

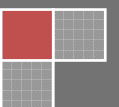
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ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE 'SKILLS REVOLUTION' AMONG WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study sought to examine the extent to which there is/has been a skills revolution in South Africa, the extent to which such a revolution targets/has targeted women and the extent to, and ways in which such skills revolution benefits/has benefitted women, particularly those who have been historically disadvantaged. In essence, the study examined the nature of opportunities available to South African women as a result of the skills revolution and the factors that impede their use of these opportunities.

Post-apartheid South Africa continues to struggle in its efforts to provide quality life for all its citizens, particularly for women and children. Persistent inequalities (linked to race, gender and social class for example), continue to impact negatively on the availability and quality of skills needed to grow the economy. In particular, as researchers have concluded:

“It is women, particularly rural black women, that most often [bear] the brunt of social and economic inequality, and yet they are also the sector of the population that can most easily slip through the net of social policy and research” (Parenee and Wilhelm-Solomon, www.idasa.org.za/gbOutputFiles.asp?WriteContent, accessed March 19, 2009).

As such, gender imbalances in the workplace continue to impact negatively on the country’s efforts to grow and sustain its economy, and to improve lives. To illustrate, while women constitute 51% of South Africa’s population, they make up 57% of those unemployed, with African women in particular constituting 55.5% of those unemployed (ibid).

To address this, the then Minister of Labour, Tito Mboweni, launched a comprehensive skills development strategy. This ‘skills revolution’, as the minister described it, was based on the principle of life-long learning, embedded in a National Skills Framework, administered by 25 (later reduced to 23) Sector Education and Training Authorities

(SETAs), and funded by a one per cent payroll levy (Johnston, 2007, lnw.creamermedia.co.za/articles/attachments/09678_the_skills_revolution.pdf, accessed March 18, 2009). Finally adopting the National Skills Development Strategy in 2005, the South African government identified skills development as key to “social mobility and chances of a materially better and more fulfilling life” (Johnston, 2007: 5, lnw.creamermedia.co.za/articles/attachments/09678_the_skills_revolution.pdf, accessed March 18, 2009). In this regard, government and scholars alike, have concluded that women, who constitute 51% of the country’s population (Knight, 2006, richardknight.homestead.com/files/SouthAfrica2006-PopulationandHIV-AIDS.pdf – accessed March 21, 2009), and who carry the burden of care in families and communities, must be prioritised in any skills development intervention if poverty and other development issues are to be addressed. As the PWMSA’s Business Plan of 2008 indicates, “the Skills Development Act, while not specifically targeted at women, [was developed] to improve the employment prospects of persons previously disadvantaged by unfair discrimination and to redress those disadvantages through training and education” and the intended beneficiaries include women, and particularly rural women (PWMSA Business Plan: 7). In particular, ~~the SDA~~ the Skills Development Act (SDA) ~~The SDA~~ seeks to transform the education and training system in South Africa by improving the quality and quantity of training (Department of Labour 2004, p. 1). Its specific aims are to, among others:

- Develop skills in the economy by ensuring transferability of skills and facilitate the anticipation of demands for new skills needs,
- Increase levels of investment in education and training and improve returns on that investment,
- Encourage employers to use the workplace as a learning environment,
- Improve workers’ quality of life, prospects of work and mobility, and
- Encourage learnerships and other training programmes to improve employment prospects. (Grawitzky, 2007, p. 6).

In line with the vision of the SDA the then Minister of Labour, Tito Mboweni, called for what he termed a ‘Skills Revolution’. To facilitate the implementation of this vision, the

Department of Labour developed the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS), which sought among others to:

- Enable high-quality life-long learning among the workforce,
- Develop skills among people in formal employment and those in small businesses,
- Develop skills for employability,
- Assist new entrants into employment, and
- Offer skills development grants.

Other supportive structures such as the Skills Development Levy for companies have also been implemented.

While available research suggests that major strides have been made in closing the gap between men and women in terms of accessing education and the labour market, gender continues to play a significant role in women's lives in general, and in their academic and workplace success specifically, and consequently, in the quality of life they have.

Sixteen years after democracy, there is consensus that a lot of effort and resources, through the SETAs and service providers in the country, has been spent in attempts to realise the ideals of the skills revolution, particularly with regards to prioritising skills development among women. For example, the National Skills Fund (NSF) comes out of a 20% top-slice of the skills development levy paid by employers. Funds are disbursed through the National Department of Labour, from the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and from the Provincial Offices of the Department of Labour for skills training. As such, the NSF is a medium through which cross-subsidisation from the formal to the informal sector, from the employed to the unemployed, and from declining to growing industries is effected.

However, putting structures in place is one thing and having such structures to work the way they should is another. Little is known about the extent to, and ways in which this facility is used to help improve the skills of marginalised women, or about what impact such efforts are having on them, and in particular, whether and to what extent and in what

ways their qualitative experiences, ~~including-and~~ their quality of life, have changed for the better as a result of the implementation of the NSDS.

It is for these reasons that the Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa (PWMSA) has identified "a skills revolution for marginalised women as the priority step in the implementation of its programme of action" (PWMSA 2008 Business Plan).

Goals of the Study

In its pursuit to advance women the PWMSA commissioned this study which examined the impact of the skills revolution on women. This study therefore sought to answer the following key questions:

1. To what extent has there been a skills revolution in South Africa?
2. To what extent and in what ways are women benefiting from a skills revolution?
3. What factors, if any, impede women's access to skills training and its intended results (improved access to the labour market and better quality of life)?

In order to achieve the goals of this study, we begin by exploring the literature about the policy framework guiding skills development in South Africa. The pillars of this framework as we reported above are the Skills Development Act and the Skills Development Levies Act. Within these frameworks the economy of the nation is then structured into Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs) which oversee training in specific fields.

From the policy framework we move on to review theoretical literature. We interrogate the concept of a 'skills revolution' and conclude that this must refer to a drastic, far-reaching and society-wide growth in skills in this case among women. We then proceed to examine some theories that explain women's participation in society in general and in the economy in particular. Here we identify perspectives of viewing women in society,

for example, women as an asset or a liability. We are convinced that the former view explains the role of women in South Africa and is consistent with the vision expressed in the country's skills development legal framework, hence the notion of the skills revolution for women.

Methodology

From the literature we describe the methodology of the study. The nature of the information we sought demanded that the study be largely qualitative in design. We interviewed two broad categories of respondents: officials in selected SETAs; and women themselves from selected sectors. We also gathered some small scale statistical data depicting training trends in one sector. We analysed data according to the key research questions of the study. As a way of clearly representing what obtains in each of the sectors we studied, we present interview data sector by sector with some women's experiences standing out as generic to all skills development initiatives.

Findings

Our findings suggest that across all sectors of the economy there is consciousness on the part of those implementing skills programmes, of the need to advance women. The study enabled us to reach the view that the skills revolution should be understood at two levels: low level and high level skills. We found that steady progress is noticeable with regard to the former level while a lot is still to be achieved in the latter level. The essence of the skills revolution for women is to enable them to become active players and a force to reckon with in the mainstream economy of the country. This is the skills revolution. We conclude that this revolution is yet to be achieved. However we are able to conclude that some revolution has occurred at the low end of skills development.

With regard to inhibiting factors we found these to include:

- lack of follow up on training initiatives,
- inadequate flow of information particularly to women in remote areas,
- the apparent low-key character of some training initiatives,
- women's multiple responsibilities in families and society,

- gender inequalities, and
- the inability of small companies to regularly release workers for training and remain viable seem to be some of the inhibiting factors.

As regards factors driving women to participate in skills development we found the following as some of the key ones:

- the desire to take charge of one's day-to-day life's challenges,
- the desire to be valued more in the family and society
- striving to secure formal employment in the mainstream economy,
- the motivation to run their own business, and quite interestingly
- the drive to improve the lives of other women

Recommendations

We end our 'story' with a set of recommendations emanating from the study. To make the desired (by government) skills revolution' a reality, we recommend the following:

- A countrywide study that will provide deeper understanding about developments in all (or most of) the sectors of the economy and include women from various sectors of our society;
- Programmes that explicitly target women, communicate their intention to do so, and actually implement programmes that reflect such targeting;
- Secondary/parallel programmes that facilitate women's access to training programmes (including child care, stipends to offset loss of income, etcetera);
- Mentoring and support for women during and after the training programmes to ensure follow-through and sustainability of impacts; and
- Training programmes that focus on gender equality and aim to address the stereotypes regarding the role of women in society.

1. Introduction and background to the study

Women's struggles in South Africa started before the last century. Women took a lead in the fight for land after the promulgation of the Land Act. At this time they were not full members of the liberation movement, they were deemed as associate members, yet they were able to define their role within the struggles of the South African society' (Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa, p.1 <http://www.anc.org.za/wl/docs/pwm/progressive.html>, accessed 13/03/2010).

Post-apartheid South Africa continues to strive to provide for quality life for all her people in general and for women in particular. However gender and social class inequalities, among others, continue to haunt the country, impacting negatively on the development of skills necessary for the growth of the economy. As literature testifies:

It is women, particularly rural black women, that most often [bear] the brunt of social and economic inequality, and yet they are also the sector of the population that can most easily slip through the net of social policy and research (Parenee & Wilhelm-Solomon, www.idasa.org.za/gbOutputFiles.asp?WriteContent, accessed 19/03/09).

Having realised the importance of skills for economic and social development, the South African government developed a comprehensive skills development framework. This framework comes across through at least four policy documents: The Skills Development Act (1998), The Skills Development Levies Act (1999), the National Skills Development Strategy (2001) and the Human Resources Development Strategy (2001).

The Skills Development Act (SDA) is intended to transform the education and training system in South Africa by improving the quality and quantity of training (Department of Labour 2004, p. 1). Specifically, the SDA aims to, among others:

- Develop skills in the economy by ensuring transferability of skills and facilitate the anticipation of demands for new skills needs,
- Increase levels of investment in education and training and improve return on that investment,
- Encourage employers to use the workplace as a learning environment,
- Improve workers' quality of life, prospects of work and mobility, and
- Encourage learnerships and other training programmes to improve employment

prospects. (Grawitzky, 2007, p. 6).

In South Africa skills development is financed in accordance with the Skills Development Levies Act (SDLA) (1999). The SDLA requires a payment of a one per cent (1%) levy by employers in the private sector on their total company roll. Twenty per cent of this levy goes to the National Skills Fund (NSF), which finances the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) established in 2001.

