
Submission of Group Progress Report	26 April 2007 25 May 2007		MMDP Group Members Michael Gcabashe and Joyce McCabe	Non-availability of group members for discussions
Intervention Implementation Report & discussion with Team members	22 June 2007	None	MMDP Group Members Michael Gcabashe and Joyce McCabe	Non-availability of group members for discussions

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Manager's sign-off/ Appropriate Support for the Project

The terms and references of the above-mentioned project fall within my general area of authority although they are not my core daily responsibilities and duties. In this regard, I have consulted and received consent from the Executive Manager about the research project for nominal support purposes, to obtain consent to contact the PCBP trainees for research purposes as well as to receive unlimited access to official organisational training statistics on the PCBP programme.

The above-mentioned permission does not however include permission to implement the recommendations. Supplementary permission to implement the recommendations is still subject to the Executive Manager's approval upon studying the contents of my recommendations.

2. Project Update & Intervention Plan

2.1 Introduction

South Africa is a country with a high population growth rate and jobless economic growth. According to Statistics South Africa's 2002 census statistics, South Africa has a total population of forty seven million (47 million) citizens.

Whilst the annual growth rate of the South African economy currently fluctuates under four percent (4%), the country's population grows at a much faster rate. Currently, unemployment stands at twenty six percent (26%) whilst inflation has recently surpassed the six percent (6%) mark.

The key macroeconomic problem plaguing the South African economy is jobless growth. Although the South African economy has grown at an annual rate of 4% annually since 2004, the economy does not create enough employment opportunities to absorb the growing ranks of unemployed citizens. The productive capacity of the South African economy is constrained by the high rate in population growth that far exceeds the ability of the economy to create jobs. This economic problem is further exacerbated by the tendency of key South African economic sectors within the primary and secondary industries to undermine the strategic importance of labour inputs in the mainstream production process in the economy.

The problem of jobless economic growth is characterized by wholesale shedding of jobs, retrenchments and downsizing by business enterprises in the name of improving enterprise productivity and profitability.

According to the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative South Africa (ASGISA) discussion paper (2006:2- 4), constraints to South African economic growth are caused by international currency volatility, a weak national transport system, foreign investment entry barriers, limited foreign investment, high regulation and shortage of skilled labour.

The stiffness of international competition, caused by the proliferation of globalization, has also created more economic challenges and unique human developmental skills hurdles as South African business enterprises are now compelled to compete more efficiently for a spot in the ever-competitive marketplace.

Market leadership in a globalized South African economy is now dependent more than ever before on how promptly a business enterprise responds to the changing market environment as well as utilizes its competitive advantage.

Entrepreneurial skill, underpinned by strong training and developmental learning ethos, remain the Achilles' heel against economic stagnation and the social despair caused by rampant joblessness.

A Legislative Overview

Training and Development Legislative Overview.

Over the past nine years, new legislation has transformed the South African education and training landscape. The main laws affecting workplace education and training are the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act 58 of 1995, the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998[1], the Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999, the ABET Act 52 of 2005 and the Further and Higher Education legislation as tabled by the Department of Education.

The SAQA Act of 1995 provides for the establishment of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF), oversees learning curriculum generation processes and the registration of national qualifications on the NQF through the establishment of national standards and standards generating bodies (SGB's).

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is also responsible for overseeing the quality assurance of education and training within the country through the accreditation of Education & Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) bodies.

Both the Skills Development Act of 1998 and the Skills Development Levies Act of 1999 were enacted by the South African government to increase the responsiveness of the education and training system to workplace skills needs and to increase the amount and quality of training taking place in the workplace. Increasing workplace training requires a growing commitment to and investment in training by employers in particular.

In order to support increases in both the quality and amount of workplace –related training taking place within the country, the above-mentioned skills development legislation introduce and enabling environment consisting of:-
• New workplace skills planning techniques.
• New occupationally and workplace -directed learning programmes called learnerships and skills programmes.
• Sector training co-ordination entities called Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA)'s
• A compulsory skills-levy grant scheme that aims to encourage employers to increase investment in the training and skills development of their workforce.

In response to the looming human capital challenges facing the country, the South African Minister of Labour launched the initial National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS I, 2001- 2005) in February 2001, three years after the enactment of the Skills Development Act of 1998.

The second tier of the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS II, 2005- 2010), which was launched in 2005, forms part of the essential components of the broader Human Resource Development Strategy (HRDS) of South Africa.

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[1] The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 makes provision for the establishment of sector education and training authorities (SETA)'s in accordance with certain criteria. SETA's in turn are responsible for the development and implementation of the Sector Skills Plans (SSP) which interface with the National Skills Development Strategies (NSDS I & II) targets, the promotion of learnerships as well as the collection and disbursement of skills development levies in the various sectors.

Key objectives of the NSDS I (2001- 2005) :-

1. To develop a culture of high quality life-long learning
2. To foster skills development in the formal economy for productivity and employment growth
3. To stimulate and support skills development in small businesses
4. To promote skills development for employability and sustainable livelihoods through social development initiatives
5. To assist new entrants into employment.

Key objectives of the current NSDS II (2005- 2010) :-

1. To prioritize and communicate critical skills for sustainable growth, development and equity
2. To promote and accelerate quality training for all in the workplace
3. To promote employability and sustainable livelihoods through skills development
4. To assist designated groups, including new entrants, to participate in accredited work integrated learning and work-based programmes to acquire critical skills to enter the labour market and self-employment
5. To promote the quality and relevance of training provision

The larger objectives of the National Skills Development Strategy *II is to* equip South Africans with the skills to succeed in the global market and to offer opportunities to individuals and communities for self-advancement to enable them to play a productive role in society.

One of the strategic objectives of the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) Act 52 of 2000 is to complement the National Skills Development Strategies of the Department of Labour by providing for optimal opportunities for adult learning and literacy, the creation of knowledge and development of skills in keeping with international standards of academic and technical quality.

There is an underlying unquestionable relationship between a country's economic growth as well as its training and development programmes on offer. The economic advancement of a country depends largely on the extent to which knowledge and skills are spread within a country's population.

Carell et al (2002: 340) avers that any domestic training interventions that seeks to ensure that the country's workforce possesses the necessary levels of knowledge, skills, behaviours and attributes is the responsibility of the two complementary systems in the form of formal education and training.

King & McGrath (2002) advocate for an emphasis on both access to education and improving the quality of training. This, the writers assert, can be done through addressing basic educational and foundational skills in the form of (literacy, numeracy, reasoning skills, social skills and problem-solving skills).

But how does training relate to education in general?

De Cenzo and Robbins (1994: 255) define training as a learning experience that seeks a relatively permanent change in an individual that will improve his or her ability to perform on the job. Training can thus be defined as a deliberate process aimed at changing attitudes, knowledge or skilled behaviour through learning experience in order to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities.

According to De Cenzo and Robbins (1994:265) education on the other hand can be defined as a deliberate and systematic process of learning aimed at transferring foundational information and skills that a learner will need in his or her life in future.

The fundamental difference between training and education is thus the fact that training is aimed at improving work performance whilst education is concerned with foundational competence needed for life.

There is a growing awareness of the job creation potential of small medium and micro enterprises (SMME) sector. There is a rising school of thought that accepts that the formal economy will not be able to generate sufficient employment for South Africa's fast growing population. Those citizens who cannot be absorbed by the formal economy necessarily turn to the informal sector as a means of survival.

Training is an intervention that has stood the test of viability and cost-effectiveness worldwide, and is regarded as an instrument to transfer knowledge, skills and attributes to ensure that business activities in the informal sector are not just aimed at subsistence alone.

The core adult learning challenge facing South Africa still remains basic literacy. Due to high levels of unemployment the challenge for government is to indicate to its illiterate citizenry that improved literacy through adult learning will result in an improved standard of living.

A secondary adult learning challenge arises in the fact that although improved literacy enables a country's citizenry to better access state social welfare benefits and services, mere literacy does not address the immediate human capital skills demands of the economy, the need for skilled entrepreneurs and the immediate need for employment by a rapidly growing South African populace.

2.2 A Background of Adult Learning in South Africa.

Adult learning in South Africa has come a long way prior to the introduction of the National Qualifications Framework in the early 1990's.

Based on the race-based inequities generated by successive previous governments most black South Africans received inferior or little education in the past. The inferior education system designed for blacks, called the "Bantu education system" mainly concerned itself with African languages, biblical studies and to some extent with simplistic agricultural theory.

Any adult learning that took place then was aimed mainly at combating illiteracy and was in all respects similar to the learning received by school-going child learners in terms of learner support materials and assessments.

Instruction took place in the evenings and was heavily modeled along instructivist pedagogical principles and delivered by the same poorly-educated educators who instructed child learners during the day.

During this period, churches, trade unions and non governmental organizations (NGO)'s took up the challenge to train adult learners differently by training illiterate African domestic workers and gardeners in the evenings beyond the constraints imposed by the Group Areas Act legislation which criminalized any interpersonal or interracial contact between persons after working hours.

The learning objectives then were pursuit of educational advancement for blacks and political conscientisation to illiterate adult learners. It was during this period that the realization hit home that adult learning could be more effective, efficient and productive if innovative and varied learning support material and curricula were implemented.

Due to an increase in international funding, some of the best adult learning support materials were published, researched and tested by non-profit organizations in the 1980's. Non governmental organizations (NGO)'s, churches and trade unions took a leading role in producing parallel alternative adult learning support material and very soon an alternative examination system, best suited to the unique needs of adult learners was developed. It was generally accepted during this period that subjecting adult learners to the same assessments based on a curricula for child learners was offensive and did not produce the ideal worker or citizen that the country's economy needed at the time.

Towards the late 1980's, organized industry in the form of the Chamber of Mines and its affiliates also commenced offering adult learning to its own workforce in an effort to uplift skills and remain globally competitive. The realization and active efforts by organized business to breed a more globally competitive and productive workforce buoyed by the acknowledgement of the influence of organized labour formations, played a significant role in the collaborations that took place and led to the enactment of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the skills development legislation in the early 1990's.

After extensive collaboration between industry, organized labour and the South African government, the country embraced the National Qualifications Framework, based on educational models from Australia and New Zealand.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is a manifestation of the constructivist outcomes based approach and it assisted in advancing the prominence of adult based education or ABET from the confines of non governmental organizations (NGO)'s and church halls to a distinct recognized learning sub-field that is now a priority for employers and the state alike.

Owing to the recognition given by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to adult learning, there is an NQF 1 level which is preceded by four levels of adult learning. In effect, the NQF formalized adult learning or ABET according to a set of nationally recognized unit standards. More importantly, the NQF linked adult learning qualifications into industry-based training that could yield access to employment opportunities.

Another important manifestation in favour of the advancement of adult learning ethos was the modifications made by the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) in amending summative assessments for the comprehension of adult learners based on the unit standards of the NQF and the ethos of lifelong learning.

In the past, adult learners were subjected to the same summative assessments that were designed for children within the secondary education stream of general education and training (GET).

After the enactment of the skills development legislation in the early 1990's the state faced the challenge of transforming its old instructivist-based adult education centres into constructivist-based outcomes based learning sites based on national learning criteria. Through purchasing learning materials from non governmental organizations and banning daytime child-learner instructors from training adult learners in the evenings, the South African Department of Education succeeded in bringing state-sponsored adult learning centres in line with the prescripts of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Currently, adult learning training providers and adult learners alike are able to select from the widely accepted examinations of the Independent Examination Board (IEB), adult assessments now set by the State through the Department of Education and portfolio assessments set by higher education institutions, led by the University of South Africa (UNISA).

During the same period, the Department of Labour, through the National Skills Authority (NSA) and the National Skills Fund (NSF), manages the newly-created Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA)'s. SETA 's are new entities which have been established across specific economic sectors and have replaced old styled apprenticeships with newly created learnerships. In terms of the NQF, a learnership is defined as classroom theoretical learning added with a component of practical work-based experience.

Workplace learning relies heavily on learnerships by providing a planned work experience over a specified period of time. It also interlinks with experiential learning by the linking of theoretical learning concepts with practical work experience as well as mentoring and coaching through the holistic development of individuals in the workplace in line with the adult learning principles of lifelong learning and self-directed personal learner development.

Due to the fact that most of the adult learners need literacy skills first before embarking on SETA-sponsored learnership programmes, the Department of Labour (DOL) currently spends more state funds on adult learning through the various Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA)'s than through the state-sponsored adult learning centres managed by the Department of Education (DOE).

2.3 A Brief Overview of the National Productivity Institute (NPI)

The National Productivity Institute is a Schedule 3(A) public service organization listed under the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and reports to the Minister of Labour. The NPI is at the forefront of providing relevant research, training and advisory services to enhance the competitiveness and productivity improvement of private and public sector organisations.

Its mandate is to champion productivity and economic development in the private and public sectors of the South African economy. The NPI 's mission is to promote and develop economic productive capacity, to facilitate partnerships in national productivity campaigns, to disseminate information on the nation's productivity performance and productivity improvement experiences, to initiate relevant productivity improvement approaches and techniques as well as to influence the creation of a conductive socio-economic, legislative and policy environment for ongoing productivity improvement and for South Africans to adopt a culture of sustainable productive practices in order to enjoy a high quality of life.

The Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP) forms part of the numerous training interventions by the South African government aimed at combating unemployment and business skills shortages in the informal sector. The PCBP programme is led by government in the form of the Department of Labour and its executing agency, the National Productivity Institute (NPI) in partnership with the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA).

2.4 A Brief Background of the Productive Capacity Building Programme

The purpose of the Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP) is to equip and improve the SMME owners' and employees' understanding of entrepreneurship, life skills, economics, and building the productive capacity of their own small businesses.

It is a supply-side NQF 1- 4 national training programme that is project-managed by the NPI in partnership with the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), a subsidiary of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) across all nine provinces of the country since January 2006.

The initial pilot implementation of the PCBP, which was sponsored by the Gold Field Foundation of SA Ltd, took place between March 2001- to December 2003 in Gauteng province where thirty (x30) private training providers were trained as intermediaries to train small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMME)'s on the four PCBP training modules, namely:-

- **Module 1   - Entrepreneurship**
- **Module 2   - Economic Concepts**
- **Module 3   - Life Skills**
- **Module 4   - Building Productive Capacity.**

Rationale for the PCBP Training Programme

Nel et al (2004: 420) state that in order for training to yield returns it is important that training is efficient to ensure that small medium and micro enterprises (SMME)'s do not ignore even the most basic business functions in favour of mere survivalism.

Fedderke (2001: 62) states that one of the main reasons for South Africa's declining economic growth is the "emphasis on widening access" to education rather than improving the "quality of training" given.

The current economic realities in South Africa is that a considerable proportion of SMME learners are unskilled, survivalist businessmen and women who went into self-employment by default. There is also a major underlying mindset of dependency on government and entitlement to government services.

The above-mentioned, in addition to the poor general literacy levels caused by inferior secondary education in black urban and rural settlements makes any efforts at SMME training a daunting task. In order to survive in the new South African economic landscape, South African entrepreneurs need more than language literacy alone. South African entrepreneurs need economic literacy as well.

Lehohla (2002:1) defines economic literacy as the "ability of individuals and or society to acknowledge, understand, and engage their material life circumstances like the economy; and subsequently, take a coherent set of strategic and operational steps aimed at addressing their situation."

According to the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative South Africa (ASGISA) discussion paper (2006:1), South Africa has an overall total population of 47 million citizens with an unemployment rate of under twenty six percent (26%).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s 2002 Human Development Report also cites that South Africa has an overall 85.3% literacy rate. This is a very low literacy rate compared to other developing countries and in the face of economic challenges caused by globalization.

In order to fight unemployment, the South African government has set itself a target of creating 6% economic growth and halving total unemployment by 2014. According to the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative South Africa (ASGISA) discussion paper (2006: 9), the South African government has also set itself a target of establishing 10 000 small, medium and micro enterprises (SMME)'s annually as part of its strategy to promote economic growth and fighting unemployment.

This is amongst others achieved through a concerted effort by government at targeting training at critically marginalized sections of the South African population in the form of the youth, rural based communities, the unemployed and women into participating in the formal economy.

The Productive Capacity Building Programme forms part of the above-mentioned training interventions by the South African government aimed at combating unemployment and business skills shortages in the informal sector.

Content of the PCBP Training Programme.

The Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP) contact training programme consists of four modules namely:-

- **Module 1 (Entrepreneurship)**
- **Module 2 (Life Skills)**
- **Module 3 (Economic Concepts)**
- **Module 4 (Building Productive Capacity)**

A. Module 1 (Entrepreneurship).

In the above-mentioned training module, the role of production factors in the form of land, capital, machinery, labour and entrepreneurship within the South African economy is explained and entrepreneurs are further challenged to consider more deeply how their role as small business owners positively influences the standard of living and the growth of the country's economy in general.

The rationale behind this module is to create a basic understanding of economic concepts as well as enable SMME learners to understand their roles as responsible entrepreneurs and distributors of wealth within the economy.

B. Module 2 (Life Skills)

In Module 2, the SMME learner is introduced to learning concepts that have a bearing on the internal affective and cognitive environment of the entrepreneur. The module covers internal aspects of personal self-management such as time management, communication skills, managing personal finances, stress management as well as building and maintaining self-image.

The ultimate objective of Module 2 is to help the SMME learner to live a balanced lifestyle, minimize personal stress, maintain good interpersonal relations, maintain sound personal finances as well as balance priorities between family and work life.

C. Module 3 (Economic Concepts).

In Module 3, an advanced discussion of micro-economic and macro-economic concepts such as inflation, industries, sectors, economic systems as well as supply and demand takes place. The SMME learner is introduced to understand the basic economic problem of scarcity of resources and unlimited human needs.

In this module, the SMME learner is exposed to mainstream economic concepts such as inputs, gross domestic product (GDP), production/service cost, opportunity cost, consumption as well as the roles of the different role-players in the economy namely the households, business enterprises, government and the foreign sector as well as how the economy operates in a circular flow of funds, goods and services between the various economic role-players.

The ultimate objective of Module 3 is to enable the SMME learner to understand micro and macro-economics as well as what role the SMME plays as an important role-player within the economy.

D. __Module 4 (Building Productive Capacity)__

In Module 4, an advanced emphasis on measurable and immeasurable factors that that affect enterprise productivity, efficiency and effectiveness takes place. Formulae to calculate and quantify Single Factor Productivity (SFP) factors such as labour productivity, machine productivity and capital productivity as well as Total Factor Productivity (TFP) factors help SMME learners to understand the importance of the productive usage of all enterprise inputs and how these can be measured and quantified.

Module 4 further introduces SMME learners to concepts such as calculating and measuring wastage, labour turnover, absenteeism, efficiency and resource utilization and how these factors can ultimately affect enterprise productivity.

The ultimate objective of Module 4 is to enable SMME learners to actualize their management responsibilities of planning, organizing, leadership and control within their small businesses through managing their business operations profitably, efficiently and qualitatively through the application of productivity formulae into the actual business operations of the small, medium and micro-enterprise (SMME).

__Nature of the PCBP Training Programme__

The Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP) Training Programme for small, medium and micro enterprise (SMME) learners involves the following:

__SMME Learner Selections__

The criteria requirements for choosing which small businesses are invited for selections are the following:

- The SMME must be operational for a period of at least six (x6) months

- The SMME should be able to provide evidence of a regular cash flow with growth potential

- The SMME has to satisfy the criteria laid out by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) defining a small business. This implies that the SMME has to employ from one to ten (1- 10) people and not have more than ten personnel.