The Department of Labour (DoL) drives the implementation of the NSDS. This strategy, launched by the Minister of Labour, comprises five key constituencies namely Organised Labour; Organised Business; Government; Community; and Education and Training providers (Department of Labour 2004, p.1). The NSDS was set up to offer a broad national framework in which skills development was to take place. Entitled 'Skills for productive citizenship for all', the NSDS was planned to, by March 2005, achieve the following objectives through the given success indicators:

- Objective 1: Developing a culture of high quality life-long learning
 - Success Indicator 1: 70 % of workers will have at least a level one qualification on the National Qualification Framework
 - Success Indicator 2: a minimum of 15 % of the workers will have embarked on a structured learning programme satisfactorily
 - Success Indicator 3: an average of 20 enterprises per sector and at least five national government departments to be committed to an agreed national standard for enterprise-based people development
- Objective 2: Fostering skills development in the formal economy for productivity and employment growth
 - Success Indicator 1: at least 75% of enterprises with more than 150 workers are receiving skills development grants and the contributions towards productivity and employer and employee benefits are measured
 - Success Indicator 2: at least 40 % of enterprises employing between 50 and 150 workers are receiving skills development grants and the contributions towards productivity and employer and employee benefits are measured

Success Indicator 3: Learnerships are available to workers in every sector

Success Indicator 4: All government departments assess and report on budgeted expenditure for skills development relevant to Public Service sector and departmental priorities

- Objective 3: Stimulating and supporting skills development in small businesses

Success Indicator 1: at least 20 % of new and existing registered small businesses to be supported in skills development initiatives and the impact of such support to be measured

- Objective 4: Promoting skills development for employability and sustainable livelihoods through social development initiatives and

Success Indicator 1: 100 % of the National Skills Fund apportionment to social development is spent on viable development projects (by March 2003)

Success Indicator 2: the impact of the National Skills Fund is measured by project type and duration, including details of placement rates, which shall be least 70 %

- Objective 5: Assisting new entrants into employment

Success Indicator 1: a minimum of 80 000 people under the age of 80 have entered learnerships

Success Indicator 2: a minimum of 50 % of those who have completed learnerships, within six month of completion are employed, in full-time study or further training, or are in a social development programme

The equity targets span across all five objectives and state that the beneficiaries of the strategy should be 85 % black, 54 % female and 4 % people with disabilities (Department of Labour, 2004). The preceding objectives and success indicators demonstrate the high level of seriousness with which government sought to approach skills development. Later in this report, we briefly examine what available evidence from literature suggests regarding the achievement of these objectives.

To facilitate the implementation of these targets the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) were established in 2005. SETAs represent every sector of the

South African economy ranging from private to public enterprises and manage and coordinate the skills development therein (Department of Labour 2005d, p.3). Among other functions, the SETAs' tasks include developing and implementing Sector Skills Plans (SSP) in reference to the framework given by the NSDS. The annual updated SSPs describe the development trends in the different sectors, the skills demanded as well as the priorities for the skills development (Department of Labour 2005d: 6).

The Human Resources Development Strategy (HRD) builds on the overarching framework for the NSDS. Launched in 2001 by the Ministers of Labour and Education, the HRD was related to several development facts shown in the Human Development Index (HDI). One feature was the high degree of inequality according to race, gender and disability shown in South Africa's high *Gini* coefficient of 0.72 in 2001 (United Nations Development Programmes 2008, p. 27). Others included health issues such as HIV/AIDS as well as other infectious diseases, life expectancy, under 5- mortality and population growth rates. The main aims of the HRD can be summarised as abolishing poverty, promoting economic growth and providing a solid educational foundation. These efforts were meant to improve the Human Development Index of South Africa (Department of Education/ Department of Labour 2001, p. 4).

Of particular relevance to this study is the fact that the government of South Africa, and indeed scholars have concluded that women, who constitute 51% of the country's population (Knight, 2006, richardknight.homestead.com/files/SouthAfrica2006-PopulationandHIV-AIDS.pdf -accessed 21/03/09), and who carry the burden of care in families and communities, must be prioritised in any skills development intervention if poverty and other development problems are to be addressed. Therefore, although the Skills Development Act was not entirely targeted at women, it was indeed intended to improve employment prospects of South Africans who were previously disadvantaged through unfair discrimination and to redress the situation through education and training. Women are undoubtedly the most previously disadvantaged group and therefore they should be first-choice beneficiaries of this Act.

Sixteen years after the attainment of democracy, there is general consensus in South Africa that a lot of effort and resources, through the SETAs and various service providers have been spent in attempts to realise the ideals of the skills revolution, in particular, the prioritisation of skills development among women. To illustrate, the National Skills Fund (NSF) is a medium through which cross-subsidisation from the formal to the informal sector, from the employed to the unemployed, and from declining to growing industries is put into effect. However, little is known about the extent to, and ways in which this facility is used to help improve the skills of marginalised women, or about what impact such efforts are having on them. It is for these reasons that the Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa (PWMSA) has identified a skills revolution for marginalised women as a priority in its programme of action. In this connection, the PWMSA commissioned a study to examine the impact of the 'skills revolution' on women.

2. Purpose of the Study

This study sought to examine the extent to which there is/has been a skills revolution for women in South Africa and the extent to, and ways in which such skills revolution benefits/has benefited women. In essence, the study examined the nature of opportunities available to women as a result of the skills revolution and the factors that facilitate and/or impede their access and use of these opportunities. The following three research questions guided the investigation:

1. To what extent has there been a skills revolution in South Africa?
2. To what extent and in what ways are women benefitting from the skills revolution?
 - To what extent are formal educational institutions/programmes including Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) accessible to women and how has this impacted on the skills revolution for women?

- To what extent are informal educational programmes accessible to women not in formal employment and how has this impacted on their access to other learning pathways?
 - What other forms of training are open to women in various sectors?
 - To what extent and how have employment and entrepreneurship trends changed in favour of women? What are the career routes of women in various sectors and to what extent do these reflect a positive impact of the skills revolution (for example, are women taking up careers that were previously the preserve of men as a result of the skills training)?
 - Has the skills revolution resulted in a decrease in the wage gap between men and women?
3. What factors, if any, facilitate and/or impede women's access to skills training and its intended results (improved access to the labour market and better quality of life)?

In the next section, the notion of a 'skills revolution' is discussed and international and local literature pertaining to this is reviewed. This will be followed by the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that have informed the study, the research design and methodology used to address the research questions, and finally, the findings from the study and its implications for policy and practice.

3. Exploring the notion of a 'skills revolution' in the context of South Africa: A review of Literature

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines a skill as 'an ability to do something well, especially because you have learnt and practised it'. Thus, for economic development to occur a country's workforce should not simply work, they must do that work well. In order for this to happen, they must have learnt these jobs to be able to either look for work or self-employ. In 1999, 80% of the South African workforce was in the categories: semi-skilled, unskilled or unemployed. As such, skills development was

desperately and urgently needed if the economy was to be competitive on the global market (Kraak 2004, p. 40). The same Dictionary defines a revolution as ‘a complete change in ways of thinking, methods of working etc’. It is a drastic and far-reaching change. In the context of South Africa, we can therefore argue that a skills revolution should be a far-reaching, society-wide development of skills particularly among the historically disadvantaged populations, most of whom are poor African women. It should be a vigorous process of moving people from being unskilled or semi-skilled to skilled, and from being unemployed to employed or self-employed. It must be a drastic, complete change in the state of skills of the entire society, in basic education, further education (FE), higher education (HE) or workplace-based skills development (Vass 2009, p. 4).

But what does the literature say so far regarding the achievement ~~or lack thereof~~, of a skills revolution or lack thereof, in South Africa? We turn to this matter next.

3.1 The skills revolution: Government and independent research perspectives

Different perspectives have emerged on whether there has been a skills revolution or not in the country. In this section we examine government and scholars’ perspectives on the extent, nature and outcomes of the skills revolution as evidenced in literature.

3.1.1 Government Perspectives

In 2005 the Department of Labour (DoL) reflected on the first outcomes of the ‘skills revolution’ using the objectives and success indicators reported in section 2.1 above. According to the Implementation Report published by the Department of Labour (2004) most of the targets set for the first phase of the skills revolution were met. In particular, the ABET programme, with nine objectives, was deemed successful (Department of Labour 2004, p.14). These were:

Objective 1: Link ABET to the development of human resources within the national development programme aimed at restructuring the economy, addressing past inequalities and the building of a democratic society.

Objective 2: Provide general education as the basic foundation that enables learners to develop their full potential and to engage in opportunities for further education and training and lifelong learning.

Objective 3: Develop a framework for the recognition of prior knowledge, skills and abilities gained through life experience.

Objective 4: Develop a curriculum framework that will equip learners with the knowledge, attitudes, skills and critical capacity to participate fully in all aspects of society. Specifically, the curriculum framework must enable individuals to :

- develop literacy, language and communication skills in one or more languages
- develop numeracy and mathematics skills
- develop a critical understanding of the society in which learners live
- develop a critical understanding of the context in which learners live, work and interact with others at a local, national and global level
- develop technical and practical skills, knowledge and understanding
- develop an understanding of the world of science and technology.

Objective 5: Co-ordinate the development and implementation of national standards in relation to the National Qualifications Framework. This requires the articulation of ABET with mainstream education and training provision.

Objective 6: Organise ABET programmes within three sub-levels within NQF Level 1 of the National Qualifications Framework, leading to the attainment of the General Education and Training Certificate at NQF Level 1.

Objective 7: Provide opportunities for learners to develop themselves in order to improve the quality of their lives and their communities as part of the central objective of the Reconstruction and Development Programme, alongside the meeting of basic needs, democratising society and growing the economy.

Objective 8: Facilitate partnerships between government departments, the economic sector and civil society in order to stimulate development initiatives and to embark on the expansion and qualitative improvement of the education and training system.

Objective 9: Encourage linkages between ABET programmes and training in marketable skills to ensure that, where possible, learners are enabled to enter the formal economy and or initiate self-employment.

(Department of Education 2003: 14)

However, we did not find any specific data on how these targets were met.

Despite the reported pronouncement of success, several challenges were identified. First the lack of collaboration and coordination between the Department of Labour and the Department of Education was still a challenge. In this regard, Vass (2009, p. 6) reports of a systemic incoherence and a disarticulation between both departments that caused a lack of responsiveness to the society's and economy's development needs. Second, the equity targets in terms of race (85% black), gender (54% women) and disabilities (4%) of the learners could not be achieved (Department of Labour 2005, p. 2; Department of Labour 2005c, p. 2). The Department of Labour does not comment on the reasons for the missed targets in the latest Implementation Report. Third and final, problems in funding the several programmes within the Skills Revolution, especially the ABET, has remained cause for concern (Department of Labour 2005c, p. 2). Since 1996 the funding for ABET declined as major funders from the non-governmental (NGO) sector directed their grants mainly through government and "representative" NGO bodies while government spending on ABET remained inadequate. Within ABET some projects did not receive funding at all (Aitchison et. al. 2000, pp. 12-13). The recent resurrection of the ABET programme by government may mean changes for the better, however, our literature review has yielded no reports on progress in implementation.

As a result of these challenges the first National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) was revised in 2005 and transformed into a second skills development strategy (NSDS2). The new strategy was supposed to be focused more on the quality of the training and its

impact. As such, the NSDS2 was to concentrate on programmes like apprenticeships, learnerships, internships, bursaries, experimental learning and unit-standards based skills programmes (Department of Labour 2005c, p. 2). The goals and success indicators of the NSDS2 include:

- Objective 1: Prioritising and communicating critical skills for sustainable growth, development and equity

Success Indicator 1: skills development supports national and sectoral growth, development and equity priorities ???

Success Indicator 2: Information on critical skills is widely available to learners. Impact of information dissemination researched, measured and communicated in terms of rising entry, completion and placement of learners

- Objective 2: Promoting and accelerating quality training for all in the workplace

Success Indicator 1: at least 80 % of large firms and at least 60 % of medium firms' employment equity targets are supported by skills development.

Success Indicator 2: skills development in at least 40 % of small levy paying firms supported and the impact of the support measured ??

Success Indicator 3: at least 80 % of government departments spend at least 1 % of personal budget on training and impact of training on service delivery measured and reported

Success Indicator 4: at least 500 enterprises achieve a national standard of good practice in skills development approved by the Minister of Labour.

Success Indicator 5: Annually increasing number of small BEE firms and BEE cooperatives supported by skills development. Progress measured through an annual survey of BEE firms and BEE co-operatives within the sector from the second year onwards. Impact of support measured.

Success Indicator 6: From April 2005 to March 2010 there is an annually increasing number of people who benefit from incentivised training for employment or re-employment in new investments and expansion

initiatives. Training equity targets achieved. Of number trained, 100% to be South African citizens.