- The physical business premises of the SMME has to be within a 10-15 km radius from the training venue

- The SMME can hail from any business economic sector

- The SMME owner needs to have arithmetic proficiency at an NQF Level 1
- (Grade 9) or higher

- The SMME owner/s must be prepared to sign a contract of commitment to the full training programme. Financial penalties for money already spent would be levied onto SMME's should they not comply with the above-mentioned agreement.

__SMME Selections Process.__

During selections, potential SMME learners congregate in a localized training venue and are subjected to a one-hour selection process that includes filling in a general application form, a basic knowledge assessment and an arithmetic proficiency

assessment tool using a calculator. The total selection process lasts averagely no more than two hours for a minimum amount of fifteen (x15) potential trainees. If a localized training venue can accommodate more than fifteen (x15) potential trainees, then up to fifty (x50) potential trainees are sometimes subjected to the selection process simultaneously.

The objective behind the usage of the general application form is to capture the potential trainees' personal and business details. The basic knowledge assessment test is utilized to gauge and confirm the trainee's basic literacy skills, reasoning abilities as well as ability to express basic language concepts in writing. The arithmetic assessment is utilized to gauge the numeracy skills of the potential trainees, their ability to use a calculator as well as their ability to apply basic common-sense and multiplication, subtraction, division and addition to arithmetical problems.

Selection onto the programme takes place on the basis of the arithmetic proficiency test alone. A pass mark of 50% is initially generally considered as the minimum pass mark. In order to include as many SMME trainees as possible, the 50% pass mark for the arithmetic proficiency assessment was waived and amended to a general total score of 40% for potential trainees from urban areas and an average pass mark of around 35% for potential trainees from rural areas.

Three days after SMME selections are conducted, selections are marked by the NPI Consultant and communicated to the nearest office of the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) which in turn notifies the SMME trainee telephonically of the assessment result in order to prepare for training or not.

Due to the high training schedules and understaffing selection results are sometimes communicated after a week.

SMME Training

The training programme for SMME training lasts for 5 days at a centrally accessible venue within a 15km radius from the business premises of the SMME. The daily training programme consists of five daily lessons each lasting one day from 9:00 am in the mornings to 15:50 pm in the afternoon. The daily training programme commences at 9:00 am - 15:50 pm daily.

Each daily lesson consists of six individual 45 minute sessions with 15 minute breaks in between. At the beginning of each lesson, the preceding lesson summary is repeated before commencement with the new lesson.

At the end of each lesson, the current lesson is summarized in addition to the summarised lesson from the preceding lesson held on the previous day. At the end of each lesson, the SMME learner is given a practical homework assignment to complete and give a written report-back on the next day. During training, SMME learners are advised to ask questions and to comment on the graphics utilised.

Training is complemented by the usage of Power Point slides, graphics, case studies, examples and an overhead projector. A step-by-step approach is used starting from the simplest to the most complex concepts.

The facilitator uses summaries and revision questions to assess knowledge gained by SMME learners.

A commitment session date is set during which and where learners make the necessary verbal report backs on productivity challenges encountered, their interventions and progress achieved to their peers as well as to the facilitator.

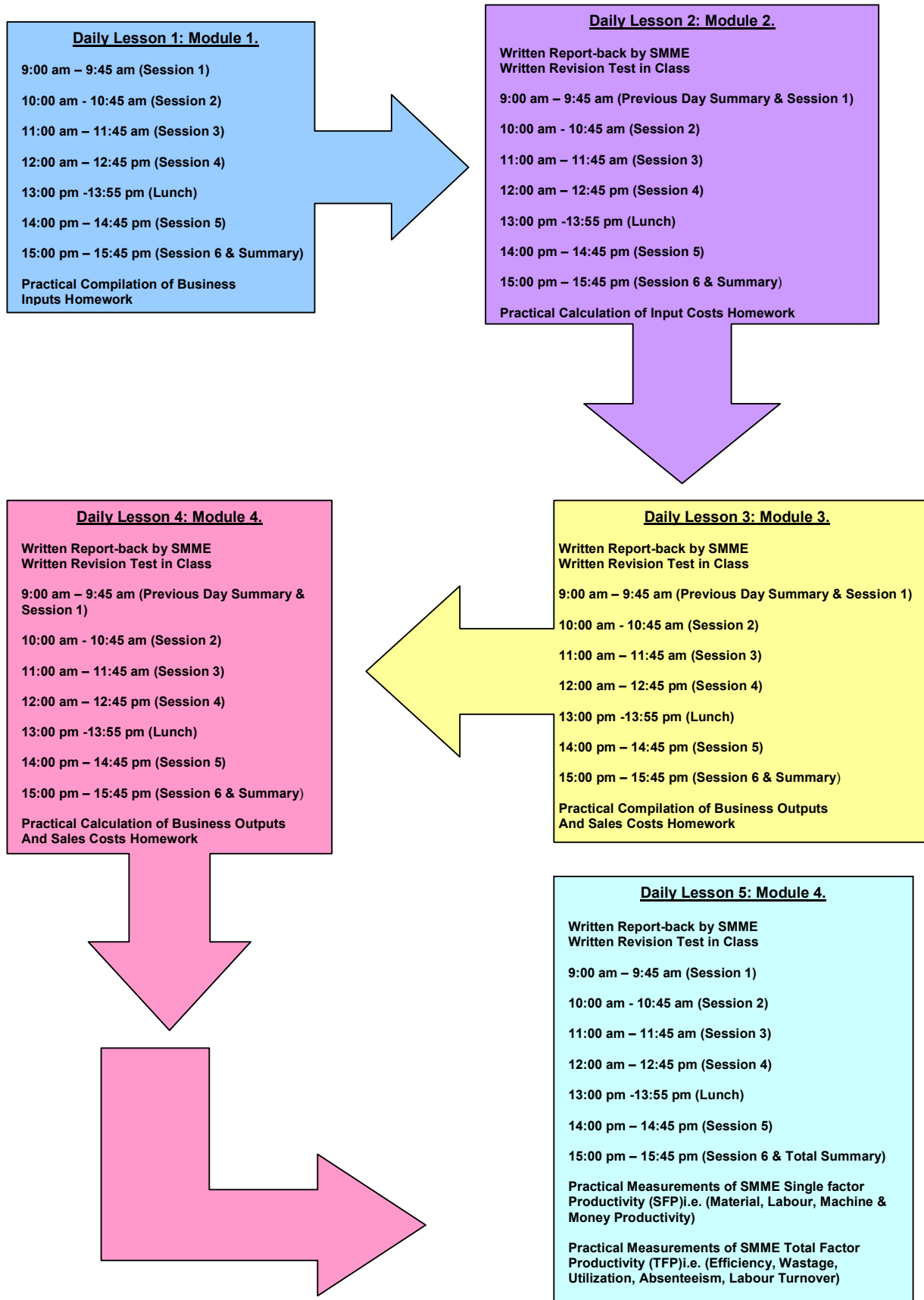*Kindly refer to the structure of the current PCBP training lesson below.*

Daily Lesson 1: Module 1.

9:00 am – 9:45 am (Session 1)

10:00 am - 10:45 am (Session 2)

11:00 am – 11:45 am (Session 3)

12:00 am – 12:45 pm (Session 4)

13:00 pm -13:55 pm (Lunch)

14:00 pm – 14:45 pm (Session 5)

15:00 pm – 15:45 pm (Session 6 & Summary)

Practical Compilation of Business Inputs Homework

Daily Lesson 2: Module 2.

Written Report-back by SMME
Written Revision Test in Class

9:00 am – 9:45 am (Previous Day Summary & Session 1)

10:00 am - 10:45 am (Session 2)

11:00 am – 11:45 am (Session 3)

12:00 am – 12:45 pm (Session 4)

13:00 pm -13:55 pm (Lunch)

14:00 pm – 14:45 pm (Session 5)

15:00 pm – 15:45 pm (Session 6 & Summary)

Practical Calculation of Input Costs Homework

Daily Lesson 4: Module 4.

Written Report-back by SMME
Written Revision Test in Class

9:00 am – 9:45 am (Previous Day Summary & Session 1)

10:00 am - 10:45 am (Session 2)

11:00 am – 11:45 am (Session 3)

12:00 am – 12:45 pm (Session 4)

13:00 pm -13:55 pm (Lunch)

14:00 pm – 14:45 pm (Session 5)

15:00 pm – 15:45 pm (Session 6 & Summary)

Practical Calculation of Business Outputs And Sales Costs Homework

Daily Lesson 3: Module 3.

Written Report-back by SMME
Written Revision Test in Class

9:00 am – 9:45 am (Previous Day Summary & Session 1)

10:00 am - 10:45 am (Session 2)

11:00 am – 11:45 am (Session 3)

12:00 am – 12:45 pm (Session 4)

13:00 pm -13:55 pm (Lunch)

14:00 pm – 14:45 pm (Session 5)

15:00 pm – 15:45 pm (Session 6 & Summary)

Practical Compilation of Business Outputs And Sales Costs Homework

Daily Lesson 5: Module 4.

Written Report-back by SMME
Written Revision Test in Class

9:00 am – 9:45 am (Session 1)

10:00 am - 10:45 am (Session 2)

11:00 am – 11:45 am (Session 3)

12:00 am – 12:45 pm (Session 4)

13:00 pm -13:55 pm (Lunch)

14:00 pm – 14:45 pm (Session 5)

15:00 pm – 15:45 pm (Session 6 & Total Summary)

Practical Measurements of SMME Single factor Productivity (SFP)i.e. (Material, Labour, Machine & Money Productivity)

Practical Measurements of SMME Total Factor Productivity (TFP)i.e. (Efficiency, Wastage, Utilization, Absenteeism, Labour Turnover)

Figure 1: Structure of Current PCBP Training

SMME Post-Training Mentoring.

A. Commitment Session 1.

Ongoing mentoring at the small business' site lasts for approximately 3 months after the contact training. At the end of the five day training, SMME learners undertake practical work covering the application of the productivity measuring techniques learnt. They are requested to identify a productivity-related problem in their own small, medium or micro enterprise (SMME) and are expected to implement the initial productivity improvement projects based on their measurements during and after training.

Productivity improvement projects are thus a practical application of the theory gained during classroom contact with the facilitator. This is done by applying the official productivity measurement formulae to practically reduce wastage, staff absenteeism and labour turnover as well as to maximize and improve efficiency and resource utilisation.

On the first week after the training, the SMME learner is expected to identify and define the practical productivity problem; calculate the size of the productivity problem in financial terms); calculate the cost of the productivity problem in financial terms); list the effects of the productivity problem; list the causes of the above-mentioned productivity problem; plan a detailed action intervention plan to maximise productivity in the SMME and counter the productivity problem identified and to state the expected results of the productivity intervention plan.

During the second week after contract training has taken place, a verification site visit to the small enterprise premises is conducted by the ETD service provider and the NPI Consultant to prepare the SMME learner for the commitment session. On the third week after the training, the SMME learner attends an initial commitment session in a centralised venue along with other peers where he/ she reports, with the usage of a laptop, overhead projector and Power Point software, in terms of the following:-

- The practical productivity problem encountered in the small enterprise
- Calculation of the size of the problem to the enterprise (in money terms)
- Calculation of the cost of the problem to the enterprise (in money terms)
- The effects of the productivity problem to the small enterprise
- List the causes of the above-mentioned productivity problem
- The action intervention plan to counter the productivity problem and maximise productivity in the enterprise
- The actual results of the productivity intervention plan in terms of the official productivity measurement formulae

At the end of the commitment session, the learning cycle is repeated again with the learner expected to identify another productivity improvement project and a new date is set for the second Commitment Session.

B. <u>Commitment Session 2.</u>

On the first week after the initial commitment session, the SMME learner is encouraged to continue making productivity measurements in resolving a second productivity-related problem.

The learner is again encouraged to identify and define the second productivity problem in the enterprise; calculate the size of the productivity problem in money terms; calculate the cost of the productivity problem in money terms; list the effects of the productivity problem; list the causes of the above-mentioned productivity problem; plan a detailed action intervention plan to maximise productivity in the SMME and to counter the second productivity problem as well as state the expected results of the productivity intervention plan.

A verification site visit to the small enterprise is conducted by the ETD service provider or the NPI Consultant to prepare the SMME learner for the second commitment session. After conducting continual measurements of the second productivity-related problem in the small enterprise for a period of two weeks, the SMME learner again attends a second commitment session on the third week in a centralised venue along with other peers where he/ she reports, with the usage of a laptop, overhead projector and Power Point software, in terms of:-

- The practical productivity problem encountered in the small enterprise
- Calculation of the size of the productivity problem to the enterprise in money terms.
- Calculation of the cost of the productivity problem to the enterprise in money terms.
- The effects of the productivity problem to the small enterprise
- List the causes of the above-mentioned productivity problem
- The action intervention plan to counter the productivity problem and maximise productivity in the enterprise
- The actual results of the productivity intervention plan in terms of the official productivity measurement formulae

At the end of the second commitment session, the cycle is repeated again with the learner expected to identify a third productivity improvement problem within his /her small enterprise. A new date is also set for the third commitment session.

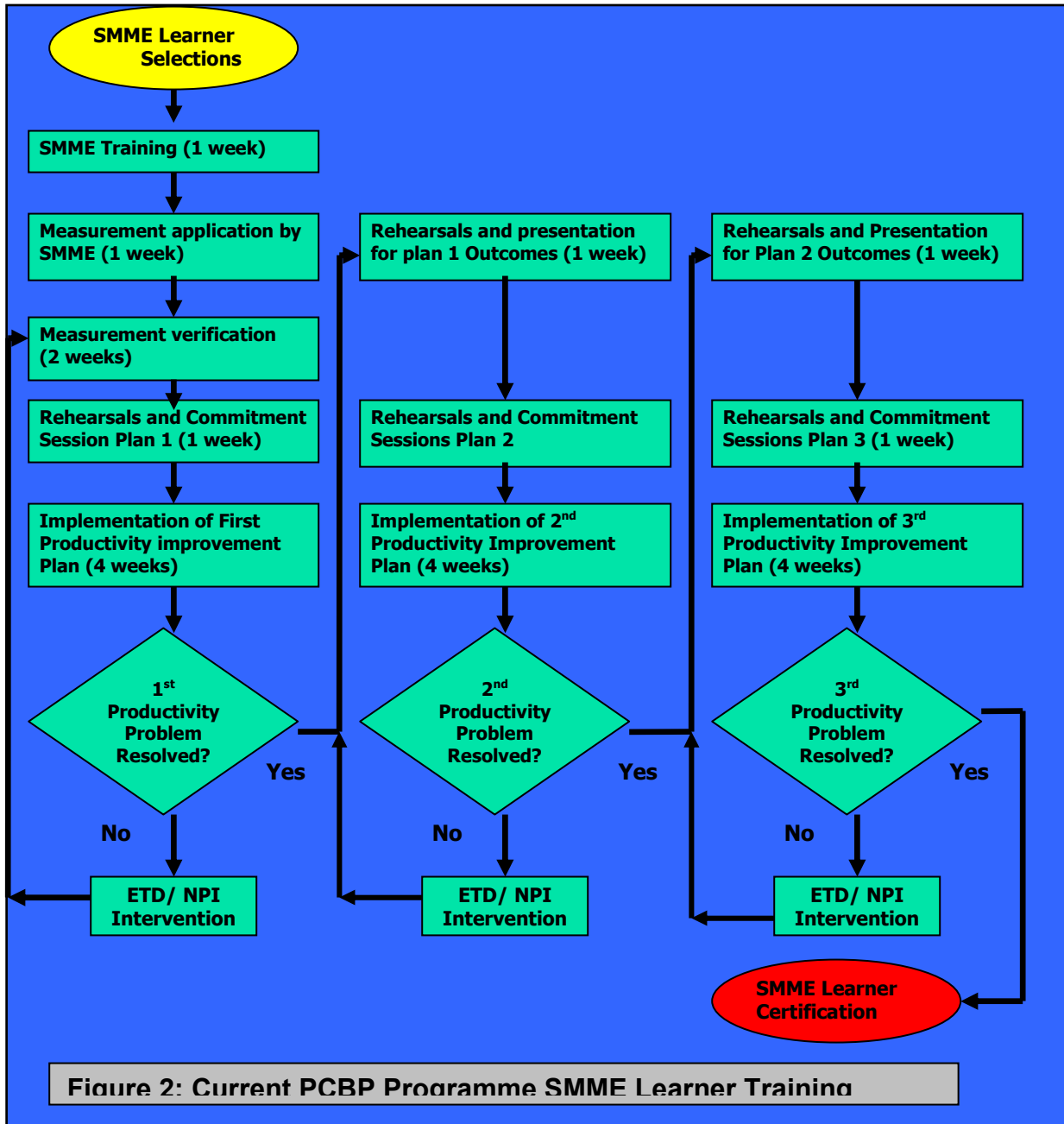**C. <u>Commitment Session 3 and Certification</u>**

On the first week after the second commitment session, the SMME learner is again encouraged to continue making productivity measurements in resolving a third and final productivity-related problem which is different from the previous productivity problems already resolved and reported on. The learner is again encouraged to identify and define the third final productivity problem in the enterprise; calculate the size of the productivity problem in money terms; calculate the cost of the productivity problem in money terms; list the effects of the productivity problem; list the causes of the above-mentioned productivity problem; plan an action intervention plan to maximise productivity in the SMME as well as state the expected results of the third productivity intervention plan.

This time, no verification site visit to the small enterprise is conducted as the learner is already familiar with self-preparations for the final commitment session. After conducting continual measurements of the third productivity-related problem in the small enterprise for a period of two weeks, the SMME learner attends a third final second Commitment Session on the third week in a centralised venue along with other peers where he/ she reports, with the usage of a laptop, overhead projector and Power Point software, in terms of:-

- The third practical productivity problem encountered in the small enterprise.
- Calculation of the size of the productivity problem to the enterprise in money terms.
- Calculation of the cost of the productivity problem to the enterprise in money terms.
- The effects of the productivity problem to the small enterprise.
- The listed causes of the above-mentioned productivity problem.
- The action intervention plan to counter the productivity problem and maximise productivity in the enterprise.
- The actual results of the productivity intervention plan in terms of the official productivity measurement formulae.

At the end of the third Commitment Session, learners are invited to a certification ceremony which takes place one week later at the same training venue. During the formal certification ceremony certificates containing the accredited unit standards are awarded to successful learners.

After the certification process, competent SMME learners are introduced to other new functional training courses offered by the Small Enterprises Development Agency (SEDA) that could further assist their businesses to grow further. A flowchart of the current PCBP training process is depicted below.

Figure 2: Current PCBP Programme SMME Learner Training

Criteria for Selection of PCBP Training Venues.

Each training venue that is utilized to conduct selections and training of SMME learners is selected based on the capacity to seat at least fifteen (x15) to twenty (x20) delegates comfortably and should ideally be thirty six square meters' large ($36m^2$); have accessible electrical plugs to connect electrical appliances like the overhead projector and laptop computer.

Also, the training venue should have adequate acoustics to avoid noise pollution from outside the venue; the training venue should have a flip chart stand and paper as well as two (x2) flip chart pens for two (x2) different colors; fifteen (x15) tables to accommodate fifteen seated learners and one table to accommodate one digital projector and laptop computer for the trainer; there should be adequate air-conditioning or open windows to allow fresh air in.

Education Training and Development (ETD) Service Provider Selection.

ETD Service Provider Selection Criteria

The criteria utilized for the selection of ETD Service Providers is that the potential ETD service provider/ facilitator should possess a university degree or equivalent qualification in the academic fields of Economics, Human Resource Management or Business Management.