Success Indicator 7: at least 700 000 workers have achieved at least ABET level 4.

Success Indicator 8: at least 125 000 workers assisted to enter and at least 50% successfully complete programmes, including learnerships and apprenticeships, leading to basic entry, intermediate and high level scarce skills. Impact of assistance measured.

- Objective 3: Promoting employability and sustainable livelihoods through skills development

Success Indicator 1: at least 450 000 unemployed people are trained. This training should incrementally be quality assured and by March 2010 no less than 25% of the people trained undergo accredited training. Of those trained at least 70% should be placed in employment, self-employment or social development programmes including (EPWP), or should be engaged in further studies. Placement categories ~~each~~ to be defined, measured, reported and sustainability assessed.

Success Indicator 2: at least 2 000 non-levy paying enterprises, Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs), and community-based co-operatives supported by skills development. Impact of support on sustainability measured with a targeted 75% success rate.

Success Indicator 3: at least 100 000 unemployed people have participated in ABET level programmes of which at least 70% have achieved ABET level 4.

- Objective 4: Assisting 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

Success Indicator 1: at least 125 000 unemployed people assisted to enter and at least 50% to successfully complete programmes, including

learnerships and apprenticeships, leading to basic entry, intermediate and high level scarce skills. Impact of assistance measured.

Success Indicator 2: 100% of learners in critical skills programmes covered by sector agreements from Further Education and Training (FET) and Higher Education and Training (HET) institutions assisted to gain work experience locally or abroad, of whom at least 70% find placement in employment or self-employment.

Success Indicator 3: at least 10 000 young people trained and mentored to form sustainable new ventures and at least 70% of new ventures in operation 12 months after completion of programme.

- Objective 5: Improving the quality and relevance of provision

Success Indicator 1: By March 2010 each SETA recognises and supports at least five Institutes of Sectoral or Occupational Excellence (ISOE) within public or private institutions and through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) where appropriate, spread as widely as possible geographically for the development of people to attain identified critical occupational skills, whose excellence is measured in the number of learners successfully placed in the sector and employer satisfaction ratings of their training.

Success Indicator 2: By March 2010, each province has at least two provider institutions accredited to manage the delivery of the new venture creation qualification. 70% of new ventures still operating after 12 months will be used as a measure of the institutions' success.

Success Indicator 3: By March 2010 there are measurable improvements in the quality of the services delivered by skills development institutions and those institutions responsible for the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in support of the NSDS.

Success Indicator 4: By March 2010, there is an NSA constituency based assessment of an improvement in stakeholder capacity and commitment to the National Skills Development Strategy.

(Paterson et. al. 2008: 61 – 62)

The target for meeting these is 2010.

In 2007 the Minister of Labour [Membathisi MS Mdladlana](#) summarised the outcomes of the Skills [Development](#) after 10 years of implementation as follows: First, there were serious concerns about the efficiency of the SETAs. Second, the minister lamented the fact that Sector Skills Plans, as required by the Skills Development Act, were shooting in the dark as they did not meet the needs of the potential beneficiaries, the requirements of broader government goals or the targets of sectors growth strategies (Department of Labour 2007).

3.1.2 Research Perspectives

Perspectives from independent research suggest a slightly different picture from that of government concerning the outcomes of the skills development. To illustrate, Kraak points out that although South Africa's economy has impressively improved in the last four years these improvements could not be noticed in the education sector (Kraak, 2008, p. 1). This author refers to several problems in the first NSDS phase, including data collection problems, lack of political will, lack of communication between the various bodies and the complex institutional architecture of the programme (Kraak, 2008, p. 2). A related problem has also been identified as the lack of cooperation between the Departments of Education and Labour as well as the absence of a streamlined, collaborating bureaucracy within every department (University of Cape Town, 2007, p. 8).

Bischoff and Govender (2004) reported that the national skills strategy was intended to revolutionise the skills development. However, they identified a lack of clear direction and a system that was open to corruption and abuse as factors impacting negatively on skills development in South Africa (Bischoff and Govender 2004, p. 70). Furthermore, Freemann (2009) claims that the skills revolution has never really taken hold in South Africa. The author is also critical of the programmes for carrying too much intellectual weight, seeing this as producing a barrier particularly for young unskilled people from (economically and educationally) impoverished households. However, according to this

author-, in the new political dispensation, some significant changes are in store. For example, the responsibility for the skills development will shift from the Department of Labour to the newly established Department of Higher Education and Training (DoHET). In addition, the third phase of the National Skills Development Strategy (2010 – 2015) has already been published (DoHET, 2010). The strategy aligns itself to the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF 2010-2015) adopted by government in 2009. Of particular relevance to this study is the Strategic priority Number 4 of the MTSF, which is to “*strengthen the skills and human resources base, while the particular responsibility of DHET is to develop a skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path*” (DoHET, 2010, p. 41). To achieve this, the MTSF elaborates that the task involves:

Ensure[ing] that training and skills development initiatives in the country respond to the requirements of the economy, rural development challenges and social integration. The main aim would be to increase the number of skilled staff in the priority skills areas, such as design, engineering and artisanship categories that are critical to manufacturing, construction and cultural activities, as well as to other priority economic sectors that are identified in the National Industrial Policy Framework (p.42).

According to Vass (2009), the establishment of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DoHET) was a response to the lack of or poor articulation between the skills development agenda of the DoL and that of the DoE. This shift is expected to provide the needed coordination between further education, higher education and workplace skills (Vass, 2009, p. 4). For example, in direct response to the various critiques brought up by scholars and practitioners, the NSDS (2010-2015) identifies a set of action steps that have to be in place in the implementation of the framework. Among these is the intention to:

Put mechanisms in place to ensure the improved coordination and integration of relevant government departments and agencies responsible for skills development, including state-owned enterprises (SOEs) (p.42).

However, Vass also emphasises that the skills development of post-apartheid South Africa is currently at a critical point as the new developments imply. According to her, as South Africa is facing a major economic recession (like other parts of the world), the

payment of the skills levy will probably decline and this in turn will influence the financial stability of the SETAs and the NSDS (Vass, 2009, p. 5).

Commenting on ABET as one form of training provided within the skills development programme, Baatjes (2008, p. 207) considers the programme as having failed. For him, adult education serves a politically under-represented clientele, lacks prestige and can hardly compete with the better funded formal education system. Moreover ABET offers only low level skills that do not qualify for the global market. Finally the involvement of civil society decreased with the privatisation of ABET due to changes in funding models for human resource development (HRD) through the NSDS. The private sector, partly responsible for implementing the ABET programme states high dropout rates, poor results and completion rates, poor financial support and a lack of interest by the adults to attend the scholarly ABET classes (Independent Education Board 2008, p. 2).

What has been the impact of the NSDS on women in South Africa? The next section addresses this question from a research perspective.

3.1.3 Women and the skills revolution

In its own assessment, the Department of Labour (2007a) concludes that on the one hand, women have increasingly engaged within the South African economy, representing 6 out of every 10 new labour force members between 1995 and 2005. ~~However~~~~On the other~~, they still remain over-represented in low-income employment as the majority have jobs as unskilled elementary workers. As such, a clear gender disparity remains in terms of the implementation of equity targets within the skills development. Furthermore, while women of all race groups earned less than men between 2001 and 2005, white women earned more than their African counterparts with the same education levels (Department of Labour 2007a, p. 36). And while white women in South Africa make 16% of the labour force at the managerial level, only 6% of black women occupy such positions (Parencee & Wilhelm-Solomon 2004, p. 3). This means that a clear race disparity also remains.

On a positive note, the National Skills Survey undertaken by Paterson et al. (2007) reflected amongst others some of the successes of the gender related targets of the NSDS. According to this survey the distribution of women in training increased substantially between 2002/03 and 2006/07. Kraak (2008, p. 7) concurs, citing examples of -women in large enterprises as beneficiaries of the skills development. However, this author warns that many of the equity targets set by the DoL are still not fulfilled. As other authors concur, for example, only 20% of workers achieved level one on the National Qualification Framework and only 41% of workers participating in structured learning programmes were women (Parenee & Wilhelm-Solomon, 2004, p. 5). These women received training in high skills management as well as in professional and technical occupations. Significantly lower rates of women participation in training were reported in community and sales occupations (Paterson 2008, p. 157). Parenee and Wilhelm-Solomon (2004, p. 5) in turn even speak of typical gender stereotyping within the sector of DoL's training of unemployed people. According to them a great number of women have been channelled into low-paid jobs such as in textiles, craft and domestic work.

The literature we have reviewed so far gives no clear explanation for the poor participation of women in the skills development. However, certain theories provide hints to explain the ongoing state of affairs.

3.1. Some theoretical perspectives

Available literature suggests that explanations for the trends in the participation and success (or lack thereof) of women in the various skills development programmes and resultant employment in various sectors derive from theoretical perspectives (mostly gender and feminist theories) as well as evidence from empirical research. This section reviews some of the possible theoretical explanations.

3.1.4.1 Development Theories

Development theories may explain why women are under-represented in various skills development programmes and in particular sectors of the economy. To illustrate, there

are several theories explaining the women's role in development. Here we dwell on three such theories. First, Razavi and Miller (1995) identify Women in Development (WID) as an approach developed in the 1960s/70s when the existing development theories were considered as failed, as the most influential. According to these authors, these theories measured success by emerging modern industrial societies and the establishment of social security systems. The productive role of women in society was not recognised. With an emerging body of research on women and the ascendancy of liberal feminism in the 1970s central ideas of the women and development theory developed. As a result women's disadvantages in society were elucidated by stereotyped customary expectations of the feminine gender. These were considered as held by men, internalised by women and promoted through various 'agencies of socialisation' (Razavi & Miller, 1995, p. 3). This approach to development concluded that disadvantages experienced by women and girls could be eliminated by breaking down gender stereotypes (e.g. by improving girl's education, setting up equal opportunity programmes or freeing labour markets). The WID approach stressed the implementation of pragmatic women concepts and projects to gain influence on international development programmes. The WID approach is premised on the understanding that women are no needy beneficiaries but productive members of the society. This means that women were seen as the 'missing link' in development in society.

WID clearly focuses on improving productive labour rather than on social welfare or reproductive concerns. This theory has been criticised for focusing too little on men and on power relations between men and women. Furthermore, it is also criticised for divorcing welfare concerns from the policy discourse. A further, more serious concern is related to the categorisation of all women as a homogenous group wherein differences in class, age, marital status, religion, race and ethnicity are not recognised (Razavi and Miller, 1995: 9). Practical implementation showed that it is not enough to set up 'women-only' projects and analysing women's issues on the labour market with an isolated focus on women and the labour market leaving out questions about gender (power) relations and further roles women have to fulfil in society.

Second, closely related to the WID is the theory of *Women and Development* (WAD). Linked to a political economy perspective and recognising the multiple roles of women in society, and the significant roles they (must) play in the country's economy, the WAD approach focuses on the relationship between women and development processes rather than on integrating women into development processes. WAD argues for the recognition by employers, of women's unpaid domestic work in macroeconomic policies and of their reproductive roles (www.essa.org.za/download/papers/06.pdf, accessed October 03, 2009).

Third, the *Gender and Development* (GAD) approach advocates using a gender lens—focusing on the notion of gender as socially constructed and on gender relations as the socially scripted patterns of behaviour between men and women in families, communities and societies. This approach is premised on the understanding that unequal power relations between men and women deny the latter access to economic and social resources (www.arts.yorku.ca/sosc/.../genderapproachestodevelopment.ppt, accessed October 01, 2009). As such, it is based on the notion that if power structures in national and international agencies (Aid) take gender equality seriously, women's empowerment would be ensured and their uptake of economically active/productive roles would increase (Momsen, 2004).

3.1.4.2 Gender and Economic Development

Literature suggests that gender equity is often related to economic development. This means that as national income increases, women are more likely to have a higher life expectancy, fewer children, better health, better education and more participation in the labour force (Momsen 2004, p. 18). In most parts of the world women have, bound to gender stereotypes, three roles: reproduction, production and community management (Momsen 2004: 16). Due to slow changes in society women today have to perform all three, often simultaneously, unless they opt out of one of these. Momsen (2004, p.174) emphasises three theoretical economic viewpoints explaining the disadvantaged position of women in the labour market: the Neo-classical economic theory; labour market segmentation; and Feminist theories.

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Neo-classical economic theory

According to Momsen (2004), the Neo-classical economic theory assumes that under competitive conditions workers are paid according to their productivity. Gender related differences in earning can be explained by lower productivity of women or market imperfections. This takes a woman's lower level of education, training and on-job-experience into account. Related to gender stereotypes, women often acquire a poorer education than men as they are expected to spend their time with housework and childcare. However this theory can only explain a part of the wage gap between women and men. The theory implies that gender inequality can be attacked by providing the same level of education. But in most countries, including South Africa, women do not even have the same access to the labour market as men and they cannot compete on equal terms for job opportunities, even with the same qualifications.

Theories of labour market segmentation

According to Momsen (2004), theories of labour market segmentation emphasise the structure of labour markets when explaining sex inequalities in employment. They assume that the labour market is segmented by institutional barriers. In each segment neoclassical principles still apply. The labour market is divided into the primary and secondary market. The primary market includes jobs with good prospects for promotion, on-job-training and payment. Jobs in the secondary market are mainly poorly paid and have little security. Because of gender inequalities women are more likely to be recruited into second sector employment (secondary market). Factors influencing gender segregation include the better organisation of male workers, their resistance to competition from cheaper (female) labour and patriarchal ideologies controlling structures of firms (Momsen 2004, p.176).

Further, women are generally mainly excluded from the official market. Likewise many African women in South Africa are forced into the informal market due to a lack of formal education qualifications and the consideration that capital intensive skills tend to be considered as 'male'. Production arrangements in the informal sector include self-employment, outworking, family enterprise and household service. These working

possibilities offer the flexibility women often need combining work with the demand for their reproductive and productive activities. However these models give no sufficient explanation for high degree of gender segregation in the informal market.

Feminist theories.

Momsen (2004) also identifies feminist economic theories as emphasising the negative impact of social and cultural factors on women's access to the labour market. They see the interaction between the reproductive and productive roles of women as key issues rather than fixed conditions. As women are able to increase their time spent outside the home in new employment possibilities, men rarely increase their share of unpaid work at home. As a result women are often handicapped in the labour market because of domestic responsibilities.

Furthermore stereotyped views limit employment opportunities for women. Employers often have a preconceived idea of work suitable for women such as jobs using 'household skills'. That is why there is often a narrow range of jobs open to women (Momsen 2004, p. 182).

3.1.4.3 Gender as a social construct

The classification of the world in terms of 'male and 'female' is often taken for granted and being male is often taken to be a standard or norm from which women differ. Gender is derived from the interaction of material culture with biological differences between the sexes. Since gender is therefore created by society its meaning can differ from culture to culture and is changeable over time. Nevertheless in various societies characteristics of men are often seen as more positive than the one that are attributed to women. These attributes are reproduced in the concept of 'doing-gender'. According to Gildemeister (2001, p. 3) we identify others as 'male' or 'female' in daily life not because of physiology, hormones and chromosomes. In fact we mainly identify them in reference to performance of gender. So in our interactions with others we are forced to categorise them as men or women. Other constructions beyond this bipolar gender view are possible

but seen as abnormal. It should be recognised that the category of 'gender' is always crosscut by and interacts with differences in class, race, ethnicity, religion and age.

Gender stereotypes

The social construction of gender applies to various values, norms and beliefs that are created by the dominant economic and powerful groups in society. These values, norms and beliefs are perpetuated and reinforced by social institutions like the family, workplace, the media, educational system, religion etc. The stereotypes affect the understanding of each and every individual as female and male behaviour is historically grown. In these stereotypes women are seen as passive, emotional, illogical, dependent, soft and psychologically weak. All these characterisations imply that women are not suitable for career and vocational success. Running against these stereotypes women are often seen as "not female enough", a 'women's libber' or lesbians. On the other side men face a similar categorisation. They are widely seen as strong, emotionally controlled, responsible, intelligent, emotionally cold and authoritarian. If a man does not correspond to these norms he will be seen as 'sissy', 'nerd' or as gay (Lenz 1996, p. 169). These norms implement different gender-related skills making certain tasks more appropriate for women and men. Breaking with these norms does not essentially mean to change these stereotypes as they are very resistant (Eckes 2004, p. 165).

Socio-cultural norms

Another explanation for the poor participation of South African women in skills development efforts lies in the dominant socio-cultural norms in the society. In any society, social norms tend to influence men and women's work and in particular, the gender division of labour in families and communities, and consequently in rights and responsibilities between the two sexes. This often means that women's responsibilities revolve around the home while men are expected to go out to work (Serugama & Kotze, 2004). Informed by these norms, educational institutions and organisations may exclude women from jobs/positions considered to be appropriate for men, -or exclude men who are seen as falling outside the set norms. Furthermore, due to these socially ascribed roles and responsibilities for men and women, motherhood, in particular, tends to limit

women's access to these, particularly to the labour market and to progression within industry, resulting in them entering and leaving more frequently, as well as lack of progression and skills development on their part. Based on these social norms, starting from the family and extending into society and the workplace, certain tasks are considered more appropriate for men or women.

Hegemonic Masculinities

Another explanation lies in what has been referred to as hegemonic masculinity. Connell (2005) defines hegemonic masculinity as a type of gendered practice which functions to exemplify and legitimise patriarchy (male authority and power) and the domination of some men over others (e.g., those who are viewed as behaving outside the norm, such as for example, homosexual men), and the subordination of women. Thus, it is the benchmark against which men are measured and is used as a means of excluding those men who are viewed as not measuring up, as well as women (Faulkner, 2000, p. 91). While some strides have been made in overcoming these norms and understandings and many women are now working in jobs which were traditionally perceived as male, that women generally still lag behind in their participation in the labour market, and more so in particular fields (e.g., science and engineering) is a cause for concern. In this regard, it is necessary to examine what so effectively maintains this male dominated domain. For example, what explains why women are particularly missing in certain fields of study and employment (e.g., science, engineering and technology).

The concept also explains the high number of women in unpaid and reproductive work. Parenting for example, is not included in the idea of manhood at all. In the concept of hegemonic masculinity men do not have the facilities or the interest to care for their children, especially for babies. Nutrient and care-giving behaviour is therefore connected to a female role (Donaldson, 1993, p. 7). In most societies these images change slowly but still there is a lack of women on the labour market, especially in male dominated sectors.

3.1.5 Emerging issues from literature

After the fall of Apartheid South Africa faced millions of unskilled workers. With the requirements of globalisation and a new labour market a 'skills revolution' was announced to improve the country's competitiveness and as well as the quality of life of the previously marginalised groups. The abundant policy literature developed by the South African government is testimony of its passion for skills development.

-While the government sees the targets of skills development as almost or somewhat fulfilled, critics' voices doubt this development. Nevertheless improvements on the labour market are recognised, also for women. However women are still not adequately integrated into the network of skills development. Further, research literature criticises women's commitment in this development. This especially focuses on African women still being marginalised.

Theoretical literature offers some explanations on the position of women in the labour market and clarifies why it is so difficult for them to progress from the informal to the formal market. These include approaches to development, hegemonic masculinity, feminist and gender theories and socio-cultural norms. Equality of education opportunities is necessary but not a sufficient condition for equality on the labour market e.g. in access and payment.

Reviewing the listed material a few points became apparent. Firstly when examining gender issues the consideration of discrimination due to race among women is still necessary. Thus the interaction among gender, race and other forms of identity seems to explain the poor participation of women in skills development and in the labour market. Secondly the reviewed literature gives very little data or analysis on the impact of the skills development on the lives of women. This study therefore is meant to contribute towards filling this gap.

4. Research Design and Methodology

In this study we sought to understand the extent to which there has been a ‘skills revolution’ in South Africa. To obtain answers to this matter, it was necessary for us to listen to the voices of those involved. This became our main source of data. It was also necessary that we reviewed government (and NGO) reports of what was going by way of training as well as assessments of progress made and successes gained. To do this, we adopted a mixed-method research design.

Initially, we targeted three major sources of data: Government officials in the National Department of Labour; managers of training (mostly ABET) centres (See Tool A: Structured question guide for In-Depth Interviews with Officials in Department of Labour, selected SETAs and ABET/Training centre managers); and women who are unemployed/self-employed (see Tool B: Focus group discussions with women in selected sectors). After interviewing one official in the DoL, it was clear that our focus should be on the SETAs and of course, as per our original plan, the women themselves who are supposed to have benefited from the skills revolution.

Being a small scale study, we selected a purposive sample of four SETAs: Agriculture; Education, Training and Development Practices (ETDP); Mining; and Wholesale and Retail (WR). The main criteria for selection was that within the sample, we wanted at least one sector that was historically predominantly male dominated such as Mining; and at least one historically female dominated such as Agriculture. These permutations would help us to determine any changes with regard to women’s participation in those sectors. We selected Education as the mother sector in terms of education and training. In total we managed to access a sample of six respondents, one from each of Mining, Agriculture, and Wholesale and Retail, and two from ETDP- one at provincial and one at national level.

With regard to the women as the intended beneficiaries, limited by time and resources, we randomly selected three provinces: Limpopo, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. From these provinces, we selected the specific women on grounds of their availability and

willingness to participate in the study. Among them were unemployed and self-employed women. Because of time and resources, we elected to interview this group, leaving a gap in terms of those women employed in the various sectors of the economy. For the latter, our study relied on the views of managers of SETAs and ABET centres regarding the training programmes they offer and the extent to and ways in which they target women and the benefits thereof. Future studies will have to fill this gap and include among the respondents, women who are employed as well as their employers.

The main data collection instrument in both cases was the interview. First, for the SETA managers we conducted individual interviews, four telephonically and two face-to-face. Each interview lasted for about an hour (See Tool A: Structured question guide for In-Depth Interviews with Officials in Department of Labour, selected SETAs and ABET/Training centre managers). At the end of each interview we requested the interviewee to send us statistics and other documents showing the participation of women in their training programmes. These documents would constitute an additional source of information on our part¹. We used the following questions for each of these interviews:

1. *What training initiatives does your sector/centre currently have?*
2. *What is the focus of these initiatives?*
3. *To what extent and in what ways do these initiatives particularly target women who are (a) in formal employment and (b) not in formal employment?*
4. *How accessible is the training to women?*
5. *What factors prevent/encourage women's access to training programmes?*
6. *How have women benefited from your training initiatives?*
7. *Has your organisation kept a record of the above and can we access these?*
8. *Do you think there has been a skills revolution for women in your organisation?*

Second, we interviewed a total of 38 unemployed and self-employed women in four focus groups from Limpopo (two groups), Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal (two groups). A selection of fields notes from one of field workers illustrate the processes we went

¹ After many attempts on our part to get these documents, we succeeded in only two sectors: ETDP and WR.

through during these interviews as well as some of the concerns we had to address in the field, some directly related to skills development and employment opportunities, and others to poverty and poverty alleviation in these areas.