Also, the ETD service provider needs to possess relevant exposure to education, training and development practices. The ETD service provider needs to have mathematical/ arithmetical proficiency at Matric/ Grade 12 (NQF 4) or equivalent level and have proficiency in English at Matric/ Grade 12 (NQF 4) level as well as some industrial or commercial experience in terms of practical work experience.

The ETD service provider needs to have reliable sober habits and should be mature and have the ability to work under pressure; be computer literate; ideally have prior involvement in community and related work as a social activist and should also have mastery of a local dominant African language.

ETD Service Provider Selection Process

During ETD selections, prospective ETD service providers are initially subjected to a verification exercise wherein they present their curriculum vitae for analysis in terms of the above-mentioned criteria. During selection, potential ETD service providers congregate in a localized training venue and are subjected to a rigorous three-hour selection process that includes filling in a general application form, psychometric assessment, economic and training-related knowledge assessment and an arithmetic proficiency assessment using a calculator.

The total selection process lasts averagely for three hours per trainee for a minimum amount of fifteen (x15) potential ETD service provider trainees. If a localized training venue can accommodate more than fifteen (x15) potential ETD service provider trainees, then up to twenty (x20) potential service provider trainees are sometimes subjected to the selection process simultaneously.

The objective behind the usage of the psychometric assessment is to gauge the trainees' personality profile, how he/she reacts under pressure, work ethic, interpersonal skills, attitude, and motivation. The general application form is to capture the service provider trainees' personal and business details as well as to gauge written usage of language.

The economics and education, training and development (ETD) knowledge assessment test is utilized to gauge and confirm the service provider trainees' familiarity with economic concepts, entrepreneurship and basic business functions as well as written literacy skills and reasoning abilities. The arithmetic assessment is utilized to gauge the numeracy skills of the potential service provider trainees, their ability to use a calculator as well as their ability to apply basic common-sense and multiplication, subtraction, division and addition to arithmetical problems.

Selection onto the programme takes place on the basis of the results of the arithmetic proficiency test, psychometric assessment and economic and training-related knowledge assessment. A pass mark of 50% is generally considered as the minimum pass mark for candidate ETD service providers.

Three days after ETD service provider selections have been conducted, selections are marked by the NPI Consultant and relayed to the ETD service provider telephonically to prepare them for the ETD service provider training.

ETD Service Provider Training

The training programme for ETD service providers lasts for seven (x7) days at a confined exclusive training venue in the form of a conference centre where there will be minimal disruptions to the training schedule. The total number of ETD service provider trainees fluctuates from two to eight in one training venue.

The ETD service provider training programme is very advanced and consists of ten daily sessions each lasting one day from 9:00 am in the mornings to 20:50 pm in the afternoon. This is because the trainer allows each of the trainees to demonstrate a module after making an initial demonstration to the ETD learners. The daily training programme commences at 9:00 am - 20:50 pm daily. Each daily lesson consists of ten individual 45 minute sessions with fifteen minute (15 min) breaks in between.

Each of the four modules forming part of the training programme is demonstrated by the facilitator initially and each of the ETD service provider trainees is given an opportunity to also demonstrate to the other trainees. At the beginning of each lesson, the preceding lesson summary is repeated before commencement with the new lesson. At the end of each lesson, the current lesson is summarized in addition to the summarised lesson from the preceding lesson held on the previous day.

During training ETD service provider trainees are advised to ask questions and to comment on any aspect of the training at any time. Training is complemented by the usage of Power Point slides, graphics, case studies, examples and an overhead projector.

During their training demonstration presentations, ETD service providers are rated by the facilitator on their administering of the knowledge tests in the beginning of the module; their knowledge of economic concepts; their knowledge of what applies in their own organizations; the correct labeling and definition of learning concepts; their phrasing of questions; their handling of answers from SMME learners /trainees; their handling of questions from SMME learners/ trainees; their usage of appropriate examples; their appropriate usage of the overhead projector; the order, smooth flow and pace of presentation; listening to and reinforcing SMME learners /trainees; body posture,

gestures, facial expression, eye contact; their verbal fluency and pace of speech; voice tone; management of the learning environment; how session or lessons are ended; the overall impression created on SMME learners.

Training Techniques Used on the PCBP Programme

Beginning the Lesson or Session

The ETD service provider trainee is assessed in terms of his/ her ability to correctly introduce a lesson or session. A lesson refers to all sessions conducted on one day whilst a session refers to a specific part of a lesson.

Knowledge of the PCBP Programme

The ETD service provider trainee is assessed in terms of his/ her ability to correctly include all the information that is in the training manual.

Knowledge of what applies in Trainee's Businesses

The ETD service provider trainee is assessed in terms of his/ her ability to isolate from general information that which is specific to the trainee's business organisation. In order to be able to gather as much information as possible about the individual SMME learners to be trained, ETD service provider trainees source information from the learners' application form that was filled in during the SMME learner selections.

Correct Labeling and Definition of Concepts

The ETD service provider trainee is assessed in terms of his/ her ability to both correctly label and define the concepts under discussion. The correct labelling of concepts refers to the ETD service provider trainee's ability to apply the correct name to a concept when discussing various economic indicators. The correct defining of concepts refers to the ETD service provider trainee's ability to make trainees fully aware of the concept he/she is discussing.

Phrasing of Questions

The ETD service provider trainee is assessed in terms of his/ her ability to phrase questions in such a manner that questions are both relevant and understandable. Questions are phrased by the ETD service provider in such a manner that the answers they elicit from the SMME learners are relevant to the concept being discussed.

Questions asked by the ETD service providers are phrased in such a manner that the SMME learners can easily understand them. The words used should already have been explained and the questions are structured in such a way that no confusion arises in the minds of trainees. In addition, questions are not phrased in a long-winded manner and do elicit only one answer at a time from an SMME learner**.**

Handling of Answers from Trainees/ Learners

A. When Trainees are Able to Provide an Answer

When trainees are able to answer a question, the trainer/facilitator acknowledges the learner /trainee for his/her contribution; the facilitator/ trainer repeats the learner's answer; the facilitator asks the rest of the group if they agree and understand the answer already provided; the facilitator reinforces the learner /trainee for providing the correct answer by thanking him/her; the facilitator summarizes or places the question and answer into perspective for the benefit of the learners.

B. When Trainees are Unable to Answer or Provide an Incorrect Answer

When trainees are unable to answer a question or provide an incorrect answer, the trainer/facilitator rephrases the question or uses additional questions in order to enable trainees/learners to work out the answer to the original question; introduces an example that will assist trainees/learners to work out the answer to the question; uses pictures to illustrate a situation that will assist trainees to work out the answer to the question.

As a final resort after exhausting the above-mentioned options, provides trainees with the answer to the question. At all costs, the facilitator avoids giving learners the impression that he/she regards them as foolish or is angry with them.

Handling of Questions from Trainees/ Learners

A. When the Trainer/ Facilitator is Able to Provide an Answer

When the trainer/ facilitator is able to answer a question from the learner/trainee, the facilitator acknowledges the trainee/ learner for asking the question; the facilitator assesses the relevance of the learner's question.

If a learner's question is directly irrelevant to the training, the trainer responds to the learner that the training programme only covers certain aspects and that time does not permit a full discussion of the point raised by the trainee. The facilitator however, states that arrangements will be made for the issue to be discussed with either himself or someone else at another time after the training.

If a learner's question is directly relevant to the training, the trainer repeats the learners' question as if the question is asked by the trainer/facilitator himself/herself and poses the question to all the learners. If a learner's question relates to content that has already been covered, the facilitator refers the learner back to the previous section in the training manual and questions other trainees for assistance with the correct answer.

If, on the other hand, the learner's question relates to content that will be discussed in a future training session, the trainer states the learner's question will be addressed in a future session. When the training content is ultimately covered later, the facilitator/ trainer reminds learners that the question was asked earlier in the training. The trainer also asks the learner who posed the question initially whether he/she is satisfied with the answer provided.

B. When the Trainer/ Facilitator is Unable to Provide an Answer

When the trainer/ facilitator is unable to answer a question from the SMME learner, the facilitator acknowledges the learner for asking the question; the facilitator openly admits to the learner/ trainees that he/she is unsure of the answer; the trainer refers the difficult question to the rest of the learners present.

If a learner is able to answer the difficult question, the trainer checks on the correctness of the answer provided with a knowledgeable third party and corrects the answer provided at the next available opportunity if the answer provided proved to be incorrect.

If neither the facilitator nor the learners/ trainees are able to answer, the facilitator trainer stresses that he will endeavour to discover the answer and relays the answer back to the learners at the next available opportunity. Once the facilitator/ trainer discovers the correct answer to a learner's question, the answer is relayed back by the facilitator to learners as soon as possible.

Usage of Appropriate Examples by the Facilitator/ Trainer

The appropriate usage of examples refers to the facilitator's ability to use an example that readily illustrates the concept that he/she he is attempting to convey. The extent to which an example is understood by learners /trainees depends on how the facilitator uses the example.

Examples used in training should involve elements that are familiar to learners, be simple, neutral and should be trimmed of extra detail to make them readily understandable by learners. Immediately following the usage of an example by the facilitator, the example is related to the relevant PCBP concept that the facilitator endeavors to illustrate to learners.

Usage of the Learning Aids

Usage of the learning aids refers to the facilitator's ability to make maximum usage of the overhead projector and slides/ transparencies by positioning the overhead projector and slides/ transparencies correctly, questioning learners and conducting discussions around the pictures, revealing labels and pointing appropriately so that even illiterate learners benefit from learning aids.

Positioning of the Overhead Projector and Laptop Screen.

The overhead projector and laptop screen are projected for optimal working conditions by the facilitator and maximum viewing by the learners. In this regard, the laptop screen is positioned in such a manner that it is not obstructed from view and is comfortable to view so as to avoid visual distortions.

The overhead projector is positioned in such a manner that it does not obstruct the view of the trainees. The focus of the overhead projector is adjusted so that the writing and drawing of a projected picture is of a size and definition that is clearly readable to learners, even at the furthest distance.

In the case of the usage of manual old transparencies as learning aids, the positioning of the transparency film on the work stage is such that it is not set askew. A mounting frame can be fitted onto the transparency and care is taken that the films are not placed upside down by the facilitator.

Questioning learners and conducting discussions around the screened picture encourages learners to participate in the learning process. Another important aspect of the above-mentioned training technique is that the screened picture is always associated by learners with the concept it seeks to illustrate. The facilitator thus avoids explaining what the picture illustrates but questions learners and involves them in discussions around the picture until learners are able to define the concept under consideration.

The facilitator summarizes by highlighting the key elements of the concept and associates those with the features of the screened picture. The facilitator ensures that the concept has been grasped by questioning learners before proceeding to the next picture.

Revealing labels and pointing appropriately refers to the facilitator concealing labels whilst discussing a concept illustrated in a picture and only revealing the label after the concept has been internalized and understood by learners. Where more than one label is used, one label is revealed at a time by the facilitator. In announcing the label, the pointer is moved below the syllables or parts of the words being pronounced. If the literacy level of the learners is very low, the facilitator announces and points at the label repeatedly and allows the learners to pronounce the label in turn until such time that the facilitator accepts that learners associate the shape of the word to the label.

To maintain interest and attention, the facilitator makes optional use of the on-off switch of the overhead projector. The projector is switched on to draw learners' attention to the picture displayed and switched off to draw learners' attention back to the facilitator.

It is also vital that the facilitator switch the overhead projector off when not displaying any image. Leaving the projector on without a transparency not only causes a negative effect on learners' vision, but also wipes off the picture that the facilitator has screened from learners' minds.

The facilitator also ensures that no portion of his or her body is shown on the screen.

Order, Smooth Flow and Pace of Presentation

The order of presentation is the facilitator's ability to present the training concepts in the order in which they are outlined in the PCBP training manual. The smooth flow of presentation is the facilitator's ability to link the discussions of various concepts together such that the entire presentation flows logically.

The pace of presentation is the facilitator's ability to present concepts in order that learners have sufficient time to absorb them. The facilitator ensures, through questioning that learners have understood a concept before the next concept is discussed.

If the pace of training is too fast, concepts may not be absorbed by learners. On the other hand, if the facilitator's training pace is too slow, learners may become bored.

Listening to and Reinforcing Learners

Listening to learners implies that the facilitator pays adequate attention when learners are conversing. This ensures that the facilitator can correct learners' misconceptions and also acts as reinforcement for the learners' continued participation. Positive reinforcement of learners encourages them and leaves them feeling good about their participation in the training. The facilitator's ability with regards to the above-mentioned can be assessed in terms of his/ her interrelationship with learners via his/her verbal responses, body posture, gestures, facial expressions and eye contact.

Aspects Relating to the Facilitator's Self-Management

A. Body Posture

The posture or positioning of the facilitator's body whilst training is utilized to create a positive impression on learners in order to facilitate learning retention. It is important that the facilitator keeps his/ her arms open and away from the body or from the hips in order to avoid creating a barrier between himself/ herself and the learners.

The facilitator's body needs to face forward towards learners; the facilitator leans forward toward learners to bring them without coming too close and making learners feel uncomfortable by infringing on learner's private space. Also, the facilitator avoids talking whilst facing the pictures on the screen.

B. Gestures

Gestures refer to the manner in which a facilitator uses the five projections of his/her body in the form of the two arms, two legs and the head. The facilitator's use of gestures enhances and emphasizes the verbal aspects of the training.

C. Facial Expressions

The expression on the facilitator's face whilst presenting training affects how the facilitator relates to learners. Facial expressions are utilized by the facilitator to enhance training. Facial expressions are also particularly important when reinforcing learners for their participation during the training.

If a facilitator's face indicates surprise or anger when a learner provides an incorrect answer to a question, this would probably discourage future learner participation. A friendly, smiling face will generally encourage learners to participate.

D. <u>Eye Contact</u>

ETD service providers are also evaluated on their ability to make contact with learners and draw learners into the training content through the correct use of their eyes. By looking directly at a learner, the facilitator makes the learner know that he/ she is invited to participate in the training. Eye contact is however utilized by the facilitator in a discerning manner to avoid penetrating unbroken stares which makes learners feel uncomfortable.

E. <u>Verbal Fluency</u>

Verbal fluency indicates the extent to which the facilitator's speech is without flaws and sufficiently clear so that all trainees can hear clearly. Since some learners may have hereditary-disease or industrial noise induced-hearing defects, it is crucial that the facilitator's speech be clear at all times.

F. <u>Pace of Speech</u>

Pace of speech refers to the extent to which the facilitator's speed of speech allows information to come across clearly to learners. A facilitator who speaks too fast makes learner comprehension difficult. At the same time, a facilitator who speaks too slow becomes boring to learners. It is crucial that the facilitator speaks with appropriate pauses to assist in emphasizing key concepts during training.

G. <u>Voice Tone</u>

The volume of the facilitator's voice whilst presenting the training should be sufficiently loud so all learners can hear clearly. For emphasis and to gain attention, the facilitator's voice can is raised or lowered accordingly. When discussing favourable business conditions with learners, the facilitator's voice is raised to raise emphasis on the concept under discussion.

When discussing unfavorable business conditions, for instance a loss situation, the facilitator's voice is accordingly lowered to indicate the gravity of the situation under discussion.

<u>Management of the Learning Environment</u>

Management of the learning environment indicates the facilitator's ability to control or manage the training sessions in terms of his/her own reactions, those of learners, the learning environment and time. The facilitator controls his/ her own reactions in order to ensure the success of training and avoids revealing his/ her own likes and dislikes, family problems, personality clashes, anger, fears, disappointments to learners. The facilitator exercises control when challenged by learners and does not allow himself/ herself to be provoked or intimidated by learners.

If learners give long-winded answers or wish to discuss matters unrelated to the training, the facilitator counters this and steers discussions back to the actual course content. The facilitator openly makes it clear to learners that he/ she controls what is or not covered during the training. The facilitator however does the above-mentioned in a discerning manner in order to avoid alienating learners and causing an adversarial relationship to develop. The facilitator also controls the physical facilities of the place where training is conducted. This involves matters such as controlling learner seating arrangements, lighting, ashtrays, handouts, audio-visual equipment lay-out as well.

Control of the time taken for training is also a responsibility of the facilitator for whilst the pace of training is determined by learners rather than the facilitator, the facilitator minimizes the time taken up by irrelevancies, long-winded answers, interruptions, outsiders and so forth during training sessions. The facilitator also manages time better by making prior arrangements and insisting that all learners arrive on time and avoid coming back late following breaks during training sessions.

Ending a Training Session and Handling Summaries

When ending a particular training session and providing a summary of the ending training session, the facilitator asks for questions from learners and addresses each question individually; the facilitator summarizes the training session at a suitable pace. The facilitator also conducts the summaries through a mixture of questioning and/ or telling learners and only summarizes the main points of the training content. After summarizing the main point of the training content, the facilitator once more asks for questions from learners and addresses each question individually.

When a module ends, the facilitator conducts a post-training test. On completion of a post-training test, the facilitator discusses the answers with learners. The facilitator allows learners to rub off their original incorrect answers in the process. Before breaks, learners are informed of the length of a break or the starting time of the next training session.

Overall Impression Created

Prospective ETD service providers and facilitators are also evaluated on the general impression that has been created by the training to learners. This refers to matters such as the beginning of the session, knowledge, questions and answers, examples given, overhead projector presentation style, control of session, handling of summaries and how a session is ended by the facilitator.

2. 5 <u>Literature Review.</u>

<u>Overview of Learning Theories</u>

A. <u>Pedagogy versus Andragogy</u>

In an effort to analyze the nature of the Productive Capacity Building Programme within the domain of current learning theoretical discourse, it is vital to explore the fundamental differences between pedagogical learning and andragogics.

Biao (2005: 8) defines pedagogics as the art of leading the youth through teaching. According to Biao, pedagogy is based on the assumption that education and training is a formal activity; that education and training can only take place successfully within fairly rigid safeguards such as a school environment, educational curriculum and defined time-table amongst others. Pedagogical learning theories promote the idea that the teacher retains all of the knowledge that is to be dispensed within the boundaries of the learning environment and that the teacher retains the right to exercise the necessary authority within the learning environment.

Since pedagogical learning theories were initially aimed at the young immature learner, they arrogate some amount of intimidatory and monitoring roles to the teacher even outside the school environment. Pedagogical learning theories are couched on the assumption that a learner needs to become a *tabula rasa*[2] that needs to be unlearned before proper learning can take place. Paulo Freire (2001: 67) referred to the above-mentioned pedagogical phenomenon as the "banking model" where learning is assumed to be about depositing information into the minds of passive learners. Pedagogical learning theories retain some authoritarian learning outlooks best suited for the post early-childhood development learning situations.

Some pedagogical learning theories are influenced by Ivan Pavlov's Classical Conditioning learning theory. It postulates that with the proper negative or positive association, behavioral patterns of learners can be altered. Classical Conditioning is normally used in propaganda learning by repeating the same concepts repeatedly in a positive or negative light in order to condition the learning responses of the listening learners.

BF Skinner's Behavioralism Learning theory is closely associated with classical conditioning. It revolves around the belief that learning is a response to the external environment of the learner. The central idea is that the learner's behavior is determined by the consequences that follow a learner's response to an external stimulus.

Although andragogical learning theories only developed fairly recently, they have drastically changed the understanding and learning approaches adopted by education and training practitioners interacting with adult learners. The andragogical model as conceived by Malcolm Knowles is based on four basic assumptions about learners, all of which have drastic reflections about a learner's ability, needs, and desire to take responsibility for learning.

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[2] Empty slate

According to Knowles (1980: 44 -45) adult learners have a self-concept of independency and self-directedness as opposed to dependency. Adult learners accumulate a reservoir of experiences that can be used as a basis on which to build learning. Adult learners are always ready to learn due to the developmental tasks of their social roles. Adult learners have a need to immediately apply learning in the practical working world in order to improve their individual performance.

Up until very recently, with the introduction of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the Skills Development Act of 1998, the pedagogical model of learning has been applied equally to the teaching of children and adults alike. The fundamental differences between pedagogy and andragogy or adult learning is that as adults mature, they become increasingly independent and responsible for their own actions.

Adult learners are often motivated to learn by a sincere desire to solve immediate problems in their lives. Additionally, they have an increasing need to become self-directing in order to take control of their own lives. In many ways pedagogical learning theories are unable to account for developmental changes on the part of adult learners and instead produced tension, resentment and resistance to learning in individuals.

Theories of Adult Learning

Through his extensive research studies, Malcolm Knowles unearthed particular reasons why adult learners increasingly rely on self-directed learning. One reason discovered from Knowles research is the view that adult learners who take the initiative in educational activities seem to learn more and learn things better than passive learners. The second reason discovered by Knowles is that self-directed learning appears "more in tune with our (adult learners) natural process of psychological development" (1975: 14). Knowles observed that an essential component of the adult learner maturation process is the development of an ability to take increasing responsibility for life.

The third reason discovered by Knowles through his research is the observation that the various evolving education and training interventions in the form of nontraditional training programmes, satellite learning, correspondence and electronic learning globally requires adult learners to assume a heavy responsibility and initiative for their own learning.

Ference and Vockell (1994:25) further add onto Knowles' original theory and discuss the following adult learning characteristics:

- "Active learner: Adult learners are usually willing to participate in the learning process. Given the opportunity and the proper incentives, they often prefer to be active rather than passive learners.
- Experience based: Adult learners bring a wide variety of prior educational and life experiences to a new learning situation.
- Expertise: Adult learners are capable of being more self-reliant. Adult learners operating as independent individuals tend to want to accomplish things for themselves. They are often inclined to draw and rely on their own personal experience and knowledge to seek answers to questions and to solve problems.
- Hands-on Approach: Adult learners are typically faced with important matters in everyday life. As a result, adult learners tends to focus attention on real-world situations.

- Task-Centredness: Adult learners are typically more active in performing tasks directed toward reaching a goal or solving a problem.
- Problem-Centredness: Adult learners are more focused on dealing with problems they encounter in their particular life situation.
- Solutions-driven: Adult learners operate in the real world, focus on real-life problems and often actively seek out solutions to their problems.
- Value-driven: Adult learners *need to know* why they should learn something before undertaking to learn it. Given the rationale for learning something, they will often invest considerable energy in investigating the increased benefits gained from the learning experience and the consequences of not learning it.
- Skill-seeking: Adult learners often actively seek out the attainment of new and improved skills in order to better meet and solve real-life problems.
- Self-direction: Adult learners usually perceive themselves to be independent and responsible for their own actions and have a deed to be directly involved in planning and directing their learning activities.
- External Motivation: Adult learners are often externally motivated by such factors as better jobs, increased promotional opportunities, and higher salaries.
- Internal Motivation: Adult learners are often internally motivated by such factors as self-esteem, recognition, confidence, career satisfaction, and the overall quality of life".

Upon a closer look at the nature and instructional techniques of the Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP), it becomes clear that the PCBP programme is couched within the domain of andragogical or adult learning since PCBP training is primarily aimed at responsible self-directive adult learners and the instructional techniques used by facilitators are more participative than directive.

Since the delineation of pedagogy and andragogy, various divergent school of thought have since developed within the terrain of adult learning.

The Objectivist External Approach

Behaviorist Mastery Learning Theory

The Objectivist approach assumes an existing reality outside the adult learner and advocates behavioural mastery learning as a method to train the adult learner towards getting to know that external reality.

Behaviourist mastery learning is based on the objectivist principle that knowledge exists outside the adult learner and that is the task of the trainer/ facilitator to train the learner until the learner's comprehension of the realistic knowledge is similar to the actual realistic knowledge itself.

Adult learners are gradually allowed to progress through training to more complex content after successfully grasping key concepts beforehand. Behaviorist mastery learning utilizes gradually paced training underpinned by continuous Skinnerian stimulus-response learning with an element of learning reinforcement. Knowledge is internalized by the adult learner and memorized through the application of repeated practice. Through the above-mentioned method, knowledge acquisition by the adult learner is quicker but application of internalized knowledge to other situations is limited.

The Constructivist Internal Approach

Social Learning Theory

The Social learning theory is an offshoot of the constructivist subjectivist school of thought. It emphasizes the importance of observation and modeling the behaviors and attitudes of others and advocates that retention of learning is more efficient when adult learners are encouraged to model the desired functional behaviors of others and by being exposed to situations which allow them to practice the desired behaviour.

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory views learners as active participants in learning. The Social Learning theory suggests that there is a continuous interaction between a learner's internal state and the social reinforcements that follow from the learner's behavior with others.

According to Littlejohn (1983: 147) Albert Bandura's Social Learning theory is underpinned by the following principles.

- People establish goals that entail rewards or positive consequences if achieved.
- People choose to behave in ways that have the potential for achieving the goals
- People interpret the consequences of behavior as rewards or punishment.
- Choices are affected by the perceived successes and failures of the past, as well as by anticipated consequences in the future. In other words, behavior is shaped by interaction between external conditions and internal cognitive processes.

Through a learner's observations, experiences and self-regulation, a learner learns how to behave in social interactions. When learners observe that certain behavior leads to social rejection, they learn to stop the behavior. In turn, if learners observe that certain behavior leads to social acceptance, they learn to continue and build on such behavior.

Cognitive Constructivist Learning Theory

The Cognitive Constructivist learning theory on the other hand asserts that learning is an active process in which adult learners construct new ideas based upon their current knowledge. In order to learn more efficiently, adult learners need to build upon what they already know and go beyond the training information they have been allocated with in order to be able to discover the key principles by themselves.

In contrast with behavioural learning theories, cognitive learning assumes that knowledge is a constructed rather than a learned human response that is acquired through active cognitive (mental) processing, affective (emotional) and psychological interpretation by the adult learner.

(i) Cognitive Constructivist Learning Assumptions

The cognitive constructivist learning theory is based on the assumptions that learning is constructed based on the foundational experience of the learner and that interpretation of learning differs from learner to learner. Individual learners gain different interpretations of the same learning material based on their own previous knowledge and experience

and that learning is an active process through which a learner's experience is converted into his /her personal knowledge and skills set.

Cognitive constructivism learning assumes that effective learning is enhanced by the presence of multiple viewpoints and that any assessment of learners should be done based on the functional task at hand.

Cognitive constructivist learning theorists like Hannafin and Peck (1988:48) stress the importance of the learners' existing knowledge base and assert that "learning may be more efficient when the instruction is adapted to the needs and profiles of individual learners."

It is generally accepted within the ranks of cognitive constructivists that the mind of a learner is a parallel information processor that is able to handle multiple stimuli from the external environment. It is also accepted that emotions do play an important role in the retention of learning in the sense that feelings within the learner of acceptance of a daunting academic challenge improves learning retention fear and dislikes reduces learning retention within adult learners.

The learning objectives can thus be categorized into knowledge (cognitive), attitudes (affective) and skills (psychomotor) respectively according to Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) and Kemp (1985). Tables 2, 3 and 4 illustrate the concepts accordingly.

Level	Verbs
Knowledge	Name, arrange, label, list, match, memorize, repeat, recognize, recall, order, relate
Comprehension	Classify, report, discuss, describe, identify, indicate, explain, translate, sort, select
Application	Apply choose, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, operate, solve, sketch,
Analysis	Analyze, appraise, contrast, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment
Synthesis	Arrange, assemble, collect, construct, compose, create, design, formulate, write
Evaluation	Judge, argue, rate, assess, attack, choose, compare, estimate, judge, predict

Table 1: Bloom's Taxonomy – The Cognitive (Mental) Domain

Level	Verbs
Receiving	Listen to, perceive, be alert to, show tolerance of
Responding	Reply, answer, follow along, approve, obey
Valuing	Attain, assume, support, participate, continue
Organization	Organize, select, judge, decide, identify with
Characterization	Believe, practice, continue to, carry out

Table 2: The Affective (Emotional) Domain - Kemp (1985)

Level	Verbs
Reflexes	Stiffen, extend, flex, stretch
Fundamental movements	Crawl, walk, run, reach
Perception	Turn, bend balance catch
Physical abilities	Move heavy objects, make quick movements, stop and restart movement
Skilled movement	Play an instrument, use a hand tool
Non-discursive	Dancing, changes in expression

Table 3: The Psychomotor (Skills) Domain - Kemp (1985)

Although adult learning is a relatively new as field of study as compared to traditional education, several studies have been conducted into the causes of adult learner dropout in distance education programmes, literacy and e-learning programmes.

Based on the above-mentioned analysis of contemporary adult learning theories, it becomes clear that each of the various theories have important concepts that need to be included within any current training programmes in order to guarantee maximum training impact on learners.

In analyzing the nature PCBP programme, all important aspects of the various adult learning approaches have to be considered.

Studies on the Causes of Learner Dropout in Training

The underlying reasons why adult learners decide to enroll into a training programme and then choose to either continue or drop out are multiple, complex and interlinked. There are also many factors facing adult learners within a learning situation that have an influence on whether adult learners drop out of a learning programme or not.

Other research from a wide variety of sources have identified factors such as low self-esteem, a lack of self-confidence, real or perceived lack of progress, insufficient opportunities to achieve success, learning or learning materials not considered relevant to the learner's needs, previous negative learning experiences and a negative perception of the value of education.

It is critical that training and development practitioners become aware of the barriers faced by adult learners in order to know what it is that could assist in supporting and motivating adult learners to stay and complete training programmes.

Research study by Roussy and Hart (2002)

Roussy and Hart (2002)[3] conducted a study on behalf of the Ontario Literacy Coalition involving ninety two (x92) adult learners in Canada. The research found that adult learners had many different reasons for leaving their literacy training programme. In their varied responses, learners spoke of busy schedules at work or home that conflicted with their ability to attend training. Other learners cited money or health problems or lacked the confidence to continue with training.

In general, the Roussy and Hart's (2002) research report found that adult learners stopped attending training because something else in their everyday lives was more important than attending training at that time. The above-mentioned research results found that learners who dropped out of their training programmes gave the following reasons for doing so in order of percentages:-
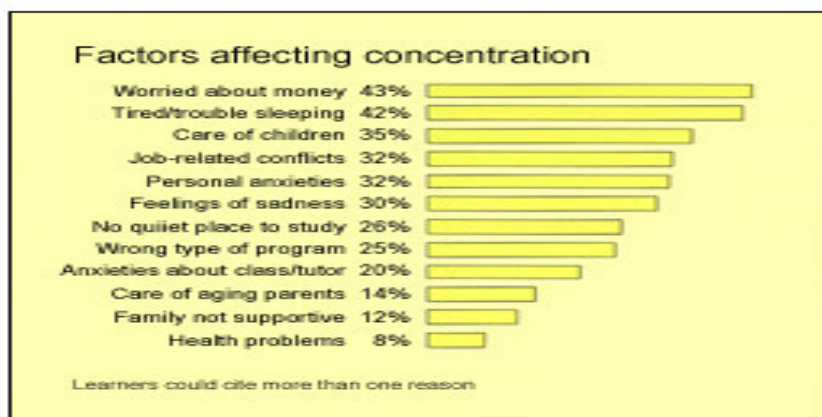

Factors affecting concentration	
Worried about money	43%
Tired/trouble sleeping	42%
Care of children	35%
Job-related conflicts	32%
Personal anxieties	32%
Feelings of sadness	30%
No quiiet place to study	26%
Wrong type of program	25%
Anxieties about class/tutor	20%
Care of aging parents	14%
Family not supportive	12%
Health problems	8%

Learners could cite more than one reason

Figure 3: Results of Long & Middleton Study. Graphic courtesy of ABC Canada

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[3] Roussy, Y.,Hart, D. 2002. Seeing the Need: Meeting the Need: A Report on Recruitment and Retention issues in Literacy and Basic Skills Programs: Ontario: Ontario Literacy Coalition

Conflicts with work and lack of money topped the list of reasons for learners dropping out. Personal problems, health and confidence also featured as key factors for adult learners. Roussy and Hart's (2002) research indicates that adult learners face significant personal challenges when faced with learning situations. Although some of the challenges fall within the adult learner's domain of control some of the challenges faced by learners are beyond the control of training institutions.

Research by Long and Middleton (2001)[4]

In 2001, Ellen Long and Sandra Middleton conducted a research study, commissioned by ABC Canada Literacy Foundation, into the causes of learner dropout in a Canadian literacy training programme. The qualitative and quantitative research study involved three hundred and thirty eight (x338) participants and was conducted over three years.

The study report titled *"Who Wants to Learn? Patterns of Participation in Canadian Literacy and Upgrading Programs,"* [5] found that thirty three percent (33%) of adult learners who had enrolled for a literacy training programme dropped out after a period between six to eight (6 - 8) months.

The above-mentioned study also examined issues such as which learners drop out and why they do so. The study concluded that there were various demographic and socio-economic factors that influenced learner dropout. These are demographics, educational levels of learners, employment status and household income levels.

Demographical Influences

According to Long and Middleton (2001), men are more likely to drop out than women. In the studies conducted by Long and Middleton, thirty nine percent (39%) of men dropped out of the training programme as opposed to twenty three (23%) of women who did drop out.

According to the findings of the study, age also played an important factor as younger adult learners are more likely to drop out. Of the total adult learners surveyed, forty two percent (42%) of those learners aged between sixteen to twenty four years (16 -24 yrs) dropped out while only seventeen percent (17%) of adult learners over forty five years (45 yrs) eventually dropped out.

Educational Levels

Adult learner dropout rates were highest for learners with a formal educational level of Grades 5 - 9 (36%), whilst learners with a Grade 10- 13 (South African Grade 10–11) educational levels averaged thirty seven percent (37%). Those adult learners who had a Canadian high school diploma (South African Grade 12) averaged thirty two percent (32%).

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[4] www.nald.ca/fulltext/abc/whowants/cover.htm
[5] Long, E., Middleton, S. 2001. Who wants to learn? Patterns of Participation in Canadian Literacy and Upgrading Programs. Toronto: ABC Canada Literacy Foundation

The adult learners least likely to drop out were those with the lowest and highest level of formal education. Learners with less than a grade five education had a drop-out rate of only twenty percent (20%) while adult learners with some post-secondary education managed to achieve a nineteen percent (19%) learner dropout rate.

Annual Household Income Level

Long and Middleton's (2001) study noted that learner retention seemed to increase as household income of the learners increased. The study also found out that learners with lower household incomes were twice as likely as those with higher incomes to worry about money as a factor contributing to their decision to drop out of training programmes.

Employment Status

According to Long and Middleton (2001) study, learner dropout rates indicated very little variations when considered in terms of employment status. Learner dropout rates for those learners employed on a full-time basis amounted to twenty eight percent (28%) while only thirty five percent (35%) of learners working part-time eventually dropped-out of training.

Learner dropout rates for adult learners receiving social financial assistance amounted to thirty percent (30%) while learners who indicated earning extra income amounted to thirty four percent (34%).

Other Causes of Learner Dropout

Long and Middleton's (2001) *study* found that the most common causes of adult learner dropout out of training programmes were socio-economic factors such as employment-related conflicts, financial problems, and childcare matters.

Secondary causes of learner dropout identified were training programme-related factors such as irrelevant training content, teaching method, wrong academic levels, training structure and programme cancellations.

The study also found out that cognitive-emotive factors such as learner fear, worry and nervousness play a very minimal role in influencing adult learner dropout. In addition, Long and Middleton's (2001) study found that the learning concentration ability of adult learners also contributes to learner drop out and is affected by various other factors such as concerns about funds, tiredness, sleeping problems, concerns over childcare matters, employment-related worries and personal anxieties. The following chart lists the causes of learner dropout as indicated in Long and Middleton's (2001) study:-

Job related conflicts	47%
Money problems	35%
Care of children	29%
Worried/nervous about school	25%
Teacher/tutor not knowledgeable	17%
Program not thought to be of help in the long run	17%
Inconvenient program location	15%
Feelings of sadness	15%
Care of ageing parents	13%
Level of instruction too low	12%
Level of instruction too high	12%
Health problems	10%
Unsupportive family	6%
Tired/trouble sleeping	6%

Table 4: Results of Long & Middleton Study. Graphic courtesy of ABC Canada Literacy Foundation

According to Hill and Raven (2000) adult learner dropout rates within adult training programmes have generally ranged from between thirty to fifty percent (30% - 50%).

Lieb (1991:2) asserts that "unlike children and teenagers, adults have many responsibilities that they must balance against the demands of learning".

<u>Adult Learner Motivation</u>

Chyung (1999) cites learner motivation as another cause of high learner dropout. Four possible causes for learner dropout are identified by Chyung in the form of:-
- Attention span of learners
- Relevance of learning material
- Confidence levels of learners
- Satisfaction of learners.

The above-mentioned causes for learner dropout are based on John Keller's Attention, Relevance, Confidence & Satisfaction (ARCS)-learning model (Keller and Kopp: 1987). Chyung states that the above-mentioned factors influence the extent of an adult learners' motivation to continue learning.

According to Chyung (1999), adult learners lose their motivation to learn and are inclined to stop and drop out of learning when their attention is not sustained, when they do not regard the training as interesting, important or relevant to their life goals, when they are not confident of completing the learning processes and/or when the adult learners are not content with the actual conducting of the training process.

Lieb (1991: 2) also identified adult learner motivation as a potential barrier to learning. Lieb's studies on adult learner enabled him to identify six key sources of adult learner motivation namely:-

Sources of Motivation for Adult Learning

❖ *Social Relationships:* to make new friends; to meet a need for associations and friendships

❖ *External Expectations:* to comply with instructions from someone else; to fulfill recommendations of someone with formal authority

❖ *Social Welfare:* to improve ability to serve mankind; to improve ability to participate in community work

❖ *Personal Advancement:* to achieve higher status in a job; secure professional advancement

❖ *Escape/Stimulation:* to relieve boredom; provide a break in the routine of home or work

❖ *Cognitive Interest:* to learn for the sake of learning; to satisfy an inquiring mind

Source: Lieb, 1991

Figure 4: Lieb's sources of Motivation for Adult Learning

According to Lieb (1991: 2) adult learner motivation factors can become a barrier to adult learning. This can however be circumvented by the motivation of adult learners through a concerted effort by the facilitators to find out the reasons why learners are enrolled within a learning programme beforehand. According to Lieb (1991: 2) "the best way to motivate adult learners is simply to *enhance* their reasons for enrolling and *decrease* the (learning) barriers".

It is thus very crucial that facilitators of learning should plan for learner motivation. According to Lieb (1991:2), a successful learner motivation plan could include showing adult learners the relationship between training and an anticipated work promotion, licensing, job enrichment, the need to maintain old skills by learning, the need to adapt to job changes or the adult learner's need to learn in order to comply with organizational directives.

In the case of SMME adult learners, cognitive interest, escape, stimulation and social relationships would clearly serve as very poor learner motivators. An SMME learner who is motivated by external expectations would most likely be an employee as opposed to being an owner of an SMME enterprise. This does not however mean that the above-mentioned factors do not have an overall effect on the motivation levels of SMME learners. For example, it could be possible that an SMME learner enrolls for the PCBP programme due to pure cognitive interest since the training programme is offered at no cost by government.