Group 1: Lephalale, Limpopo Province (4 women)

*On 22 January 2010 I visited Lephalale to introduce myself and identify women who were willing to participate in the focus group interviews. I met the women at Marapong where some of them are working on a sewing project. There were in excess of twenty (20) women at this meeting. I explained the nature and the purpose of the research and I went through the **Information and Consent Form** with them and requested their voluntary participation. Six women volunteered to participate and a meeting was arranged for 20 January 2010. I finally managed to interview a group of eight women on the day.*

Questions asked by women at the initial meeting were indicative of expectations regarding poverty alleviation programmes. For example, despite repeated explanations that this particular project will not have any direct benefits for them, women expressed dismay at prior projects where promises were made but never came to fruition. Interest in training programmes was high, for example, women repeatedly enquired whether there will be other training opportunities where they will be issued with certificates (of competence). To me this was indicative of their desperation and need for life lines to deal with the challenge of poverty that they are faced with. While the number of volunteers was good for purposes of the focus group interview, I thought it was a bit disappointing considering the large turnout. Many women seemed to lose interest when they realized that it was not about providing training per se. On the day of the interview, eight (8) women availed themselves. These women volunteers were very enthusiastic and provided rich data.

Group 2: Vlakfontein, Gauteng Province (14 women)

*I visited Banabokamoso Community Development Centre in Vlakfontein on 10 February 2010 to introduce the project and interview unemployed women/women traders. Vlakfontein is an informal settlement area where unemployment seemed the order of the day. I had requested a maximum number of eight women but was surprised when almost double that number (fourteen) showed up. This, I surmised was due to the fact that they were unemployed and were hoping for some opportunity that might assist them. After explaining the nature and purpose of the project and going through the **Information and Consent Form** with them, they all decided to participate. The group was much bigger than I would have preferred but I was again humbled by their willingness to help.*

Initial questions asked by women revolved around their disappointments and frustration about their plight (lack of support for their initiatives, especially financial). I got the sense that they were expecting some tangible direct benefits from my research in spite of the upfront declaration to the contrary.

Group 3: Bela-bela, Limpopo Province (4 women)

The third set of interviews was held with women in farming on 22 February 2010 At Bela-bela, Limpopo Province. There were four women, three of whom were farm owners while the fourth woman was an assistant to one of these farmers. They were very willing to participate in the project and gave of their time for the meeting.

The remaining groups in KZN were constituted as follows:

- Group 4: 8 women; and
- Group 5: 8 women.

In these FGD, we used the following as our lead questions:

1. *Have you ever gone for training? What sort of training? What were the benefits?*
2. *Do you think women in the workplace find it easy to access training?*
3. *What kind of training would you like to have access to if you had the opportunity?*
4. *Do you know about the skills revolution?*
5. *Do you think there has been a skills revolution in your company/organisation?*

The bulk of our data ~~wasere~~ qualitative in nature. In the first stage of data analysis we grouped the responses according to the questions we presented above. In stage two we categorised the data according to the three research questions of the study. Finally we interpreted the data accordingly. With regard to the quantitative data we obtained, we simply present these as we obtained them.

5. Research Findings

This section is made up of two main sections. In the first section, we present findings from the SETA officials' perspectives. In the second section we present women's perspectives (including unemployed, self-employed and formally employed) on their experiences and views of skills training in South Africa.

5.1: Perspectives from selected SETA officials

How do the officials charged with conceptualising, developing and managing the training programmes meant to effect a skills revolution in the country view their work, how it targets women and what impact it has had on them?

5.1.1 Focus of training programmes and benefits for women

The first set of questions we asked of the SETA officials was: *What training initiatives does your sector/centre currently have? And what is the focus of these initiatives? To what extent and in what ways do these initiatives particularly target women who are (a) in formal employment and (b) not in formal employment? How have women benefited from your training initiatives?* In response, first, the head of the Skills Development and Research Unit: Mining Qualifications Authority (hereafter referred to as the MQA official) reported that ABET, Skills programmes, and learnerships were some of the initiatives the SETA had put in place.

In these programmes she reported that so far, there was nothing specifically targeted at women:

With regard to these ongoing programmes there's been no particular incentives for women, ----like the grant is the same for women and men whether black or white or whether disabled or not. But it is one of the things being considered, ----- maybe taking on more women or more people with disability. It's a standard grant and as I said, we just encourage people to bear in mind the equity target when they take their learners. But ultimately it's the employers who decide to take from learnerships, skills programmes and ABET. So we don't have control over that.

Asked to confirm that there were no particular initiatives for women, she responded:

No. However, we've had over a period of time, from 2004 up to now, perhaps even before that time, -----we have sacrificed a small amount of money for targeting women specifically but not women employed in big mines and already employed. It's been specifically in communities around mines or those who are going to set up their own little businesses to provide service to mines.

Explaining this outreach programme targeting women she gave examples of some of the small scale women projects they sponsored. In 2008/09, they trained women small scale miners in technical mining skills. In 2007/08, they offered training in procurement skills

in the South African Women Mining Association. In the same year, there was also training offered to women in the National Union of Mine Workers about the work they do in the trade union. This respondent emphasised that the projects that target women specifically were very small. For example, in the 2008/09 financial year, they spent only R1 million on such projects.

Explaining how they used the money, she identified four ways through which they targeted women:

In terms of the Mining Charter, this is where the objective is to get 10% women into core mining occupations-elementary level right up to geologist and also at management level as well as women owning mines, sitting on boards etc. The second is women in small scale mining. Part of this project is to get small scale miners into mainstream mining and the other part is to help them become compliant with the law-safety, health issues etc. The third is women in mining communities. The fourth and last is women from labour sending areas such as Eastern Cape. However, of the four areas, the MQA's main focus is women in mainstream mining through the learnership, ABET, and skills programmes. In the case of ABET for example, for every 100 learners you employ in the workforce, MQA will support 20 unemployed learners taken on by that company to train them in ABET and more often than not those unemployed learners are women.

On whether the training grants they offered were conditional on the 10% target for women, she acknowledged that this was currently not the case. For example, regarding the labour-sending areas, the respondent reported that MQA did not set the interventions up to target women. They were intended for retrenched ex-miners. However, she informed us that in most cases those targeted (the men) tended not to take the training up and instead opted to nominate proxies,proxies; most of whom are ~~are~~ women. So although the MQA did not specifically target them, women benefitted indirectly as a result of being nominated by the targeted men.

Explaining the low participation of women and the relative lack of targeting towards them, this respondent explained that the MQA was an exception with regard to the target figures for women. This is what she had to say:

In the Service Legal Agreement (SLA) with the Department of Labour, our target for women is 10% because of the nature of the mining industry. So we get

measured against how we have done against this target not how we have done against the NSDS target which is 50% plus.

We asked what the target date was for the achievement of this and she said:

It's actually this year-2009. The target was set in 2004 in the Mining Charter. In fact next month there is a review process sector by sector, the Department of mineral resources, employer associations---etc. We are busy with our report. These documents are still internal.

On what her sense was regarding how far they were from achieving the target for women, she had this to say:

If we look at the figures that are available to us collectively as a sector in employment terms, we just---, we fall short of 10%. And then we have analysed this in terms of what we call sub-sectors. For example we have got a larger number of women in the jewellery sub-sector compared to gold and platinum which are typically your deep underground mines.

The second respondent whose views we present was a Regional Manager: Wholesale & Retail SETA (hereafter referred to as the WR SETA official). Responding to the first set of questions, the WR SETA official reported that their areas of skills development included work place experience, learnerships, skills programmes and ABET. Regarding ABET, his explanation was that employers in large companies tend not to employ anybody who requires ABET. He however added that this was not the case with small enterprises. In the latter case ABET would be necessary.

Like the MQA manager, the WR SETA manager also added that their SETA had outreach programmes where they were working. Adding that their work extended to every town in the province, he reported that they focused on what he called 'projectising', that is they start projects, using 10% of the levy for administration and to employ people such as project managers.

Regarding whether their programmes specifically targeted women, first, this respondent told us that in their province, their sector contributes 21% of the employed population. He further told us that nationally, this sector contributes 12 to 14 % of South Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Coming to women, he reported that they made up 95% of the

staff in the province, adding, “*I’m the only man, let’s just put it that way. My entire staff is female*”.

When asked whether they had programmes specifically targeted at women, the manager responded:

All are.....Remember that in our sector there is no woman or man’s job. That is why to us our initiative is that this is a priority skill. Remember our target is 53% women. So automatically for every project we put out there our priority is 53% women.

Regarding how accessible their programmes were to women, as expected, he added that:

They all are. There is no limitation. The number of women employed within the W&R sector is already in the majority. So when I speak to the stakeholders I need to see that reflected in their submissions or their applications. There are more women participating than there are men because that reflects the employment status of women within the sector.

With regard to female participation in training projects, this is what he had to say:

With us we have a target of 53% female participation. We have made that a priority target. We have many targets. For example one of our priorities is 4% disabled. Even though that is one of our priorities, the female participation is more of a priority target for us. So we have exceeded the 53% target over the last few years. In fact I’m proud to say we have exceeded every one of our targets in this industry except ABET which we are struggling with.

A specific challenge pertaining to ABET according to this respondent was that results were only reported at completion of NQF 1 which is ABET 1, 2, 3,& 4. As he explained:

... many people say to themselves, look, this ABET certificate is not going to benefit me anywhere in the world. All I need is to have the ability to read and write. So they do not continue once they can read and write.

On whether women have benefited from training programmes in the sector, this WR SETA official responded:

I would have loved to have seen more. ...I think the only thing that has prevented women from getting to the top is male dominance that is on the top of the hierarchy. But let me say to you, I have a W&R sector forum....we get about 60-80 participants. ...About 7% of those who attend are female and they occupy fairly high positions. But in terms of training I see more women on NQF 3, 4, and not in 5, and 6. So that’s a concern but its changing though. To change people’s minds over 10 years is not a very easy task- to change an entire sector.

The third respondent was a Director of the ETDP SETA. We began our interview by asking her to name the constituencies that make up this SETA. She reported that these include among others, the Department of Education, Trade Unions as employers, political parties as employers, Early Childhood and Development, Adult Basic Education and Training, non-governmental organisations, school governing bodies as employers, higher education institutions, Further Education and Training institutions, and other institutions. In terms of what training programmes the SETA provided, she reported that the SETA's programmes include learnerships, bursaries, internships, workplace experience and ABET, adding:

We develop programmes that will be relevant so that unemployed young people can enter a programme with a future in education, training and development related fields of employment;to get a qualification that would be beneficial in improving the competency levels within the workforce.

With regard to targets for women she reported that they abide by the Employment Equity Act, and that 54% of all beneficiaries of their programmes should be women and 85% are to be black. She singled out programmes in Early Childhood Development where she reported that about 95% of the beneficiaries in learnerships are women. Giving further statistics she reported that in the 2008/09 financial year, they trained 8604 black learners (90% of all programmes). In that year, 63.9% of the people trained were women, which is 9.9% above the target. Of these, 60.7% of the learners that were trained and declared as competent were female learners.

As expected for this sector, this respondent told us that the SETA had projects specifically for women:

...Currently we have a project in higher education institutions.....We have 20 black women managers that are being trained in management and leadership across the different universities. You know universities in the country have not transformed as we would have liked it as a country. So there is an initiative to get black women into those top management positions.....

She emphasised that they fund programmes that would have been identified as scarce skills and critical skills in the SETA. In this regard she cited financial management as one such area. The quality assurance is done by the relevant training institutions. Therefore

they did not only ?? the programmes they develop but they respond to the needs of the sector.

The fourth respondent in this category was an ABET Centre Manager. Regarding the focus of training programmes in this SETA, this manager identified one focus: basic adult literacy. According to her, in her experience people who cannot read and write are among the poorest in the country. The province did not have a portion of the budget going directly to the training of women. However, females constitute about 80-83% of their trainees.

Regarding how accessible their programmes were to women, she responded, 'We have taken the programme to communities'. In this regard, she reported further that they use churches, halls, homes, etc. Trainees travel for short distances, not longer than 2 kilometres from their homes to access training. They do not pay anything. The class times are flexible. Classes comprise 15-20 people in a neighbourhood. Facilitators are young persons from the same villages where the training takes place. About 90% of these facilitators are women.

The fifth respondent was an AGRISETA Director. This respondent identified the following training programmes in this sector: apprenticeship, learnerships, skills programmes, bursaries, interns (100 per year), workplace experience, and grants for the qualified unemployed. They also sponsor mentors for small scale farmers over a long period of 3-5 years. He emphasised that the sector does not train the unemployed. If unemployed, one has to already have land to qualify for training. According to this respondent, the sector offers one of the largest literacy programmes (ABET) in the country. However he reported that illiteracy was still a big problem and it was higher among women. He estimated that at least 33% of the employed and under-resourced people in the sector were illiterate. Although he reported that there were no known factors preventing women from accessing training, he thought that this issue of illiteracy could be one such.

Regarding any initiatives particularly targeted for women, he reported that they do not go out to hunt for women to train instead figures come naturally due to the nature of the sector. Their equity targets are 54% female and 4% disabled. What were some of the reasons why women accessed training programmes? He said skills programmes were by far the most popular. There are 8-10 000 people on these programmes per year. According to him, most people are not concerned with qualifications. They ~~will select~~ will select a group of unit standards of their interest. Have women benefited from these programmes? His answer was 'yes'. However, formalised learning programmes were still limited.

5.1.2 Factors that facilitate and/or impede women's access to and success in training programmes

The second set of questions posed to the SETA officials was: *How accessible is the training to women? What are the factors that facilitate and/or impede women's access to and success in these training programmes?* In response, regarding any factors inhibiting women from accessing training programmes, the interviewed official reported that the MQA was about to start a research project in this regard. As the situation stands learners access training through a Mineral and Mining Sector company "so there will be companies out there who are reaching out to women and others that are not". On the MQA's part, programmes are publicised through annual road shows, radio, newspapers, information sent to organisations such as the South African Women in Mining and unions as well as exhibitions, career guidance booklets etc.

When asked about the main reasons for women accessing skills development programmes, she responded:

That's a very hard one to answer until we've done our research, one may say. But I think a lot of women especially coming into the lower levels of the workforce, its more about survival and accessing what is available. ---underground mining in platinum and gold do very hard work and its different from working in a quarry, which is a lot safer. You find a lot of women in quarries and open coal mining.

On the factors that impede women's access to training in this sector, the respondent also informed us that mining had certain legal training requirements. If you are going to be a blaster for example, you need to have particular certificates and competences before doing the job. The main factor that has enabled women to enter this industry has been the Mining Charter. According to this respondent, had there not been the 10% requirement, not much would have happened regarding women participation. There is also a strong association of women, SAIMA which has an entrepreneurial flair aimed at getting women into offering services to mines and getting women more involved in mining.

Regarding whether they had monitoring mechanisms in place, she reported that all companies entered learner details onto the MQA's Management Information System so they have every detail per learner per company.

On whether there were any factors that might prevent women from accessing programmes in this sector, WR SETA manager responded that there was absolutely no reason why women can't participate in every single programme. However, he added what challenges companies face in industry regarding training:

You know, they need to release those learners to attend college on a weekly basis, or every second week. Most small organisations really struggle with this because they employ what they need. Releasing people to attend college 6 months of the year really hurts them even though we are prepared to pay them. ---A company has 10 staff members, five are doing very well and five aren't. Who do they put on for training? So they say to me, if we send the good guys, as soon as they finish they will ask for an increase, but the business is not making more money because they have got a qualification----and they are gonna go for a better paying job. --- They ask me, if I send my weaker team members, then the good guys turn around and say is this reward for laziness.

He concluded this interview with us by identifying a big problem that many women face:

I wonder when they have time to do the portfolio of evidence (POE). I have put together a POE myself-monstrous. So many of them are doing this and the only resource they is a candle to help them at night. And my heart bleeds but I don't know how best to overcome that. One of my recommendations is to pay the providers more and make a tax rebate so that they can release those learners more often because there are struggles that they have within their communities.

On whether there were any factors preventing/enabling women from accessing training programmes in this sector, the Director of the ETDP SETA cited one important enabler, success. She gave an example of women who after learnership training gained confidence and went ahead to go and get learners licences. Another group of three or four women used the allowances they get during training to start their own businesses. With regard to inhibiting factors, she cited one as family pressures. For example one young woman was kicked out of the house by her mother who wanted her to leave training and find a better paying job. Another problem was that older trainees were laughed at by people around them (for example by their own children).

On what she saw as the main drivers for women to come for training, she observed:

I think for me the key driver would be getting better qualifications for employment opportunities. That's one. The other group would definitely be for empowering themselves for they never had access to a qualification or any real skills that they were recognised for. I think another group would come and say, for example, I'm working in a crèche but I'm not convinced that I'm developing the child correctly.

Regarding factors that could possibly hinder trainees from accessing their programme, the ABET Centre Manager reported that there used to be high dropout rates when the curriculum used to be four levels and one was required to complete all. They have now changed it to one big module comprising literacy, numeracy and the language of the economy. This has reduced dropouts. In terms of enabling factors, she told us that there were strong drivers that attracted them particularly women. In this regard she had this to say:

Women get taken seriously when they can read and write. There is better common sense in the home. They can access their social grants better. They can read and understand information regarding immunisation.

She also added that another driver was the 'feel good' factor when people are able to manage their day-to-day lives, when they can read letters, process a bank transaction and especially when they can use a cell phone. Their basic literacy programme has encouraged other projects in communities, such as burial societies and gardening. As a programme they now find themselves connecting with many other sectors such as health. According to her, their programme has improved the performance of school governing bodies.

5.1.3 Has there been a skills revolution in South Africa?

Finally we asked the officials: *Do you think there has been a skills revolution for women in your organisation?* To this, the MQA manager responded:

Revolution----you expect a lot of radical change. And I wouldn't call it a revolution in the mining context, but definitely let's say some steady progress has been made, because of the nature of the industry.

However, she conceded that she did see progress regarding moving women beyond the peripheral activities within mines:

We do. Definitely. I'm not sure if you are aware that until the late 80s, it was illegal for women to work underground and it required special permission for women to even go underground.----It has thrown a lot of challenges to the mining industry which was male dominated in every sense, even in ergonomics and other things that affect the workers' well being underground-they have been working this out on the basis of the size of an average man.

The WR SETA manager was more cautious. When asked whether in his opinion there had been a skills revolution for women in this sector, he responded:

Look, I can't say no because we have exceeded our targets. ...But in terms of positions held I would like another five years please so that I can get them where we need them to be...Look, again it won't happen very soon. Some people say 10 years. And I'm saying to them look, we only have x amount of money allocated and a company has 20 women employed. They not gonna put 20 women on training. They gonna put 10 in the first year. Next year it's the next 10, so the first lot are stagnant now.....So 10 years is not a very long time. And remember women, they drop out.... Most women will tell me they are single parents. You find that they are lagging behind because they have socio-economic problems at home, they have their personal challenges. So it's not only limitations from a legislative point of view. There are limitations from a society point of view.

Two respondents were more certain about the existence of a 'skills revolution' in South Africa. For example, as far as the ABET Centre Manager was concerned, there has been a skills revolution in their sector:

The most exciting most exciting news for our readers and fans is that our adult learners can now read and write', she wrote in one of her messages. They can now use a cell phone. They can now withdraw money at an ATM. Facilitators are predominantly girls.

She reported that one of them said to her *'I never thought I could be a teacher'*. According to her, facilitators are trained in computers and they are issued with 3G cards-another skills revolution.

On her part, the Director of the EDTP SETA commented on whether in her opinion there has been a skills revolution for women in this country as follows:

Yes, I would say that, Yes. I think there has been a huge impact in our sector as a whole and for women especially, in terms of women's lives changing, employment opportunities, women are now empowered to make certain decisions that they previously were scared to make. I would say there is a clear positive impact but it's also clear that we still have a lot more to do.

The AGRISETA Director was more cautious. While he thought that there has been a skills revolution in South Africa, he also felt that the sector was only touching the 'tip of the iceberg'. He indicated that the SETA was inundated with applications for learning and that the sector is 4-5 times over-subscribed. As a result the sector is reactive as opposed to pro-active. He also identified a huge shortage of artisans as an impediment to the success of their programmes.

The findings above suggest that the different officials have identified partial successes and failures in terms of skills training in their various SETAs, and in particular, the extent to and ways in which they target women. The findings also identify various factors that hinder the participation and success of women in the SETA programmes.

5.2 Perspectives from selected Women's Voices

In this section we discuss the ways in which women themselves experience the so-called 'skills revolution' and the extent to and ways in which they have benefitted from it. As stated above, four groups of women in Limpopo (two), Gauteng, and KwaZulu-Natal were interviewed. We elected to interview women outside the formal economy (a gap which we hope future studies will address) as we wanted to hear, in this exploratory study, from those most marginalised in our society: Unemployed/self-employed women in the three provinces.

5.2.1 Has there been a gendered skills revolution in South Africa?

We asked a group of women in Vlakfontein whether they had heard about the skills revolution and they said they heard about this on radio. The women further argued that

those who are leading this intervention do not come to talk to them. They even requested that we should also not go for good after this interview:

If you could please come back and help us. Don't disappear. Come down to our levels and help the women. Women are suffering. They survive by growing crops but there is no rain. Please come back and help us.

From the various focus group interviews we held in the three provinces, indications are that a number of training programmes have been availed to women. However, access to and benefits from these varied, particularly for women. For example, on whether there had been a skills revolution, the four women in Agriculture (Bela-Bela, Limpopo) generally felt they had themselves not experienced it. In this regard, one simply said: 'We do hear about it but it doesn't reach us'. Some were quite blunt about how unhelpful the Agriculture sector had been and therefore they did not experience the so called skills revolution:

If I see a person from Agriculture coming to my farm, I'm going to chase them away. Why are they coming? What do they want? They are not helping me. I'm doing it all alone and I'm able to take my cabbages and sell them at the Pretoria market.

In particular, when asked whether they had undergone any training, their experiences varied. To illustrate, one responded as follows:

To be honest I haven't received any training in agriculture. But I have started planting already. I plant using guidelines from magazines—~~F~~ (the book from ARC). Their magazines help me a lot.

We asked the woman whether she knew of any training going on and her response was:

I know that there is training. Agriculture does give training but it hasn't reached me. If they do it's going to be a waste of my time because I've started already. If a person is farming, I wish they would train you as you start because if they come when you already know the basics, it's pointless.

Some of the women in the group had received some training. One of them elaborated:

The training we received at Toppies training centre is far below standard compared to what we got from the former farm owners, the white farmers. I think the way I can explain it is that facilitators at Toppies miss some of the sessions—sometimes they don't come a whole week. Their training needs lots of improvement.

Yet another participant reiterated the issue of poor training as follows:

The training we get is a standard of a Sub A kid. With chickens you need proper training because there are diseases. If at all you want to be a proper farmer, you need to go according to the Boer training. They know everything. Do you

remember when we went to Nelstroom? You will hear them say they have twenty something certificates but they don't know anything.