Another possibility is that an SMME learner could enroll for the PCBP training programme out of pure external expectations in order to fulfill the loan application recommendations from a bank official hoping to further strengthen his/her small business' application for finance. It is highly likely that personal advancement (to achieve a higher social economic status in life or to secure professional advancement) would serve as a key motivation factor affecting SMME learners in the PCBP programme.

Interpersonal Relations between Learner and Facilitator

Lieb (1991: 2) states that adult learners need to be given full respect by the facilitator. It is very important that the facilitator should acknowledge and not discount the wealth of experiences that is brought into the learning situation by individual adult learners. This thus implies that the facilitator should allow adult learners to hold and voice their opinions freely in the learning situation.

Based on studies of the causes of high failure and dropout rates affecting adult learners studying matric (Senior Certificate or South African Grade 12), Wee (2005: 123) found that the low success rate for adults in the Senior Certificate adult learning programme resulted from several factors some of which "included the relationship between learners and teachers".

Due to the complexity of the adult learner's mental and emotional learning processes, learning occurs at different speeds within each individual adult learner as a continual process throughout life. The facilitator should be careful not to embarrass, antagonize or in any manner cause anxiety or interpersonal tension with the adult learner in the learning situation. Wee (2005: 127) emphasizes that "adults should be treated as adults".

Vella (1995:6) states that if facilitators of learning do not listen to learners but are instead "teller, master and critic, the learner can be reduced to dependency and anger".

Learner Group Size

Slay (2000: 177-180) states that the size of the learning group can also lead to a decline in learner motivation and lead to learner dropout. Successive adult learning research studies indicate that learning only takes place if the learner's interest is maintained by the facilitator. McConnell (1996) states that this can be done through involving the learner in learning activities such as reading, writing, discussing and/ or solving problems.

Due to the fact that a struggling adult learner is very likely to drop out from a learning situation, a large size of the learning group minimizes the individual attention of the facilitator and compounds the problems of the struggling learner. The facilitator also cannot adequately manage a large learner group size. The higher the participation ratio of learners in a learning environment, the lesser the interaction that will take place amongst learners and with the facilitator.

Learner Sensory Stimulation and Participation in the Learning Process

According to Goodwin and Klausmeier (1975: 423) the learner's retention of training content relies on the various learning outcomes as well as the difficulty of the aforesaid learning outcomes. "Generally factual and technical information is quickly forgotten whilst general information, application of facts and principles are better retained."

As previously mentioned, learner motivation through sensory stimulation is one of the key precursors to facilitating learner retention of training information. In order to motivate learners, facilitators should set appropriate levels of tension in the learning situation to be in line with the importance of the learning objective at hand. The training environment for a master's level qualification, for instance, will have a higher tension level than an NQF Level 4 / post school qualification due to the importance of the learning objective at hand. Also, the facilitator should strive to set appropriate levels of difficulty at a level high enough for learners to become challenged and not be bored, frustrated by perceived learning impossibilities and/or information overload.

The amount of human senses that are stimulated during the learning situation increases the likelihood of a learner's retention of training content. Sheal (1989) states that if the learner physically and mentally participates in the learning environment, the more likelier he/she is to internalize the contents of a training programme. In this regard, if a combination of various learning methods could be utilized in the learning environment, training content can be better retained.

It is also crucial that the levels of interaction between the facilitator and the learner should be heightened in order to stimulate as many human senses of the learners as possible. The facilitator should strive to create sensory curiosity to attract the learner's initial attention and cognitive curiosity to maintain the learner's interest in training content.

Learner sensory stimulation can be achieved through the creation of cognitive fantasy in the sense that the hopes and fears of the learner should be drawn upon to stimulate the learner's retention of learning.

Positive learner fantasy in the PCBP training programme could be drawn upon by the facilitator in the form of showing the SMME learners how their individual management capabilities would increase once they complete the training programme and implement the three productivity improvement   projects.

Negative learner fantasy on the other hand can be achieved by the facilitator through indicating the negative legal consequences and financial penalty of one thousand five hundred rands (R1500.00) in the case when a learner opts to drop out of training and/or fails to implement the productivity improvement projects post-training.

In this regard, a binding legal contract between the training institution and the learner could be entered into to facilitate negative learner fantasy. It is very crucial for facilitators interacting with adult learners to become aware of the effects of aging due to the fact that aging causes the deterioration of adult learners' sensory abilities in the form of eyesight, hearing and speed of reaction. It should also be taken into mind that the more mature the adult learner, the more intelligent they tend to become through time.

Another mode in which learners' human senses could be challenged is through reinforcement of learning concepts on a regular basis to assist information retention coupled with specific and direct feedback from the facilitator. Learner information retention is directly linked to practical application of the theoretical concepts learned initially in the learning situation.

If initial learning of theoretical concepts in the PCBP training programme was defective, learners would be unable to apply the productivity formulae for calculating wastage, resource utilization, labour turnover, absenteeism, efficiency, single factor productivity (SFP) and total factor productivity (TFP) in their own businesses during their post-training productivity improvement projects. Thus, learner retention of theoretical concepts leads to the ability to transfer the learned theoretical concepts in a new environment. The above-mentioned learning phenomenon has been described by Paulo Freire (2001) as Praxis, the interconnectedness between theory and practice. According to Freire (2001:51) "Theory cannot be separated from practice".

In the PCBP training programme, the ability of the learners to practically transfer learned information into a new environmental setting in their businesses is influenced by how the SMME learners associate the new information with similar information that they already know, their levels of initial learning of theoretical concepts as well as how beneficial the new information is to the wellbeing and survival of their own businesses and individual management abilities to effect planning, organizing, leadership and control as strategic, tactical and operational managers of their own enterprises.

The method of training delivery can also affect the learner's sensory stimulation and participation in the learning environment. To this effect, it is crucial for the facilitator to utilize as many training methods as possible to attract and maintain learners human senses in order to enable information retention and practical transference. In this regard, the usage of long distance correspondence, regular telephonic and /or electronic support, self-study, co-operative learning and other training methods could be considered in addition to traditional classroom facilitation or lecturing.

In order to increase the learner's interest and participation in the learning environment, proponents of the Learner-Centred approach like Hiemstra (1996) advocate for self-directed learning where learner are given more responsibility for their own learning in line with the principles of life-long learning.

Hiemstra (1996: 347) states that in self directed learning:-

- *"Individual learners can become empowered to take increasingly more responsibility for various decisions associated with the learning behaviour.*
- *Self-direction is best viewed as a continuum or characteristic that exists to some degree in every person and learning situation*

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- *Self-direction does not necessarily mean that all learning will take place in isolation from others.*
- *Self-directed learners appear to be able to transfer learning, in terms of both knowledge and study skill, from one situation to another.*
- *Self-directed study can involve various activities and resources, such as self-guided reading, participation in study and tutorial groups, internships, electronic dialogues and reflective writing activities.*
- *Effective roles for teachers in self-directed learning are possible, such as dialogue with learners, securing resources, evaluating outcomes and promoting critical thinking".*

Learners who take more responsibility for their own learning are thus more likely to retain and transfer learned theoretical concepts. The learning style of the individual learner should also be considered in the learning situation. According to David Kolb's (1984) model of Experiential Learning, different learners learn in different ways. According to Kolb (1984), there are four types of learners namely:-

- **Reflectors** who are generally imaginative learners who process information based on what they see, what they experience during learning and their analysis of the learned information. Such learners learn best through discussion, observation, simulation, brainstorming, speaking and interacting with other learners.
- **Activists** who are primarily interested in self-discovery and learn by practically applying learned theory into practice, judging results of experimentation and sharing experiences with others. Such learners learn best through practical simulations, corporate games, competitive tasks and role-play learning activities.
- **Theorists** who are primarily interested in factual information in order to create intellectual understanding and learn by examining and developing factual concepts and integrating these with their own life experiences. Such learners learn through questioning, exploration of logical theoretical concepts, the application of structured analysis and logical comparisons.
- **Pragmatists** who are generally interested in learning how things work by integrating defined factual theoretical concepts with practical application. Such learners learn best through exploration, inquiry and practical experimentation of factual concepts into the workplace with feedback or support from a credible learning source.   Kolb's (1984) model of Experiential Learning is illustrated below in Exhibit 4 below.
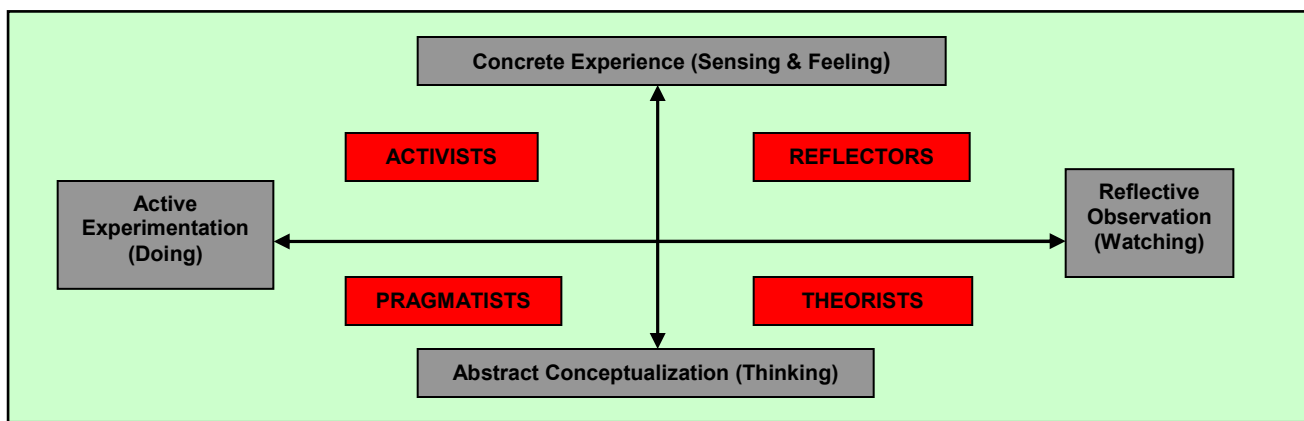

Figure 5: Kolb's Model of Experential Learning as adapted from Gibbs, G. 1987. Learning by Doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods. Birmingham: FEU Birmingham Polytechnic

Literature Review Summary

The objective of this section was to conduct an analysis of learning theories as well as examine various research studies that have been undertaken to further understand the phenomenon of adult learner dropout within learning programmes. To this end, various adult learning theories and divergent schools of thought have been discussed in an effort to clearly identify those causes which lead adults to withdraw from learning programmes. The objective was to further understand how the practical application of proper adult learning theories within the delivery of the PCBP training programme can help reduce learner dropout.

Literature review on the causes of adult learner dropout within adult learning environments indicates that learner attrition and adult learner turnover is caused by a wide variety of internal factors as well as external environmental factors. Internal factors are those factors that reside within the internal locus of control of the adult learner.

Factors which reside within the learner over which the learner has control are amongst others factors such as learner motivation, the maturity of the learner, literacy and numeric competency of the adult learner, the educational background of the learner as well as the personal interest of the learner in training.

There are also other factors which lie outside the locus of control of the adult learner, over which the adult learner has no control. These are external factors which lie within the domain and operational control of designers of learning programmes, namely the education, training and development (ETD) and human resource development (HRD) practitioners.

External factors outside the adult learner's control are amongst others factors such as, the involvement of adult learners within training, the activities during training sessions, the length and relevance of post-training activities, the training abilities of the facilitators, the reinforcement of learned concepts in the learning environment, the retention and transfer of learning concepts through practical application of theoretical concepts, the interactivity of learning programmes, the appropriateness and quality of the training curriculum, the interaction between the learner and facilitator during training as well as the social support from the learner's work colleagues and /or superiors.

The duty of learning practitioners within the PCBP training programme is thus to ensure that the above-mentioned factors are enhanced through the selections of mature SMME learners who are numerically competent and literate to ensure personal sustained interest in the learning programme.

The above-mentioned will increase the learning motivation of adult learners within the PCBP training programme. Education, training and development practitioners in the PCBP training programme must thus also ensure that the delivery of the programme enables learners to become more involved within the programme through ensuring relevant post-training activities, interactivity, high quality learning curriculum and facilitation skills and ensure that SMME learners practically apply learning concepts in their own business to enable retention and transfer of learning.

Section 2.6 discusses the research methodology, data collection, analysis as well as the findings unearthed in the course of the study.

2.6. <u>Research Methodology</u>

The main objective behind the evaluative research study is to assess the causes of SMME learner drop-out and attrition and retain learners in the national training operational rollout of the Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP), a national training programme of the National Productivity Institute (NPI).

This research study not only has internal validity in terms of the PCBP programme but also contextual importance for the larger human resource development (HRD) domain where high volumes of adult learners participate in publicly-funded training programmes.

With the ultimate aim of better understanding the causes of learner attrition involving adult learners within the context of a learning environment in the PCBP training programme, a qualitative survey involving sixty (x60) randomly sampled small medium and micro enterprise (SMME) learners who have attended PCBP training was surveyed utilizing a questionnaire survey instrument and telephonic interview method.

A case study research format was used. In my personal capacity as a Provincial Project Manager within the National Productivity Institute (NPI)'s Public Sector Productivity division, my position allows me to undertake the research study from an Education Training and Development (ETD) practitioner perspective according to Pritchard (2002: 2).

This allows the researcher to be able to critically evaluate PCBP training operations as well as applicable training techniques for any internal causes of adult learner dropout within the operational delivery of the PCBP training programme.

According to Bryan and Burgess (1999: 140), qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview and historical documents from SMME learners can be utilized. The above-mentioned enables the researcher to assess SMME learners' opinions and experiences utilizing open-ended questions in the questionnaire and during telephonic interview. Historical documents utilized in the study include learner attendance registers for training sessions and commitment sessions, pre-assessment documents as well as learner pre-assessment results.

Using simple random sampling, the total survey sample of SMME learners sampled make up twenty percent (20%) of the total number of trainees who have been trained and selected on the PCBP programme. This number includes all the SMME trainees/ learners who failed their selection assessment.

The survey population consists of randomly sampled SMME learners who have successfully completed training as well as undertook their three post-training productivity improvement projects, learners who have dropped out of training as well as learners who have attended training but failed to implement the post-training productivity improvement projects.

Some of the learners who have been included in the randomly-sampled survey population have not passed the initial selection test of the PCBP training programme. The randomly-sampled survey population also consists of SMME learners from most of the provinces in the country where PCBP training operations take place.

The rationale for the inclusion of non-selected learners in the survey population is to be as inclusive as possible and consider all the possible various contributory causes of learner dropout in the operational delivery of the Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP).

The total random sample of trainees comprises twenty percent (20%) of the total number of trainees who have been trained and selected on the PCBP programme, inclusive of all the SMME trainees/ learners who failed their selection assessment.

The survey population consists of randomly sampled SMME learners who have successfully completed training as well as undertook their three post-training productivity improvement projects, learners who have dropped out of training as well as learners who have attended training but failed to implement the post-training productivity improvement projects. Some of the learners who have been included in the randomly-sampled survey population have passed the initial selection test of the PCBP training programme. The randomly-sampled survey population also consists of SMME learners most of the provinces in the country where PCBP training operations take place.

For the sake of confidentiality of the respondents, the real names of the interviewees/ respondents as well as the business names of the SMME's surveyed are not included in the survey. Instead, respondents are listed in alphabetical order from Respondent A – Z. Company names are listed as Company A – Z. The rationale for the inclusion of non-selected learners in the survey population is to be as inclusive as possible and consider all the possible various contributory causes of learner dropout in the operational delivery of the Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP).

The above-mentioned research approach, method and instrument is utilized due to cost-effectiveness and logistical reasons. The primary objective of transmitting the questionnaire electronically and thereafter conducting the interview telephonically is to be able to explain the questionnaire requirements to interviewees as well as to allow interviewees plenty of time to add additional facts to the contents of their questionnaire responses in their own time after the telephonic interview. The secondary objective why telephonic interviews were arranged to take place in the mornings or in the afternoons was to ensure minimal inconvenience to interviewees and to cause as little disruption to the life schedules of the interviewees as possible.

The research questionnaire is transmitted electronically to and from the interviewees using electronic mail or the facsimile machine. In instances where electronic facilities are not available to the interviewees, snail mail is utilized to transmit questionnaires to and from interviewees.

The interview itself is conducted telephonically whilst the interviewee/ learner is in possession of the questionnaire. The questionnaire itself is paper-based or electronic, depending on the circumstances of interviewee. The case study format is chosen by the researcher due to the high volumes of learners involved in PCBP training operations nationwide as well as the similarities of the PCBP training operations with other large-scale publicly-funded training programmes.

Lessons learnt from the study can thus be extrapolated and applied to other similar publicly-funded adult learning programmes and environments which are plagued by high adult learner dropout and attrition rates. The study thus has high contextual importance for the larger human resource development (HRD) domain in the public sector.

Private-sector Education Training and Development (ETD) service provider enterprises, institutions of higher learning and learnership/ internship practitioners who manage high volumes of adult learners within similar learning environments can also benefit from the practical applications of recommendations flowing from this study.

The above-mentioned research approach, method and instrument is chosen for utilization due to cost-effectiveness and logistical reasons. The primary objective of transmitting the questionnaire electronically and thereafter conducting the interview telephonically is to enable the researcher to explain the questionnaire requirements to interviewees as well as to allow interviewees plenty of time to add additional facts to the contents of their questionnaire responses in their own time after the telephonic interview. Some of the respondents needed assistance with translating the contents of the questionnaire and obviously had very basic literacy skills.

The secondary objective why telephonic interviews were arranged to take place in the mornings and/ or in the afternoons was to ensure minimal inconvenience to interviewees and to cause as little disruption to the life schedules of the interviewees as possible. A response rate of at least fifty percent (50%) of the total survey sample was anticipated.

Since learner confidentiality was identified as a barrier to the participation of respondents, the real names of the interviewees/ respondents as well as the business names of the small medium and micro enterprises (SMME's) surveyed were not included in the survey. Instead, respondents are listed in alphabetical order from Respondent A–Z. SMME enterprise names are listed from Company A–Z.

Research Questions.

In undertaking the study, the researcher attempts to answer the following questions:-

- What causes adult SMME learners to loose interest in learning in the PCBP training programme?
- What internal and external barriers within the current operational delivery of the PCBP training programme leads to adult learner dropout?
- What internal interventional measures can be put in place to retain learners within the PCBP programme until they are certified?

Mulder (1986: 27- 28) states that the following are characteristics of a hypothesis**:-**
- *"A hypothesis should not be contrary to existing knowledge".*
- *"A hypothesis should offer a reasonable explanation for the problem (the question, phenomenon or event)".*
- *"A hypothesis should be capable of being tested".*
- *"A hypothesis should state the expected relationship between variables and define the variables in measurable terms".*
- *"A hypothesis is an important link between theory and the empirical investigation".*

The major underlying hypothesis behind the study is based on the adult learning principle that "*adult learners drop out of training due to loss of interest in training*".

The minor hypothesis behind the study is that "*if learners are given more control over their learning situation, their interest in learning will be heightened and result in lesser learner attrition rates*".

Underlying Assumptions.

The following underlying assumptions informed the research study:-

1. Lengthy tedious and repetitive training sessions lead to dropout by small business learners out of training due to being away from their businesses for extended periods.
2. Repetitive post-training rehearsals and commitment sessions cause SMME learners to become bored and loose interest in training.
3. Inferior training abilities of facilitators cause SMME learner boredom and loss of interest in learning.
4. SMME learner illiteracy and numeracy barriers cause learner demotivation and dropout.
5. Inferior post-training learner mentorship causes learner demotivation and dropout due to lack of transference and retention of learning.
6. Lack of personal motivation causes SMME learners to drop out of training.

Literature review on the causes of adult learner dropout within adult learning environments indicates that the above-mentioned phenomenon is caused by a wide variety of internal factors as well as external environmental factors. Literature review has indicated various contributory causes leading to adult learner dropout. These are amongst others, factors such as:-

- Learner motivation
- The involvement of adult learners within training
- The length and activities of the contact training schedule
- The length and relevance of post-training activities
- The training abilities of the facilitators
- The literacy and numeric competencies of the adult learner
- Reinforcement of learned concepts in the classroom
- The retention and transfer of learning concepts through practical application of theoretical concepts by learners
- The interactivity of the learning programme
- The educational background of the learner
- The appropriateness and quality of the training curriculum
- The interaction between the learner and facilitator
- The social support from the learner's family /work
- The maturity of the learner.

The design of the research questionnaire instrument therefore had to take cognizance of the effects of the above-mentioned factors on the phenomenon of adult learner dropout and also ensure validity and reliability of the research study to the research objectives of assessing the causes of SMME learner drop-out and retaining learners in the operational rollout of the Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP).

Reliability in the context of this research implies the extent to which the research results can be repeated in line with the research information that has been collected. Validity in the context of the research implies that the research study assesses and evaluates what the research study envisages to assess.

Ethical considerations in the research study were followed through respect for the respondents' confidentiality, convenience of interview times through the prior request for appointments to conduct telephonic interviews, clear explanations of the purpose of the research, the research process and questionnaire contents as well as the respect for the respondent's right to decline or withdraw participation in the study.

Figure 6: Geographical Depiction of Survey Sample per Province

2.7 Data Collection.

On the 10th April 2007, the researcher undertook simple random sampling of SMME learners who were selected or attended PCBP training. Out of this process, sixty (x60) SMME learners representing the total survey population were identified for participation in the research study. The total survey population represents twenty percent (20%) of the total number of SMME learners who were training on the PCBP programme. Qualitative data for the evaluative and descriptive research was collected and analyzed through observation, interviews and documents.

Literature review on the study was conducted on the 2nd – 20th April 2007. Initial telephonic contact with respondents took place on the 13th April 2007 where participation in the study was requested. During initial telephonic contact with interviewees, the researcher contacted the interviewees with the objective of explaining the purpose of the interviews, the procedure to be followed, clarifications and/or interpretation needs as well as the fact that telephonic interviews would be recorded for latent analysis. Verbal consent was thus obtained from participants. Between the 24th– 25th April 2007, respondents were contacted telephonically for the second time to arrange for telephonic interview appointments. During these telephonic interactions with SMME interviewees, eight (X8) respondents withdrew from the study due to personal and confidentiality reasons and could thus not participate in the telephonic interviews..

Telephonic Interviews.

Standardized telephonic interviews with respondents were held from 2nd – 18th May 2007 with (x52) out of the sixty (x60) randomly selected SMME learners utilizing an electronic and/or paper-based questionnaire instrument.

During telephonic interviews, the researcher asked open-ended questions. All interviewees were subjected to the same questions both during telephonic interviews and in the paper-based and electronic questionnaire. Although the primary medium of communication during telephonic interviews was English, some Zulu and Northern Sotho interpretations had to be given to some of the interviewed learners.

Telephonic interview responses were recorded and immediately transcribed on the same day as the telephonic interview for better analysis. The returned copy of the interviewee's questionnaire responses were also interpreted along with the telephonic transcripts by the researcher.

Telephonic interviews were held initially with those interviewees who had access to electronic mail and facsimile machine facilities and could thus receive and fill in the questionnaire immediately as well as resend it back to the researcher. Electronic questionnaires were e-mailed/ faxed to respondents on the 23rd April 2007 whilst paper-based questionnaires were posted to non-electronic mail respondents on the 21st April 2007. On the 21st April 2007, twenty two (x22) postage paid envelopes were procured and posted to interviewees who utilized snail mail.

On the 21st May 2007 – 30th May 2007, returned electronic mail, faxed responses and postal responses from interviewees were received, sorted, referenced and coded. Coding of interviewee responses was easier due to the similarity of questions that were posed to respondents.

No of Respondents	Category	Percentage
X34	Returned Questionnaire	56.6%
X14	Questionnaire not returned	23.3%
X8	Withdrew from Survey	13.3%
x4	Excluded - Vague Responses	6.6%

Recorded and written transcripts made by the researcher during telephonic interviews were collated with returned questionnaire responses and subjected to analysis using selective description. Only thirty eight (x34) interviewees comprising fifty seven percent (56%) out of the total survey population of sixty (x60) interviewees fully completed and returned their questionnaires.

In order to avoid ambiguity, defaulting respondents were re-contacted telephonically and requested to return their completed questionnaires back to the researcher. An extra week from the 31st May 2007 – 4th June 2007 was also dedicated for the receiving of late postal responses. After the 4th June 2007, a conscious decision was taken by the researcher to exclude all fourteen (x14) SMME respondents who did not return their electronic and paper–based questionnaire responses from the research study. Four (x4) questionnaire responses had to be excluded due to vagueness of respondent responses.

This implied that fourteen (x14) recorded transcripts of the telephonic interview with respondents had to be excluded from the study. The rationale for the above-mentioned decision by the researcher was to consolidate the validity, consistency and reliability of the research study.

Telephonic interviews were held with fifty two (x52) learners/ interviewees who all confirmed receipt of the electronic questionnaire. Out of the total survey population, eight learners did not participate in the telephonic interview and resultant survey, most citing confidentiality concerns as primary reasons.

The majority of respondents who did not return the research questionnaire responses utilized facsimile machines to receive and resend the paper-based questionnaire instrument. Most of the respondents who transmitted their questionnaire responses back had access to electronic mail facilities.

Telephonic Interview Respondents

☐ Participating Respondents ☐ Withdrew from Survey

Figure 7: Telephonic Survey Respondents

No of Respondents	Category	Percentage
x52	**Participating Respondents**	86.6%
X8	**Withdrew from Survey**	13.3%

Documents

Merriam (1989:104) states that documents are "ready-made sources of data" that are easily accessible to the researcher. During the survey, historical documents that were utilized include copies of SMME learner's contact session attendance registers, rehearsals and commitment session attendance records, learner pre-assessment documents for numeric and literacy skills, initial application form, written and typed transcripts of the actual recorded telephonic interview and an electronic or paper-based questionnaire document.

Attendance Registers

Attendance registers from the contact training sessions of the PCBP as well as SMME learner attendance records for the rehearsals and commitment sessions were utilized during the study. Closer inspection and observation of the attendance registers will help identify underlying learner attendance trends.

Questionnaires.

Based on Pritchard's (2002: 2) perspective, the researcher has utilized a case study research format from an education, training and development (ETD) practitioner's perspective. The researcher has utilized his knowledge of the PCBP training programme within the research study to critically evaluate PCBP training operations as well as applicable training techniques for any internal causes of adult learner dropout within the operational delivery of the PCBP training programme.

The questionnaire itself consisted of open-ended questions with SMME learners subjected to the same questions. Since the qualitative study has more to do with respondents' feelings, opinions and learning attitudes, the usage of different types of questioning both in the electronic and paper-based questionnaire as well as during interviews enabled me to be able to dig deeper in order to uncover underlying reasons for SMME learner's responses.

Written Transcripts of the Telephonic Interview.

Recorded transcripts made by the researcher during telephonic interviews were written down and collated with the returned questionnaire responses from the respondent and subjected to analysis using selective description.

Common SMME learner responses in both documents were grouped together based on the contents of the written transcript and questionnaire document.

Observation.

Since this study is undertaken from an ETD practitioner's perspective, the researcher taps into his knowledge and familiarity with the PCBP training programme learning atmosphere and utilizes observation whilst analyzing PCBP training documents. For instance, observation is utilized by the researcher to inspect attendance registers for learner attendance trends within SMME attendance records.

During data analysis, observation is also utilized to dig deeper into underlying respondent assumptions and opinions whilst undertaking selective description.

2.8 Data Analysis

Research data from the telephonic interview and the actual contents of the questionnaire are analyzed using selective description methods. After the codification of recorded telephonic interview recordings into written transcripts, the contents of the transcript are coded and collated with the returned paper-based or electronic questionnaire responses from the respondent.

Using selective description analysis data analysis method, the contents of both documents are grouped together based on the similarities of responses received. This enables the researcher to be able to group responses into distinct response categories. The questionnaire contents provide more detailed information to support and corroborate the contents of the interview transcript. Data analysis thus consisted of:-
A. Codification of recorded interview information into written transcripts.
B. Collation of transcripts with the returned questionnaires.
C. Clustering of the various responses into loose associations based on similarity.
D. Categorization of loosely similar responses into firm categories.
E. Consolidation of response categories.

A. <u>Codification of recorded interview information into written transcripts.</u>

During the holding of telephonic interviews with respondents, the researcher made notes of the key responses from the respondents. Key responses are written down and added to the written transcripts of the interview recordings. Since telephonic interviews were also recorded with the knowledge of the respondent, recorded transcripts made by the researcher during telephonic interviews were also written down into transcripts.

B. <u>Collation of transcripts with the returned questionnaires.</u>

Written transcripts of the telephonic questionnaire are sorted and collated with the returned questionnaire responses from the respondent. During sorting of questionnaire and transcripts together, documents are given common labeling. For instance, the written transcript from Respondent A would be labeled Respondent A-A whilst the questionnaire response would be labeled Respondent A-B. This method allows the researcher to be able to easier group written transcripts with the questionnaire responses that are received electronically and via snail mail.

C. <u>Clustering of responses into loose associations based on similarity.</u>

Responses that are contained in the transcripts and the questionnaire responses are grouped and subjected to analysis using selective description. Common responses contained are grouped together based on the contents of the written transcript and questionnaire document.

D. <u>Categorization of loosely similar responses into firm categories.</u>

Using the affinity method, loosely similar response groupings are grouped into firm categories of responses. This enables the researcher to be able to group responses into distinct response categories for better analysis.

E. **Consolidation of response categories.**

Response categories are further analyzed for commonalities and consolidated into more distinct and varied response categories for analysis.
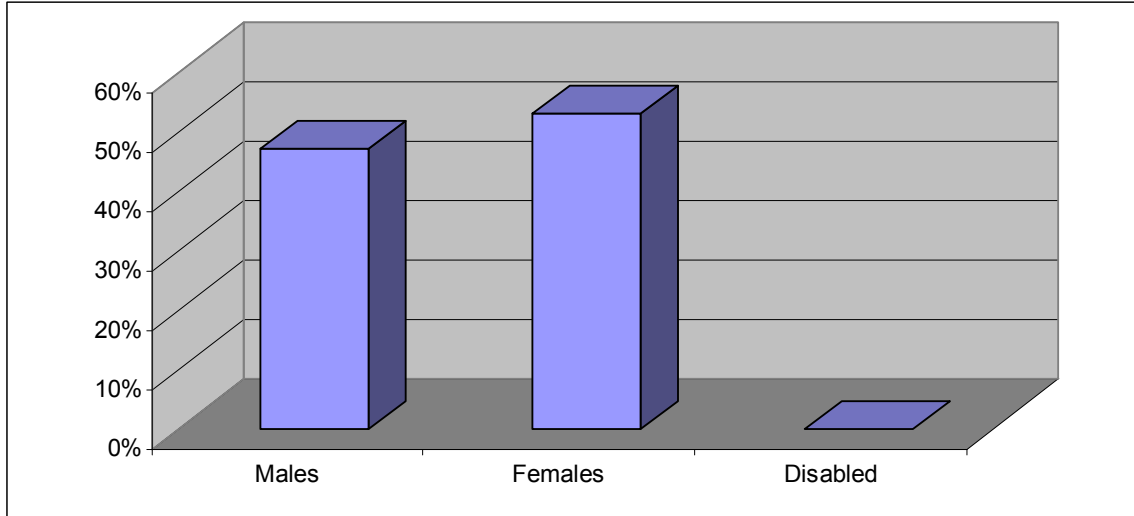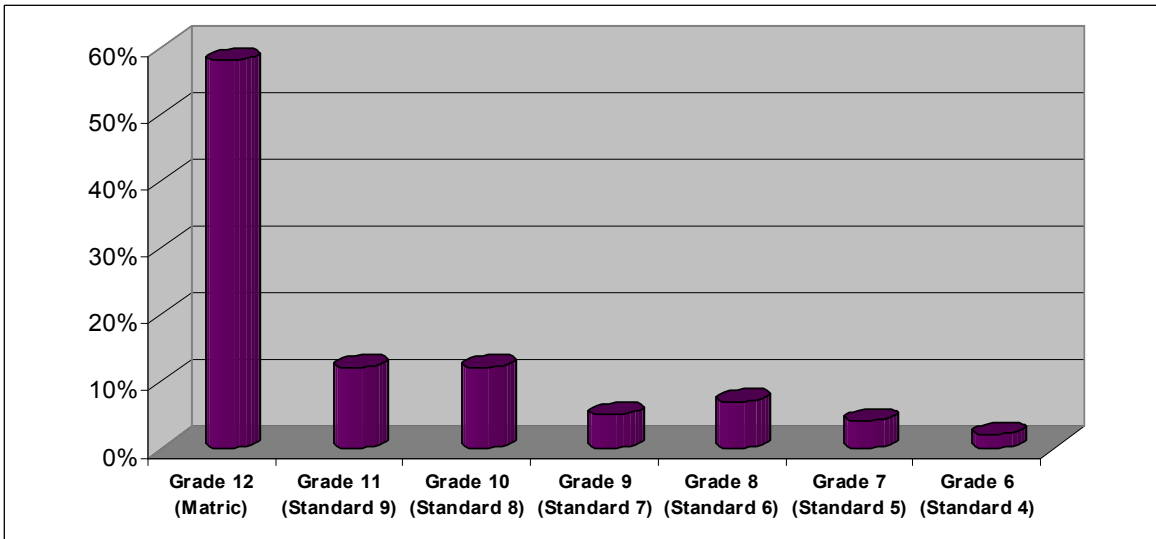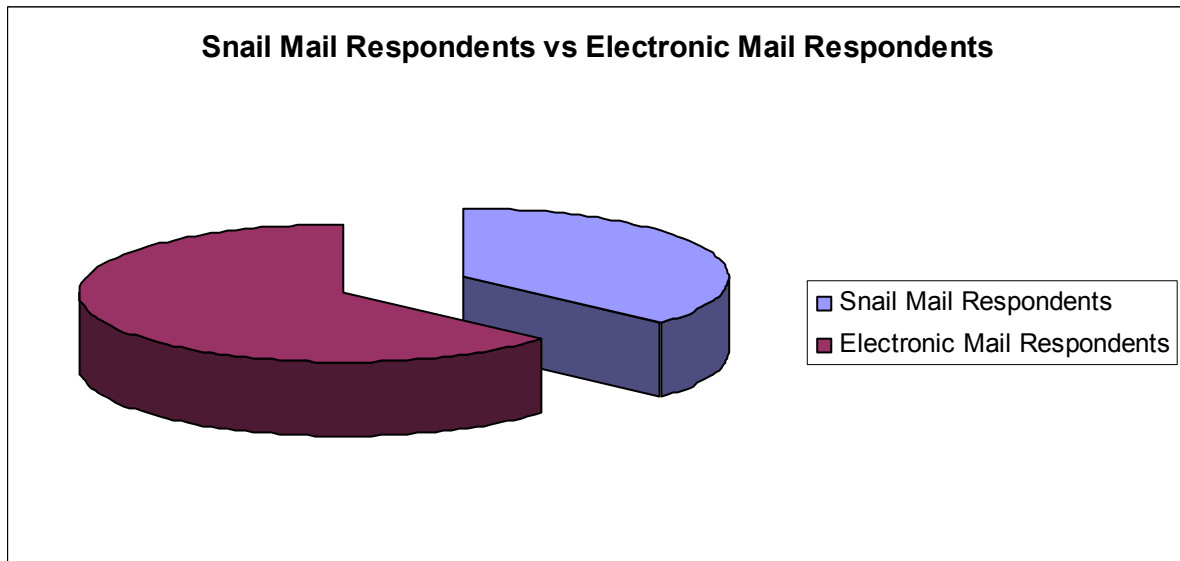
Figure 8: Respondent Demographics based on Gender

Figure 9: Educational Levels of Participating Respondents

Snail Mail Respondents vs Electronic Mail Respondents

- Snail Mail Respondents
- Electronic Mail Respondents

No of Respondents	Category	Percentage
x22	Snail Mail Respondents	36.6%
x38	Electronic Mail Respondents	63.3%

Figure 10: Snail Mail Respondents vs. Electronic Mail Respondents

Questionnaire Response Rate

- Returned Questionnaire
- Questionnaire not returned
- Withdrew from Survey
- Excluded due to Vague Responses

Figure 11: Questionnaire Response Rate

No of Respondents	Category	Percentage
X34	Returned Questionnaire	56.6%
X14	Questionnaire not returned	23.3%
X8	Withdrew from Survey	13.3%
x4	Excluded - Vague Responses	6.6%

2.9   Key Research Findings.

The results of selective descriptive analysis of the transcripts and the returned questionnaires resulted in the following categorizations of learner responses based on the ranking order selected by learners in the questionnaire:-

Competing personal responsibilities of SMME learners	**34%**
Duration of the PCBP training programme	**32%**
The difficulty of PCBP learning content	**28%**
Non-operational businesses and irregular business transactions	**22%**
Lack of personal interest and motivation to continue	**19%**
Costly travel to training and post-training venues	**16%**
Lack of proper post-training support and mentoring	**14%**
Other Personal Reasons	**8%**

Breakdown of the Key Findings.

A. Competing Personal Responsibilities of SMME learners (34%).

The majority of respondents cited competing personal responsibilities as inhibitive reasons that led to their dropout from the PCBP training programme. When prompted to expantiate more on the exact reason, the majority cited reasons such as other more important business appointments, meetings with external lucrative sources of potential income to the unavailability of replacement managers to help manage their businesses during training. Thirty four percent (32%) of respondents ranked the above-mentioned as a primary reason leading to their non-attendance of training and/ or non-completion of their three post-training productivity improvement projects. Of these, some indicated having missed one or two days during initial training or having arrived late during the formal training sessions.

B. The Duration of the PCBP Training Programme (32%)

Thirty two (32%) percent of respondents surveyed ranked the duration of the PCBP programme (and post-training activities) as a secondary inhibitive factor that led to their dropout. When encouraged to explain more on the above-mentioned reason, the majority cited the five days fulltime training from Monday to Friday 8:30 – 16:00 as an inhibitive factor that led to their non-attendance of some of the training modules. The repetitive predictive nature of the first, second and third rehearsals sessions, commitment sessions are also cited as leading to boredom and perceptions of triviality. The vast majority of respondents did not seem to understand why they have to repeat the productivity improvement projects more than once.

C. **The Difficulty of PCBP Learning Content (28%)**

Twenty eight (28%) percent of respondents surveyed ranked their difficulties in comprehending and understanding the PCBP learning content as a contributory factor to their non-completion of the three productivity improvement projects in their own businesses.