The poor training aside, some participants felt that training had tended to ignore the poultry sector and concentrated on sectors such as cattle.

It also emerged that some of the women arranged for their own private training outside AGRISETA. This was because they felt the latter did not give them the support they needed. Here is what one had to say:

...At the moment I have done my own research on how to access training, not through Agriculture. I don't know how their programmes are run. I don't what their procedure is as far as training is concerned. So on the 28th of April I'm going for training.

Yet another one said:

What makes me so cross is that when you have planted and your crops are growing, they come and tell you your spinach is a little yellow, but you never taught me what to do so that it does not become yellow? No, no, no.

The second group was made up of unemployed women participating in various skills training programmes at an AIDS hospice in KwaZulu-Natal which also assists them to sell their products to the public as a form of income generation. When asked whether they had accessed any training, as expected they said yes. The training they received came mostly from NGOs and individuals. As one of them explained:

We were taught by different people. Unfortunately we don't know their names. They just come as you did and they teach us and we accept what they have to teach us.

When we asked a group of women from Lephalale (Limpopo) whether or not they had accessed any training, the first answer we got revealed that some women had undergone many forms of training, but they faced many 'down-stream' challenges:

I did a building and construction course at ----Academy. I also did a financial skills training done by... and a marketing training by.... We were promised certificates for all this training but we haven't received them. They also promised to visit us after training to assist us here and there but that hasn't happened. So we don't see any benefits because we haven't really seen anyone to help us.

But there still were women who had not undergone any training:

I haven't had any form of training. I wish I could have training like catering and so on so that I can be able to help myself and be like other women.

Another woman who had also not had any training said:

At home, at Reedfontein there are no training opportunities. The ladies talking about training stay around Lephhalale, in town. In rural areas there is no training. Even if we try there is nobody willing to help us. The women from Nchibidi tried but nobody came to help them. The skills you are talking about are not there at all in rural areas. All we do is go to the fields and farm. But we are not far from Lephhalale.

5.2.2 Have skills training programmes targeted women?

When asked: Was this training accessible to women, the KwaZulu-Natal group reported that in their experience, any woman could access the training:

I would say someone has to be eager to learn. 'Its not by luck. If you want to learn you can learn. Its well known. At home they know that we do beadwork, we sew.... So if you want to learn you can come and learn', said another, with the concurrence of all others.

When asked whether they had had any training and in what areas, the unemployed and self-employed women from Vlakfontein (Gauteng) indicated that the majority had indeed undergone some training in various industries, ranging from sewing to catering and other fields. To illustrate, one elaborated:

The training that I got is caring for special needs children conducted by Wits University. The training has helped as they have taught me how to deal with children as a mother. My wish is to get a Llevel 4 training. I don't want to focus on the crèche only. I wish I could have a bigger place where the ladies can have a place to sew uniforms for these children, cook for them, start a garden, a shop--- a lot of things, create jobs for Vlakfontein people.

Another was trained in agriculture:

I had Agricultural training and it helped me to be able to put food on the table. I am able to plant veggies in my garden and survive on them. When we were in the middle of the training it was discovered that it was not registered. We were disturbed. We did not get anything, no certificate, nothing! So we stopped going.

So, do women benefit from these training programmes? The section below addresses this question.

5.2.3 Have skills training programmes benefitted women?

First, with regard to what they were taught and how it helped, the KwaZulu-Natal group responses were enthusiastic:

They teach us beadwork, sewing, writing and home-based care for the sick people. There are a lot of things they have taught us.

Another added:

Yes, it helped us a lot. We are able to use it at home, make a few cents here and there. So it helped a lot. Especially beadwork, as we are here at the centre we are able to teach others. Those who have the skill pass it on to others.

The women were asked whether and how they had benefitted from the training. This is how one woman in the KZN group responded:

It has helped but there people in the community who haven't been reached. Like us for example we are doing home-based care, And when you go out to the communities to care for the sick you find people suffering. Yes they are doing something but are not reaching more people.

These women's desire to help one another learn something new came out quite strongly throughout our conversation with them. One woman had the following to say in this regard:

There is something that touched me that mama said earlier. She said she'd like to learn how to read and write. I am running a project in my community, maybe she'd get a group together and then we'd make a plan for me to go and help them.

The Vlakfontein women felt empowered by what they had learnt and wished to develop further in those fields. One woman had this to say:

I got home based care training. It has helped me a lot because I didn't know anything about caring for people. I would like to have a place here at Vlakfontein where we can take care of the terminally ill patients, something like a hospice. And a home for children who have lost their parents and end up on the streets. Also there is teenage pregnancy here...

5.2.4 What are some of the barriers to women's access to the skills training?

An interesting perception from women who had had no training was that training programmes were made available to women who knew important people. To illustrate, one elaborated:

I'm still in training for the past two days. I am involved in sports. There is another challenge when it comes to sport. Development forums, ward committees, they have their own thing. When you come up with a project, at the end of the day it's either they ruin it or they take it away from you. You are told that you are not educated and you cannot run it. You as a woman you become so vulnerable.

The Vlakfontein women in particular, reported a lack of information on where to get the help they needed as a challenge in terms of accessing skills training. The Development centre representative in the group had this to say:

Information doesn't reach people and me as a development centre person I put the blame on the Centre because it does not do the marketing. It doesn't inform people. There are individuals who are benefiting from it which is totally unacceptable, more especially for females.

A second problem was finance. For example, one woman commented:

As I said I'd like to do level 4 training, it costs thousands. And I don't have that kind of money. I don't even make that much at the crèche. So that's why I like attending meetings whenever there are skills development meetings, maybe I might end up getting what I want.

Another identified loss of income when one went for training as a problem:

... like me I work alone, if you go on training on a certain day, you lose business for that day. You lose income. But if you are a cooperative, one can go today, another one next day and so on. But the problem is that here at ---- Training Centre they only run a specific training intervention on one day and it's finished. You will only get the same training again the following year.

A third was related to the politics of eligibility for training with a given community: Here is what one woman had to say in this regard:

Where I'm working at the moment there are many training interventions but I'm not allowed to go for training. I am told that it is for the community not staff.

On the same issue of eligibility, age was also reported as a barrier in some cases:

There was training here recently on design and technology and only the young people were allowed to attend. People like us were denied access to this training because we are old-age of 40 to 45. We are old yes but not old enough to qualify for an old age government grant.

A fourth challenge was identified as related to gender:

But if you ask them to give you a register you will see how many men have been developed here and yet this organisation belongs to women. And the board took a man and made him a leader. The chairperson of the board is a man. And that's where you can understand where it all started--- so that women mustn't be developed. And that's very hurting. That's very hurting.

The fifth problem raised was the apparent lack of recognition of the training by employers:

These short courses don't work. And these certificates they issue they say are accredited but that is not true I can assure you. Its just a certificate of attendance. When you go to Woolworths to apply for a job, eish it's so bad ----they don't hire you because this thing is not accredited and it was just a basic thing. It is very painful.

In their experience, these women also felt that there was no follow up after training to determine the usefulness of the development programmes. Some also felt that training programmes were just brought to them without their involvement in decision-making.

This is how one woman expressed her concern regarding the latter problem:

And the person who comes to tell you about the training will tell you to take whatever is available, get lots of certificates. You will see when job opportunities arise, you will see! They don't build up your interest. That is why you will find nurses at Baragwanath Hospital beating and hurting patients. It's because it's not their calling. That is not what they wanted to do.

It is interesting that while some women we interviewed reported that they did not see the value of certificates of basic training, this group was bitter about not getting their certificates. One said:

There are forms that we get and they are asking for proof of training. I received forms yesterday but am unable to submit proof of training because we never received certificates.

According to this group, not only was there lack of communication, there was also lack of accountability regarding who is to help them. This is what one woman said in this regard:

After training you'd hear them say 'go to your communities, there are departments like LIPSA that will help you'. When you get there you find that LIPSA doesn't know anything about what you have come for. This hurts a lot because you take your last cents to go there and you don't get what you've been promised.

The Vlakfontein women also felt that training did not help if there were no opportunities and that they were made to pay for what would never come to fruition:

They make you pay for the ck and registration. Pay this to join this, pay this amount to join that. At the same time you are not working and you are left with nothing.

Another added:

We don't have knowledge of how to start a business. Like in cooperatives we don't know what to do to register. Tell us if you want to register you need this and that. I like working but I do not have resources to do the job.

Yet another offered:

The main challenge is that in the communities, people are starting cooperatives but there is no help from the government side, from local government. The province comes only when things are bad. Government doesn't monitor. And the marketing training, it is done in English and I'm not educated. It's terrible.

A related question asked the respondents what other forms of training they would access if given the opportunity. To illustrate the range of responses, first, the KZN women identified fabric painting, baking, reading and writing, and saving money. Some women wished they could get formal employment:

...There are things like pension and so on. Have a job where you get paid and some of the money is put into some saving scheme. There is no use going to work and at the end of the day you have nothing to show for it. There are things like benefits and so on but for us we just work and there is no savings for the future. I would also like to learn English so that when a white person addresses me in English I can understand and be able to respond.

Second, one woman commented on opportunities for women, particularly those in the 'deep' rural areas, in a way revealing the apparent lack of information some rural women had:

You know, with regard to women in rural areas I would say training as far as I understand it is accessible to everyone. If you group yourselves and mobilise the women you will be able to access the training, be it from LIPSA or the Department of Labour. They just need to form a group.

Third, the Vlakfontein women identified a variety of areas in which they would love to pursue: sewing, farming, cleaning, child care, cooking etc. A number of them desired to run businesses in these areas. But they felt they did not have the necessary knowledge and skills: One woman said:

I'd like to get training in business management, inclusive of bookkeeping, finance, accounting, and then public relations. I want to do something that will add value to the community, create employment for people. I don't want to start- something and it ends up going down the drain because I don't know which channels I should follow.

Fourth, of particular note was a woman who said she needed training in helping abused women and children:

I would like to get involved in helping abused children. There are so many children who are raped. I always wonder how I can help them. Even women, there are so many who are abused and I don't know how to help them. I wish to have some skills on how to help them.

Fifth, a profoundly relevant comment came from one of the women who observed:

I'm sure if a health and safety officer came into our kitchen he would give us 0%. We are group of five women doing a catering project for the community. We need training because when I bake from home it's not 100%.

Sixth, one woman, illustrating the range of skills training women are looking **for**, asked:

I'd like to ask, as we are having a discussion about issues raised, for instance like I said maybe we are a group of performers (for stage plays), how can we take it further and maybe become big? If its good we need to sell it, you know.

Finally, one woman respondent sought to know how they could market their products for the 2010 world cup. She asked: 'As 2010 is coming, we are selling beadwork here, if we want to sell our work for the 2010 World cup, who should we get in touch with'.

The above discussion suggests that access to skills training for women is varied. There seems to be a paucity of information regarding training programmes, and various factors, including time, finance, gender inequality, and others, prevent some women from accessing even those programmes available to them. For example a lady who had undergone training in early childhood development described the kind of training she had undergone though she lamented the fact that she would like to improve her skills but because of financial and time constraints she was not in a position to do so. This, according to her was a source of great frustration because the service she was providing was without doubt valuable to the community. The interviews with the women also suggests that they do not feel that the training programmes particularly target them as women, but that they are simply there for them to access in the same way as men do. The next section discusses these findings and identifies implications for policy and practice.