When prompted to explain further, most respondents indicated that they were not prepared for the depth of academic discipline that the course required as well as the complex productivity formulae and calculations entailed within the fourth Module (Productivity). Others cited encountering difficulties in having to implement measurements in their businesses during the first days of contact session training.

Whilst some respondents cited other reasons emanating externally from their loci of control such as the speech abilities, speed and voice of the facilitator, most also cited English language difficulties during initial training.

D. **Costly Travel to Training and Post-Training Venues (16%).**

Sixteen percent of respondents interviewed indicated that the financial costs of traveling to and from their businesses in the morning to the training venues and back to their businesses in the afternoon as a contributory reason to not fully attending the contact training sessions and/or implementing the three productivity improvement projects in their businesses. When prompted to explain further, most alluded to the high cost of public transport such as taxis, buses and trains. Only five respondents alluded to usage of a private vehicle.

Other reasons cited was the fact that training in most cases is conducted in Central Business Districts (CBD)'s of far-off cities whilst most SMME businesses are located in the townships, many kilometers away.

E. **Lack of sustained interest & motivation to continue learning (19%).**

Nineteen percent (19%) of respondents that participated in the telephonic interview indicated that they had lost interest in the PCBP training course halfway during the course. When prompted to explain more on their reasons that led to loss of personal interest, most respondents cited unsatisfied prior financial expectations from the PCBP training course, no immediate financial benefits to their businesses, familiarity with the contents of the PCBP training modules, perceptions of non-usefulness of the course, facilitators who are not knowledgeable, interpersonal dislike for the facilitator and other more important academic commitments.

F. **Non-Operational Businesses and Irregular Business Transaction Intervals (22%)**

Twenty two (22%) percent of the respondents surveyed cited knowingly enrolling for the PCBP training programme without owning any operational business enterprise to implement post-training productivity improvement projects despite the PCBP training course selection requirement. Other respondents cited the fact that their small businesses only get business on an occasional irregular basis and hence found it difficult if not impossible to implement the post-training productivity improvement projects.

When encouraged to explain more regarding the above-mentioned, a few respondents indicated that they planned to start their own businesses in the near future and hence did not want to be excluded from training. One learner stated that she does not understand the rationale for the PCBP requirement of owning an operational business enterprise prior to attending training as the PCBP is a government-funded training programme.

G. Lack of proper post-training support and mentoring (14%).

Fourteen percent of the respondents surveyed indicated that they failed to properly implement their productivity improvement projects because they did not receive the adequate post-training support and mentoring from the ETD service providers/ facilitators and NPI Project Managers as promised during the contact training sessions. When prompted to explain further, most respondents cited no site visits from either the ETD service provider or the NPI Consultants. Others cited that site visits to their businesses only took place on a once-off basis after attending the contact training sessions. Some learners also cited appointments by ETD service providers that were not honoured and very limited telephonic support. Learners cited the cost implications of lengthy telephone calls to NPI Consultants and ETD service providers as inhibitive factors that led to their failure to implement post-training activities.

H. Other Personal Reasons (8%).

Eight percent of the respondents surveyed indicated other personal reasons that have contributed to their inability to implement their three productivity improvement projects or drop out of initial contact training sessions. When prompted to provide more information, most cited domestic responsibilities, taking care of dependants, elderly relatives and extended family members as well as health-related problems.
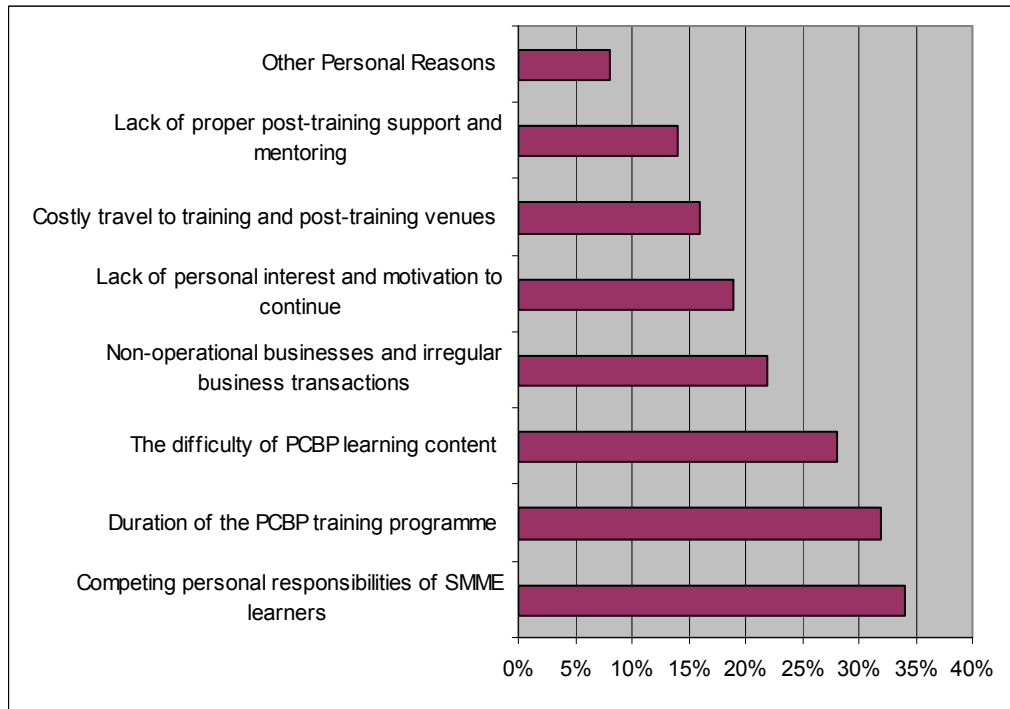

Figure 12: Causes of SMME Learner Dropout in the PCBP Training Programme

Analysis of Key Findings.

The major underlying hypothesis behind the study is that "*adult learners drop out of training due to loss of interest in training".*

The results of the research survey corroborate the major hypothesis that learners drop out of training due to loss of interest in training. Lack of interest due to a deficiency in personal motivation has accounted for nineteen percent (19%) of the causes leading to learner dropout.

There is however other contributory factors that have a major influence of adult learners such as other business engagements, domestic responsibilities, academic pressures, financial other personal responsibilities that also lead learners to drop out of training programmes.

This is due to the fact that adult learners within the PCBP training programme are involved in multiple roles as parents, siblings, sons, daughters, churchgoers, soccer supporters etc and will thus need to manage their time accordingly to satisfy these multiple responsibilities.

A contributory factor that compounds matters is the fact that adult learners are invited for training based on a fixed pre-arranged training schedule. The lack of consultation in the planning of training sessions lead to adult learners on the PCBP training programme not having the leisure to choose when and where they can attend training sessions. This disempowers learners and renders them unable to take more control over their learning responsibilities and thus increase their interest in and motivation to learn.

SMME learner illiteracy and lack of numeric competencies also cause learner demotivation, low self-esteem and resultant dropout. This is due to the fact that although other African languages like seSotho, sePedi, isiZulu, seTswana, tshiVenda and xiTsonga are utilized interchangeably during training to accommodate all delegates, English still remains the most common medium of instruction within PCBP training. Also, the training manuals, learner notes and productivity improvement forms are all written in the English language. This makes it very difficult if not impossible for learners with very low literacy abilities to participate or understand classroom deliberations.

The current operational delivery format of the PCBP training programme does little if nothing to address the detected numeric and literacy skills needs which have been detected after learners have been subjected to assessments. Those learners who are found to be possessing critically low numeric and literacy skills are simply excluded and not invited for actual PCBP training. The exclusive nature of SMME learner pre-assessment at the hands of ETD practitioners and NPI Project Managers thus also indirectly increases the number of learners who do not undertake PCBP training.

Although the current selection assessment instrument is able to detect numeric and literacy deficiencies within SMME learners, learners with low to average literacy and numeric competencies are eventually invited for training but not given specific remedial action to enable them to fit in with other more literate and numerate adult learners.

Instead of exposing their own learning weaknesses to peers, adult learners with low to average literacy and numeric abilities tend to stay away and drop out from training after attending their initial day of PCBP training.

The difficulty of PCBP learning content also adds to learner dropout. Although the PCBP training programme was designed as a learning intervention on a Level 2 – 4 according to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the actual content of training consists of complicated vocabulary and economic learning concepts such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), inflation, Consumer Price Index (CPIX) amongst others which are best suited for diploma-level (NQF 5) and degree-level (NQF 6) learning programmes. The inferior training abilities of PCBP facilitators also cause SMME learner boredom and loss of interest in learning.

The repetitive post-training activities in the from of the three rehearsals and commitment sessions for each productivity improvement project cause SMME learners to become bored and loose interest in training.
These activities are also drawn out over lengthy periods of up to three months where the learner still has to be absent from his/her business.

The long duration of PCBP training lessons also lead to dropout by small business learners due to the fact that they are away from their businesses for extended periods attending PCBP training. During the first two days of the PCBP training programme, there are more learners in attendance than during the last two or three days of training. Some learners also miss the first day of training and only start attending on the second day. Attendance records from the rehearsals and commitment sessions also indicate very low attendance when compared with initial contact session attendance registers. This alludes to an underlying dropout trend.

A contributory fact is the reality that most small medium and micro-enterprises (SMME)'s cannot afford to engage extra managerial staff to watch over their businesses whilst in training. This results in SMME learners having to in some cases temporarily close their businesses whilst in training and thereby loosing much-needed income as a result. The informal nature of most SMME's does imply that the SMME learner is, as the business owner, the only specialist within the business who can provide the relevant service or produce the relevant end-product. With the absence of the business owner from the till or the workplace floor, workers tend to idle and production comes to a standstill or gradually inches along.

The lack of consultation by ETD service providers and NPI staff in involving learners during the planning of training schedules, rehearsals and commitment sessions also leads to inconvenient choices of training/post-training activity venues for SMME learners. Inconvenient choices of training venues do result in financial cost implications to the SMME learners as most do rely on public transportation such as taxis, trains and busses for travel.

SMME learners do not have plenty of funds at hand to spend on merely traveling to and from training venues and would rather opt to drop out and use limited funds on other more important life considerations instead of impoverishment and the prospect of embarrassment at coming late during every day of PCBP training.

The informal nature of SMME business transactions implies that transactions that take place are sparse, infrequent, irregular and do not take place on a daily basis. This implies that the SMME learner will find it difficult to record productivity indicators in the business as required in order to fulfill the post-training productivity improvement projects.

It thus becomes impossible for SMME learners to record and measure single factor productivity indicators such as labour productivity, machine productivity, capital productivity, wastage, labour turnover, absenteeism, resource utilization and enterprise efficiency due to the fact that business transactions are infrequent and irregular. In extreme cases, some of the learners surveyed indicated that they did not have operational businesses whilst undergoing PCBP training. This illustrates the fact that there is inadequate verification of learner pre-assessment information after selections have taken place.

In an effort to satisfy Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) considerations, a considerable effort has been made by the National Productivity Institute (NPI)'s Public Sector Productivity division to contract and support ETD service providers.

This has resulted in contracted ETD service providers being SMME's themselves who do not possess adequate resources such as computer laptops and vehicles to be able to visit SMME premises and help learners to undertake the productivity improvement projects. This deficiency within the selection of ETD service providers results in inferior post-training learner mentorship to SMME learners, a lack of learning retention and dropout due to lack of transference of learning concepts in the practical world of business. The above-mentioned learning phenomenon has been described by Paulo Freire (2001) as Praxis, the interconnectedness between theory and practice, which is crucial for any retention of learning by learners.

The minor hypothesis behind the study was that *"if learners are given more control over their learning situation, their interest in learning will be heightened and result in lesser learner attrition rates".*
The results of the PCBP research study indicates that learner dropout can indeed be minimized through the involvement of learners in learning. Literature review has indicated the necessity for the adoption of learner-centered principles within learning programmes. In order to increase SMME learner's interest and participation in the PCBP training programme, advocates of the Learner-Centered approach like Hiemstra (1996) advocate for self-directed learning where learner are given more responsibility for their own learning in line with the principles of life-long learning.

To this end, learners need to be given more freedom to choose the training dates and venues during which they can attend PCBP training sessions. Other training delivery methods such as long distance correspondence, regular telephonic and /or electronic support and self-study should be considered in addition to traditional classroom facilitation. This will heighten SMME learner interest and participation within the PCBP training programme and limit learner dropout rates.

To further increase learner interest in the PCBP training programme, learner sensory stimulation should be achieved through the creation of cognitive fantasy in the minds of SMME learners. This implies that the hopes and fears of the SMME learners should be harnessed to stimulate the learner's retention of learning. The objectives of the PCBP training programme should be clearly explained to clarify any prior financial expectations as well as any spirits of entitlement amongst the SMME learners.

Positive learner fantasy in the PCBP training programme could be drawn upon by the PCBP facilitator through the regular show-casing and invitation of successful entrepreneurs who have graduated and benefited from the PCBP training programme. Negative learner fantasy should also be implemented in the sense that the NPI's existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), a binding legal contract containing a financial penalty of one thousand five hundred rands (R1500.00) in case of learner dropout should be compulsorily signed by all SMME learners prior to the commencement of any PCBP training. This will ensure that only mature, serious and committed learners undertake training and that potential dropouts are excluded from attending PCBP training.

This section analyzed the implications of the key research findings and how these findings can be practically applied within the operational nationwide delivery of the Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP).

Summary of Key Findings.

The key objective behind the research study was to assess the causes of SMME learner drop-out and attrition in the national training operational rollout of the Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP), a national training programme of the National Productivity Institute (NPI).

The result of the research survey indicates that an adult SMME learner's personal sustained interest and motivation within the PCBP learning programme is a key determinant whether learner dropout will take place or not.

The study also indicates that, although learners learn differently and may respond differently to different learning situations, there is a plethora of various contributory factors that influence SMME learners to drop out of the Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP). Some of the contributory factors are attributable to the learner himself/herself whilst other contributory factors lie within the design and delivery of learning programmes.

The contributory factors causing adult learner dropout within the PCBP training programme are the competing personal responsibilities of the learner, the duration of the PCBP training programme, the difficulty of PCBP learning content, the financial implications of traveling to and from training and post-training venues, lack of personal interest and motivation by learners, non-operational businesses and irregular business transactions within SMME enterprises, a lack of proper post-training support and mentoring as well as other personal reasons such as the learner's domestic responsibilities and health-related problems.

2.10 Recommendations for Practical Application within the PCBP programme

Flowing from the above-mentioned analysis and practical application of key research findings, the following are the recommendations for practical application within the PCBP training programme:-

1. The facilitation skills of contracted ETD service providers should be improved.
2. Only ETD service providers who have adequate resources like computer laptops and transportation should be contracted to mentor SMME learners.
3. SMME selection criteria should also consider learner maturity, frequency of business transactions and learner commitment in addition to only literacy and numeracy competency considerations.
4. Potential SMME learners with literacy learning skills deficiencies should not be excluded but accommodated in single-medium training sessions where a particular indigenous African language is utilized as a means of instruction.
5. English PCBP training manuals for learners should be translated into other African languages to accommodate all SMME learners with literacy problems.
6. SMME learners with limited numeric abilities should not be excluded but accommodated through the introduction of a remedial training module on basic numeracy or the usage of a calculator, hopefully also translated into other relevant African languages.
7. SMME learners should be grouped based on their numeric and literacy competencies arising out of the pre-training assessments undertaken during selections.
8. Proper verification of SMME learner information has to be conducted to eliminate non-operational small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMME)'s.
9. The lengthy duration of PCBP contact training sessions has to be reduced.
10. The repetitive number of post-training activities such as SMME rehearsals and commitment sessions need to be reduced.
11. SMME learners need to be given a choice in selecting the dates and venues for attending PCBP training.
12. Contracted ETD service providers need to be strictly monitored by NPI Project Managers to ensure that they conduct site visits and telephonic support in mentoring the SMME learners post-training.
13. PCBP learning content needs to be simplified and toned down to fit the learning comprehension abilities of NQF Level 2 – 4 learners.
14. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) contract should be strictly applied and enforced on learners who do drop out of training.
15. Other alternative training delivery methods as opposed to only classroom training/facilitation should be considered for supplementing the delivery of PCBP training to learners.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research Purposes

The following limitations affected the research study:-

Most of the learners and respondents have low literacy and numeric abilities and could thus not complete the research questionnaire without external translation by the researcher and /or family members. This could lead to dilution of learner's own inputs and opinions.

The fact that only thirty four (x34) questionnaires were received back from respondents created problems during the collation of learner responses with transcripts. The fifty seven percent (57%) response rate of the interviewees is low and could negate the reliability of the study.
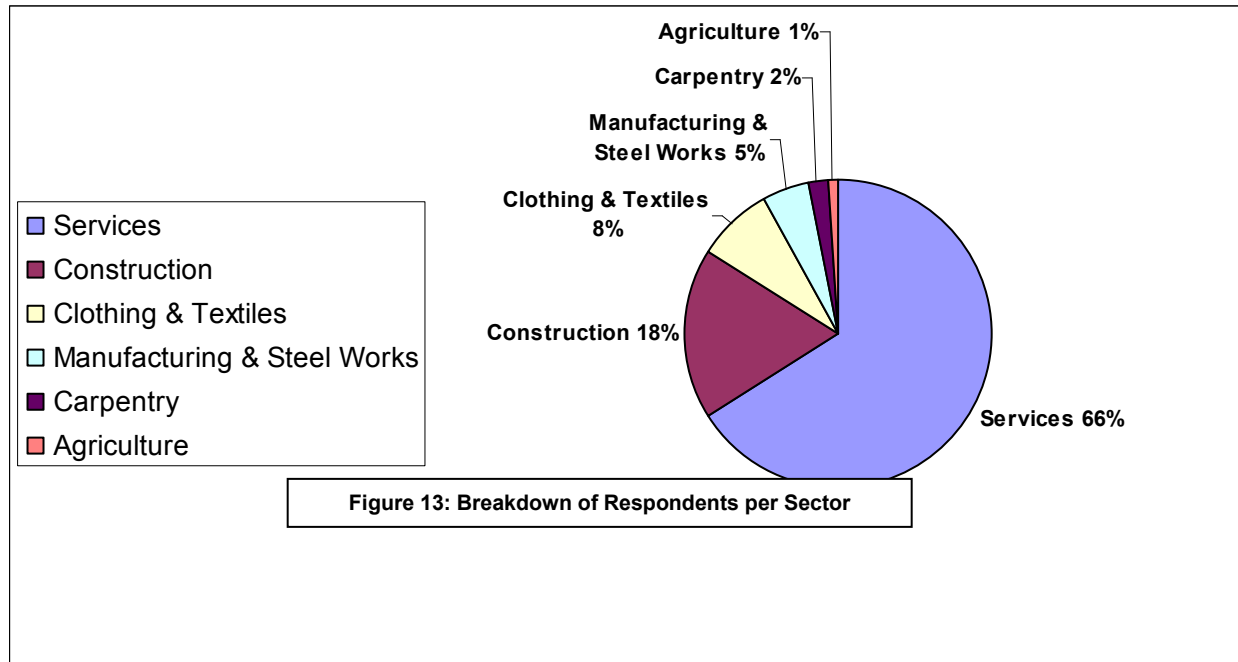
The research instrument was transmitted to some respondents via electronic mail, via the facsimile machine and via snail mail. Due to the differences in the speed of information transmission from the researcher to the respondents and back, some of the questionnaires were not legible, snail mail responses took long periods en route back to the researcher. Also, some respondents could have felt uncomfortable using software technology by filling in the questionnaire in a Microsoft Word software programme.