6. Summary and Discussion

This study examined the extent to, and ways in which there has been a ‘skills revolution’ in South Africa, and the ways in which training programmes have targeted and benefitted women, particularly the very marginalised in our society (poor, African women). On the one hand, the literature we reviewed suggests that the South African government has unequivocally declared its commitment to women advancement in terms of skills development for all, including men and women. In its Skills Development Strategy policy framework, the government has identified women as a particular group for targeting, recognising them as key to economic development in the country. In this regard, it has put in place a legal framework by way of the Skills Development Act and the formation of Sector Education and Training Authorities. The Department of Labour has also developed a Skills Development Strategy policy framework to speak to the named legal framework. In this section we utilise the literature we reviewed and the data we presented to discuss the impact on women’s skills development. We have defined a skills revolution as a drastic, far-reaching and society-wide development of skills in this case among women and particularly those historically disadvantaged. We discuss the impact in consciousness of two main themes: access and success. But because these two are inter-related, we interweave the two in our discussion and we discuss these in relation to the four sectors -(and SETAs and ABET centre) we have sampled in this study.

First, in the mining sector, findings suggest that of the four focus areas: women in mainstream mining; women in small scale mining; women in mining communities; and women in labour sending areas, there has been least progress in the area of women in mainstream mining although some movement has been noticed in this direction. This is supposed to be the main focus area in terms of skills development in this sector with the other three being supplementary. Findings also suggest that some sub-sectors such as jewellery are meeting their targets while others such as gold and platinum mining are not. Against this background, we recognise the steady progress made in this sector. However until women become part and parcel of mainstream mining we cannot declare a skills revolution in the sector.

Second, the findings suggest that the wholesale and retail sector has largely exceeded its target of 53%. However, it has struggled in the ABET sector to the extent that this area suffers neglect. Findings also show that small companies face difficulties when they have to release some of their staff on a regular basis for training as is required. There are also challenges that militate against women participation in training. To illustrate, many women are single mothers who have to handle many other responsibilities in their homes. Others living in rural areas can only use candles to do their work during the night, thus negatively impacting on their ability to produce the required portfolios of evidence required in the training. Overall the sector has made tremendous progress but only as far as achieving low-ranking positions for women. Therefore, until women enter high-ranking positions in the sector and begin to run this sector, we can conclude that the skills revolution is only starting.

Third, the findings in this study suggest that in the Education, Training and Development Practices (ETDP) SETA, steady progress has apparently been achieved. To illustrate, in the Early Childhood and Development (ECD) sub-sector, about 95% of the trainees are women. In the year 2008/09, 64% of the learners (10% above the target) were women. Some attempts at developing women to penetrate the higher echelons of companies and public sectors are being made. In ABET thousands of women can now read and write. They can now take charge of the basic day-to-day running of their lives. However, ABET is a low level training. Employers require much more from job-seekers. This suggests that in terms of low-level skills, there has been a skills revolution. However, what we need is ~~the~~ more movement beyond the basic.

Fourth, our findings suggest that in Agriculture, there is still great demand for training. The director we spoke to reported that there is still a lot of work to be done. Many women we spoke to had not yet accessed training in this sector suggesting that there is still need to reach more people particularly in the remote areas. Some women we spoke to no longer want to see officials from this sector anymore because they say they have been neglected for too long to the extent that they want to go it alone. Other women who receive training felt that there was no follow-up on the part of trainers. There is also

reported a lack of information flow to the people in the ‘grassroots’. There is also a shortage of artisans. We can therefore, conclude that according to our small scale study, a skills revolution has not yet been achieved in this sector.

From the women we spoke to in the five focus group discussions, a number of lessons can be drawn. Some women believed the training they have had is of low standard. For example, some women in agriculture reported that farm owners’ training was far more superior to what they were getting. Those who testified that they had got useful training wished to have higher training to improve their competitiveness levels. One example of evidence that women needed higher level training is the fact that some still relied on other people to find customers for their products. This implies that they would have to release some of their profits to such middle persons.

One of our findings is that most women were very willing to cascade the knowledge and skills they have acquired to other women. Therefore, the more women get trained, the more the knowledge and skills society at large will benefit from. The challenge as we have already alluded to is to raise the levels of training. Another example is the women’s expressed need for continued guidance which most reported they did not have, to the extent that they requested us as researchers not to go for good but to come back and assist them.

But we also learnt that women are not a homogeneous population. Some desired knowledge and skills to be able to run their own businesses, others wished to be developed for seeking employment. Similarly women experienced different circumstances. Some could afford to leave their jobs to go for training while others could not afford such loss of income. A perennial problem among some women was the continued dominance and in some cases interference of men. In some projects strictly developed to benefit women, men were found either running them or actually getting training therein.

Informed by the theories we reviewed earlier in this report, we see that the labour market is divided into two: the primary and secondary markets. The former houses jobs with potential for promotion, and jobs needing high level training. The latter involves poorly paid jobs with little security. It also encompasses less formal forms of employment. Our findings suggest that most women in South Africa are currently in the secondary category. They are not yet adequately active in the mainstream economy. While there may be other hindering factors such as those informed by hegemonic masculinities, the lack of high level skills on the part of women seem to be one of the dominant causes. We conclude that, unless women access skills that successfully move them out of the secondary economy and into the primary market, economic development, and poverty alleviation for women as well as for all members of our society will remain a pipe dream.

Furthermore, the impact of the skills revolution on women in South Africa can be understood at two levels: low level and high level. Our findings suggest that South Africa's skills development efforts so far have 'grown' confidence in many women. Many women have undergone some training leading to some reasonable amounts of empowerment on their part. Therefore there has been some degree of a skills revolution albeit at the low level. However, there are women who are still to experience such training. The Skills Development Act's and the National Skills Development Strategy's vision is one of achieving high level skills particularly for the historically disadvantaged for them to play a meaningful role in the mainstream economy. The desire to take charge of one's day-to-day life's challenges, to secure formal employment in the mainstream economy, and to run their own business are the key drivers motivating women to seek skills development.

7. Recommendations

Our findings in this exploratory study suggest that a skills revolution as we have defined it in this report is yet to be achieved in South Africa, at least among the sectors that we studied. Lack of follow up on training initiatives, inadequate flow of information particularly to women in remote areas, the apparent low-key character of some training initiatives, women's multiple responsibilities in families and society, gender inequalities,

and the inability of small companies to regularly release workers for training and remain viable seem to be some of the factors inhibiting access to and success in the training programmes. If addressed, these could go a long way to the country realising its skills revolution and moving the majority of people, women in particular, out of the secondary economy and poverty and into the primary economy and economic development. In particular, recommendations for increasing, strengthening and consolidating the recruitment, retention and success of women in skills training programmes in relation to policy making and industry and business might include:

7.1 Recommendations for Policy making

To ensure that the policy framework is implemented according to the spirit in which it is meant: to move the majority of the most marginalised in society to the centre of the economy, government needs to:

- Gather sex-disaggregated statistics on types of training programmes and whether they target and benefit women;
- In conjunction with State Research Councils and HE institutions, commission studies that examine the impact of the skills training programmes in various sectors on women;
- Develop a targeted national strategy for increasing women's participation in training programmes;
- Enforce legislation that is in place to address discrimination on the basis of sex and continually review the legislation to ascertain whether it is working or not;
- Facilitate the conceptualisation and implementation of training programmes that address stereotypical views of women and their roles and abilities in society, including gender awareness campaigns and equality training.

7.2 Recommendations for Business and Training Providers

In order to increase women's access to and success (benefit) in skills training programmes, business and training providers (e.g., NGOs) need to:

- Encourage employers and educate them to understand social issues affecting women's lives and how these impact on their ability to access and succeed in

- training programmes (e.g. child-rearing; care work in the family and the community, etcetera);
- Implement training programmes that take women's multiple tasks (in the workplace, the home and the community) into consideration and that accommodate a woman's need for flexibility regarding training hours;
 - Acknowledge the fact that women are not a homogenous group (they have diverse histories, experiences and educational backgrounds) and take these into consideration when conceptualising and implementing training programmes;
 - Set specific equity targets and matching these by providing in-house training so as to monitor the recruitment, retention and advancement of women in the training programmes and in the organisation; and
 - Develop and arrange partnerships with schools, ABET centres, tertiary education and private institutions that will encourage girls to access skills normally reserved for boys; and
 - Interrogate the gender issues (such as gender biases, for example) inherent in curriculum design of training programmes to help identify factors that discourage women from participating and succeeding.

7.2 Recommendations for further research

This small scale study's findings are ?? and cannot be conclusive. A nationwide study including all SETAs is necessary to develop a holistic understanding of the extent of skills development in the country and its impact on women. Such a study must include a variety of women respondents: Those who are employed as well as those who are unemployed; those in the primary as well as those in the secondary economy, those in rural and urban contexts, women with different levels of formal education and others.

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Appendix A: Research Instruments

TOOL A: Structured question guide for In-Depth Interviews with Officials in Department of Labour, selected SETAs and ABET/Training centre managers

Audit Participants:

National DoL Managers (DG/DDG)	SETA Directors	ABET Centre Managers

Date: ___/___/_____

Interviewer(s): _____

Thank you for your time. The purpose of this interview is to examine the extent to which formal and informal training/skills-building interventions in your department/directorate/centre have targeted and benefitted women in the past five years. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes.

1. What training/skills building initiative does your department/directorate/centre currently have and what is their focus?

2. To what extent and in what ways does the initiative particularly target women?

3. How accessible is the training/are the training centres to women? In particular, to what extent have women accessed your initiatives? Which women have regularly accessed your programmes in the past five years?

4. How have women benefitted from your training initiatives? In particular, in the past five years, to what extent are they accessing jobs/careers that have traditionally been the preserve of men?

5. To what extent are the initiatives accessible to women not in formal employment and how has this impacted on their access to other learning pathways?

6. In your view, to what extent is the skills revolution resulting in a decrease in the wage gap between men and women?

7. What factors facilitate or impede women's access to skills training and its intended results (improved access to the labour market and better quality of life)?

TOOL B: PHOTO-VOICE WITH UNEMPLOYED WOMEN/WOMEN TRADERS

Province:	
Number of Participants:	
Date of Photovoice:	
Facilitator(s):	

Thank you for agreeing to participate. The purpose of this session is to solicit your views regarding the accessibility of skills training to women like yourself. We will utilize what we call photovoice to solicit your views regarding the two issues. In the Photo-voice you will be given cameras to take pictures of spaces and objects that represent either barriers or factors that facilitate access to training programmes for you and other women.

The session will address three questions:

- 1. To what extent are educational/training programmes accessible to women like yourself who are not in formal employment?*
- 2. How has this accessibility/inaccessibility impacted on women's access to alternative learning pathways?*
- 3. What factors facilitate or impede women's access to skills training and its intended results (improved access to the labour market and better quality of life)?*

TOOL C: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH WOMEN IN SELECTED SECTORS

Province:	
Number of Participants:	
Date of FGD:	
Facilitator(s):	

Thank you for taking part in this discussion that centres on the impact of the skills revolution on women. We would like to hear your responses to the extent to which women have accessed skills training initiatives in the past five years, how accessible these have been to women and how they have benefitted them:

1. What training/skills-building initiatives does your employer currently have and what is their focus?

2. To what extent and in what ways does the initiative particularly target women? How are women targeted and encouraged to participate in these?

3. How accessible is the training/are the training centres to women? In particular, to what extent have women accessed the initiatives?

4. How have you as women benefitted from the training initiatives provided by your employers? In particular, to what extent are the initiatives helped you to access jobs/careers that have traditionally been the preserve of men?

5. In your view, to what extent is the skills revolution resulting in a decrease in the wage gap between men and women?

7. What factors facilitate or impede your access to skills training and its intended results (improved access to the labour market and better quality of life for you as women)?