The cost implications of the research study through the researcher having to purchase postage-paid envelopes, making telephonic requests to respondents to participate in the study as well as undertaking telephonic interviews in the mornings and during afternoons were inhibitive.

The length of telephone calls thus had to be kept to a minimum in order to offset further financial costs. In an effort to offset costs, some concepts within the research questionnaire could not have been thoroughly explained to respondents and in some cases the necessary participation lapsed due to defective communication. This is evidenced by the fact that only thirty four (x34) respondents out of sixty (x60) returned the fully completed research questionnaire back to the researcher.

In order to better understand the causes of adult learner dropout within similar learning programmes such within long distance education correspondence programmes and in order to obtain more valid statistical findings, this research study can be repeated with a much larger survey population sample of participating respondents.

Unlike the above-mentioned study which was conducted over a period of three months only, I recommend that such a more comprehensive research study should be conducted over a much longer period along with the triangulation of research data through the utilization of a more detailed quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methodological approach.

Figure 13: Breakdown of Respondents per Sector

The following is a sample of some the responses that the survey elicited from respondents.

- *"The training is very long".*
- *"I could not find somebody to help me in the business during the training"*
- *"My business lost a lot of money during the period."*
- *"I could not understand some of the things that were discussed".*
- *"I also had to take care of my young daughter who was sick".*
- *"I have already gone to another similar course on entrepreneurship before".*
- *"Transport was a big problem for me because the course was presented in Johannesburg. I used three taxis in the morning."*
- *"I struggled to understand because I did not attend training on the first day."*
- *"I found it difficult to implement the productivity projects because business is very slow"*
- *"The NPI consultant only came once to see me at my business premises"*

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3: Project Intervention Implementation

Based on the outcomes of the literature review and research study into the causes of SMME learner dropout within the PCBP training programme, the following were the key recommendations that were approved for practical application.

1. That the facilitation skills of contracted ETD service providers should be improved.
2. That only ETD service providers who have adequate resources like computer laptops and transportation should be contracted to mentor SMME learners.
3. That SMME selection criteria should also consider learner maturity, frequency of business transactions and learner commitment in addition to only literacy and numeracy competency considerations.
4. That potential SMME learners with literacy learning skills deficiencies should not be excluded but accommodated in single-medium training sessions where a particular indigenous African language is utilized as a means of instruction.
5. That English PCBP training manuals for learners should be translated into other African languages to accommodate all SMME learners with literacy problems.
6. That SMME learners with limited numeric abilities should not be excluded but accommodated through the introduction of a remedial training module on basic numeracy or the usage of a calculator, hopefully also translated into other relevant African languages.
7. That SMME learners should be grouped based on their numeric and literacy competencies arising out of the pre-training assessments undertaken during selections.
8. That proper verification of SMME learner information has to be conducted to eliminate non-operational small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMME)'s.
9. That the lengthy duration of PCBP contact training sessions has to be reduced.
10. That the repetitive number of post-training activities such as SMME rehearsals and commitment sessions need to be reduced.
11. That SMME learners need to be given a choice in selecting the dates and venues for attending PCBP training.
12. That contracted ETD service providers need to be strictly monitored by NPI Project Managers to ensure that they conduct site visits and telephonic support in mentoring the SMME learners post-training.
13. That PCBP learning content needs to be simplified and toned down to fit the learning comprehension abilities of NQF Level 2 – 4 learners.
14. That the NPI should sign memoranda of understanding (MOU) contracts with SMME learners prior to training and that these contracts should be strictly applied and enforced on learners who do drop out of training.
15. That other alternative training delivery methods as opposed to only classroom training/facilitation should be considered for supplementing the delivery of PCBP training to learners.

Upon analysis of most of the recommendation arising out of the study, it becomes clear that the most causes of SMME learner dropout are caused by contracted ETD service providers who are responsible for facilitation during contact sessions. Other contributory causes of SMME learner dropout had to do with the selection criteria, duration of training sessions, simplification of training content and proper logistical arrangements.

In an effort to implement the recommendations, the researcher submitted a copy of the research study to superiors in order to obtain buy-in and authorization in order to be able to practically apply key recommendations as stated above. Flowing from the recommendations of the above-mentioned study, a feedback meeting was convened between the researcher and senior management of the NPI's Public Sector Productivity division during which key recommendations arising out of the study were presented. Arising out of this meeting, approval was granted for the implementation of most of the recommendations.

3.1 Key recommendations not implemented.

With the exception of three key recommendations which were not approved for implementation, most of the key recommendations were approved. The key recommendations that did not receive approval for implementation are:-

- **That other alternative training delivery methods as opposed to only classroom facilitation should be considered for supplementing the delivery of PCBP training to learners.**
- **That SMME learners need to be given a choice in selecting the dates and venues for attending PCBP training.**
- **That only ETD service providers who have adequate resources like computer laptops and transportation should be contracted to mentor SMME learners.**

The primary reason why the above-mentioned recommendations were not approved for implementation by the researcher are due to cost limitations, lack of practical operational capacity within the division and the fact that there are already existing service level agreements between the NPI and its service providers.

According to senior management, the training schedule of the Productive Capacity Building Programme (PCBP) is already predetermined and venues have already been booked in advance. This thus makes it operationally impossible for SMME learners to be given a choice in personally selecting the dates and venues for attending PCBP training.

Due to existing annual service level agreements that the NPI has already entered into with its current ETD service providers for 2007, it becomes impossible to select new service providers. This thus implies that the recommendation that only ETD service providers who have adequate resources like computer laptops and transportation should be contracted to mentor SMME learners is impossible to implement.

Time constraints also played a role since the researcher did not have enough time to implement all of the above-mentioned recommendations within the outstanding thirty days prior to the completion of the research study.

3.2 Key recommendations implemented.

Due to the interconnectedness of most the key study recommendations that centred on the SMME selection criteria employed in the PCBP programme, the researcher was able to implement the following key recommendations:-

- **SMME learners with limited numeric abilities should not be excluded but accommodated in the contact sessions through the introduction of a remedial training module on basic numeracy.**
- **SMME selection criteria should also consider learner maturity, frequency of business transactions and learner commitment in addition to only literacy and numeracy competency considerations.**
- **Potential SMME learners with literacy learning skills deficiencies should not be excluded but accommodated in single-medium training sessions where a particular indigenous African language is utilized as a means of instruction**
- **SMME learners should be grouped based on their numeric and literacy competencies arising out of the pre-training assessments undertaken during selections.**
- **English PCBP training manuals for learners should be translated into other African languages to accommodate all SMME learners with literacy problems.**

After successful consultations with superiors, the researcher undertook selections of SMME learners from Randfontein on the 3rd July 2007. All SMME learners who passed the arithmetic selection test were grouped together into one class consisting of fifteen SMME learners.

Six SMME learners who did not pass the selection test due to low numeracy competencies were allocated to a separate group in an effort to group them into a training class where remedial training on numeracy and the usage of a calculator would be offered in an African language in addition to the other PCBP learning modules.
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Another group of twenty SMME learners from nearby Krugersdorp was subjected to the arithmetic assessment test on the 5th July 2007. During these selections, thirteen SMME learners passed the selection test and were all scheduled for training into one normal PCBP class. The outstanding seven learners from Krugersdorp who did not pass the selection test were placed together with the initial group of six unsuccessful SMME learners from Mohlakeng into one class where remedial arithmetic training would be offered in addition to the normal PCBP training modules using a mix of indigenous African languages during training. PCBP training was scheduled to take place in Krugersdorp on the 30th July to the 3rd August 2007.

Due to time constraints however, the researcher was unable to observe and report on the impact of the above-mentioned application of recommendations. The only immediate benefit arising from the application of the above-mentioned recommendations is that the pool of SMME learners who do attend PCBP training has increased more than before. This is due to the fact that unsuccessful learners who did not pass the arithmetic selection test are no longer excluded from attending training as before.

As opposed to the prior usage of the arithmetic assessment tool for excluding potential SMME learners from training, the recommendations from the study indicates that the arithmetic assessment tool should be used for sorting learners according to their learning competencies as opposed to excluding them from training as used to happen before the implementation of recommendations. This has resulted in an increase in the number of SMME learners that attend training.

- ***The NPI should sign memoranda of understanding (MOU) contracts with SMME learners prior to training and that these contracts should be strictly applied and enforced on learners who do drop out of training***.

On the 9th July 2007, a draft contract of agreement / memorandum of understanding document was instituted and given to all new learners who came for training on to the PCBP course. According to the aforesaid contract, SMME learners would receive free training but would be liable for an amount of up to one thousand five hundred rands (R1500) should they opt not to attend all the contact session days or not to implement the three compulsory productivity improvement projects within their businesses post-training.

The following are the conditions which are stipulated within the contract of agreement:-

- The SMME learner will allow the education, training and development (ETD) service provider to train him /her on the contents of the PCBP programme with the aim of assisting the enterprise they own or the enterprise employing them to be profitable and to grow.

- The SMME learner will attend all classroom training sessions running for the duration of five consecutive days in the venue designated for this training, and sign the attendance register daily at the end of each training session.

- The SMME learner will complete all other documentation forming part of the implementation of the PCBP and submit such documentation to the ETD service provider on request

- The SMME learner will undertake all productivity related measurements in the enterprise they own or the enterprise employing them in accordance with instructions provided by the ETD service provider training them, and provide such measurement documentation to the ETD service provider on request

- The SMME learner will undertake productivity improvement projects in the organizations they own or the organization employing them in order improve profits and growth, and provide productivity improvement plans and the outcomes of such productivity improvement project to the ETD service provider on request

- The SMME learner will allow the ETD service provider and NPI Project Manager access to his/her premises and to all departments or sections for purposes related to the implementation of the PCBP only. Such PCBP purposes will include, but will not be limited to, the collection of organizational financial and performance information

- The SMME learner undertakes to honour appointments which have been made with the ETD service provider or the NPI Project Manager.

- The SMME learner undertakes to display maximum support and participation towards all role-players during the implementation of the PCBP and to share successes with other SMME's.

- The SMME learner undertakes to pay an amount of R1 500,00 should he/she or an employee of his/her drop out of the programme before the completion of three months after signing this agreement for whatever reason including the reasons listed above.

Based on the researcher's observations SMME learners do not seem to have a problem with signing the contracts and thus far, none of the learners who have signed the contracts have opted to drop out of the contract training sessions. Due to time constraints however, the researcher was unable to observe the impact of the above-mentioned key recommendation on the implementation of the productivity improvement projects after the contact training sessions.

- **The lengthy duration of PCBP contact training sessions has to be reduced.**
- **The repetitive number of post-training activities such as SMME rehearsals and commitment sessions need to be reduced.**
- **PCBP learning content needs to be simplified and toned down to fit the learning comprehension abilities of NQF Level 2 – 4 learners.**

In an effort to reduce the length of the PCBP contact training days, the researcher, in his capacity as Provincial Project Manager recommended that the old PCBP learning modules should be simplified and consolidated into two or less training modules. This will result in the reduction of training contact days into four instead of five days. The researcher recommends that some of the learning concepts that were previously taught to SMME learners in the old module 2 (Economics) can be rationalized and added into the new module 1 (Entrepreneurship).

This thus implies that SMME learners who do pass the arithmetic selection test in the new training syllabus would only attend training for three days instead of five days and only need to learn entrepreneurship as well as productivity concepts. SMME learners who do not pass the arithmetic assessment would need to attend training for four days and be subjected to three training modules namely entrepreneurship, productivity as well as a training module on basic numeracy and the usage of a calculator.
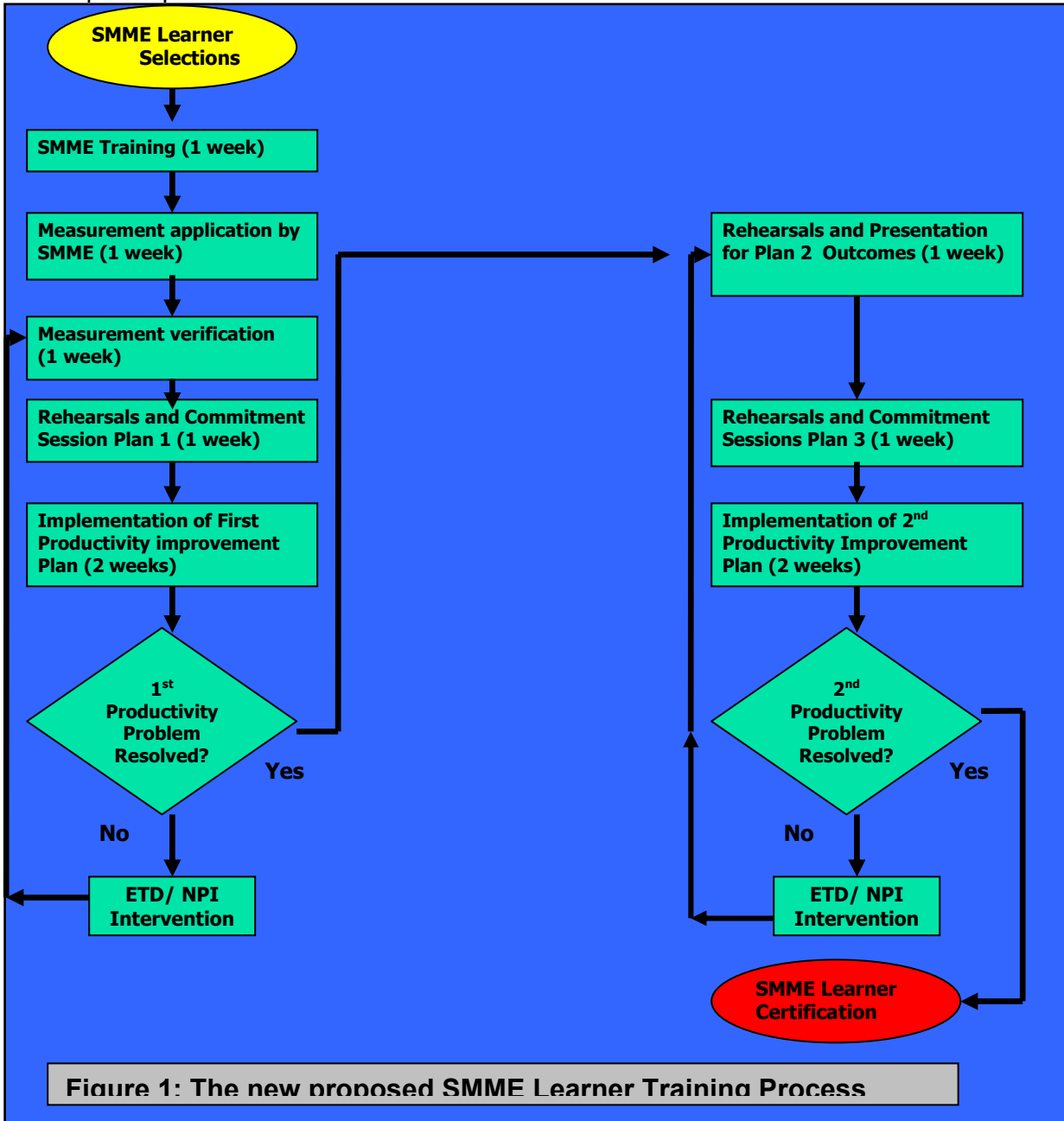
The new proposed PCBP training modules are thus:

- ■ Module 1 - Entrepreneurship and its role in the Economy
- ■ Module 2 - Basic Numeracy (SMME learner needs-based)
- ■ Module 3 - Productivity Improvement Competencies

In an effort to reduce monotony and boredom, the researcher recommends that SMME learners should undertake only two productivity improvement projects instead of three within their businesses prior to becoming certificated.

In an effort to reduce the various post-training activities, the researcher also recommends that the old training schedule be rationalized into the following post-training activities:-

(a) <u>1 week</u> training of SMMEs
(b) <u>1 week</u> of measurement by SMMEs
(c) <u>1 week</u> SMMEs selection
(d) <u>1 week</u> of measurement verification, rehearsal and commitment session for 2 productivity improvement plans (verification includes a random sample of five or more delegates per group)
(e) <u>2 weeks</u> of implementation of productivity improvement projects
(f) <u>1 week</u> of implementation follow up, rehearsal and outcomes presentation and plan 3 presentation

Figure 1: The new proposed SMME Learner Training Process

In an effort to simplify and tone down the PCBP learning content, to fit the learning comprehension abilities of NQF Level 2 – 4 learners, the researcher also recommends an overhaul of training manuals to remove bombastic terminology and irrelevant concepts within the PCBP programme. Due to manpower and time constraints, this has thus far not yet been done.

Although permission for implementation was granted, time constraints were experienced in revising the training manuals and resulted in the researcher being unable to implement the above-mentioned recommendations within the allocated time-frames of the research study.

- **Contracted ETD service providers need to be strictly monitored by NPI Project Managers to ensure that they conduct site visits and telephonic support in mentoring the SMME learners post-training.**
- **Proper verification of SMME learner information has to be conducted to eliminate non-operational small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMME)'s.**

In an effort to avoid the selection of non-operational businesses and resultant dropouts from the PCBP programme, the research study has recommended that all SMME learners who undergo selection should be verified to ensure that they do indeed own operational enterprises. This is to enable SMME learners to be able to practically apply learning theoretical concepts into practice through the productivity improvement projects in the operations of the enterprise.

In order to verify SMME's telephonic verification is done by the Divisional Secretary prior to the invitation of SMME's for selections. Further, the Project Manager now undertakes site visits in order to verify ownership as well as the existence of an SMME/.

This however relies a lot on the strict monitoring by the NPI Project manager to ensure that the ETD service provider fulfills their end of the service level agreement with NPI and indeed undertakes, site visits and gives telephonic support to mentor the SMME learners on their learning journey on productivity.

3.3 Limitations encountered.

The main limitations that the researcher encountered in implementing key recommendations from the study has been time constraints since the researcher only had thirty (30) days to practically implement recommendations since completing the study on the 30th June 2007.

Another limitation encountered by the researcher was the limited scope of authority as a Provincial Project Manager to implement some of the key recommendations. The inflexible nature of the PCBP master plan activities and the fact that funds have already been committed for specific purposes from SEDA implies that some of the key recommendations could also not be implemented. The lack of practical operational capacity within the division and the fact that there are already existing service level agreements between the NPI and its service providers implied also limited the researcher's ability to practically implement key recommendations of the study.

3.4 <u>Summary of Key Learning from the Study.</u>

The main learning from the practical implementation of recommendations indicates that adult learners are continually managing diverse competing life responsibilities and that learning is only one of the competing life responsibilities that adult learners have to contend with.

For adult learning to be enhanced, training should be such that it causes as little inconvenience to the SMME learner's life as possible. If training commitments demand too much personal time from adult learners, they are compelled to make certain life choices based on their personal priority of needs. In certain cases, such life choices can lead to the adult learners opting to drop out of learning in order to attend to other more important life priorities.

Low arithmetic skills competencies do not imply that adult learners are incapable of learning. Even adult learners with arithmetic skills deficiencies are capable of learning about numeracy faster because they have a lot of life experience accumulated in handling funds. The arithmetic assessment tool used in the PCBP programme clearly served more as an artificial learning barrier and excluded many capable SMME learners from attending contact training.

Also, adult learners need to understand that learning is a voluntary commitment and their own responsibility which will ultimately enhance the quality of their own lives. Failure to meet educational commitments also carries consequences in the form of financial penalties for dropping out. Education and training is thus a voluntary life contract with clear life-affecting consequences which only they can take.

3.5. <u>List of Tables & Figures</u>.