

commitment. Its implication is that mobilization of actions, knowledge, skills and expertise of all employees in the form of team activities is very crucial in the organizations” (p. 1024). Ghorbanhosseini (2013) thus argues that organising activities in teams, serves as a catalyst for commitment and support from employees to an organization which would consequently increase their human capital and lead to increased productivity.

Tikly (2013) too finds reason in the argument presented by Ghorbanhosseini (2013) and others as he argues in a report in a UNESCO journal where he claims that, “The new emphasis on skills for growth has led exponents of human capital theory to suggest different kinds of policy solutions” (p. 7). He states that apart from the emphasis on supporting system change through system assessments, there is further emphasis laid on the assessments of learning and skills from the World Bank that include team skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Wickramasinghe and Perera (2012) agree with Ghorbanhosseini (2013) and others who contend that teamwork skills is a capacity skill that needs to be prioritised for human capital development. It is seen as a fundamental human capital generic skill enabling employees to be effective and competitive in the new knowledge work environment.

Leadership as a skill for the knowledge economy

Sandman and Vandenberg (1995) conclude that “... leadership development for the 21st century is holistic: it is centered in groups or organizations, rather than individuals, and engages the group in heart, mind, spirit, and energy. The driving forces of this philosophy, then, are community, the heart of a group's leadership; vision, which engages the spirit; learning, which stimulates the mind; and action, which compels energy” (p. 1).

As with communication and teamwork skills, leadership skills can additionally be viewed as an essential part of generic employability skills. Leadership has to be prepared to face new challenges and different ways of dealing with demands of the new knowledge economy. Leaders have to deal with critical thinkers, be problem solvers, be prepared to adapt to new innovation and be diverse in their approach to managing human capital (Canwell, Dongrie, Neveras and Stockton, 2014).

Canwell et al (2014) assert that,

“Companies face new leadership challenges, including developing Millennials and multiple generations of leaders, meeting the demand for leaders with global fluency and flexibility,

building the ability to innovate and inspire others to perform, and acquiring new levels of understanding of rapidly changing technologies and new disciplines and fields” (p. 2).

Dilts (1996) agrees with Canwell et al.(2014) when he puts forward that good leadership skills, in a new knowledge world, is paramount to our future ‘success and survival’. He says that,

“As we try to take command of our own destiny and guide the destinies of our families, communities, organisations and our planet, the necessity of effective leadership ability has become increasingly obvious” (Dilts, 1996, p. 1).

Problem solving as a skill for the knowledge economy

Geldenhuys (2007), when defining problem solving, says that,

“In a typical problem solving process, symptoms are usually identified, the root causes of the problem are analysed, possible solutions are brainstormed, best alternative solutions are selected and action plans for implementation are developed.” (p. 1)

Gamble (2013) and others (Singh and Singh, 2008; Wickramasinghe & Perera, 2012; and Barrie, 2006) see higher order conceptual skills such as problem solving skills as fundamental in developing the ‘knowledge economy’. Geldenhuys (2007) agrees and states that problem solving skills is crucial in a modern economy and defines it as the process that identifies the root problem, brainstorm possible solutions, selects the most viable solutions and puts in action plans for implementation.

The Asian Development Bank (2009) in their report, ‘Good Practice in Technical and Vocational Education and Training’ argues that the TVET sector is arguably “... the most challenging subsector to manage because of its changing labour demands, diverse clientele, the range of programs and high inherent cost” (p. 2). It argues that TVET skills development should be seen as an important cog in raising productivity and to reduce poverty. It sees it as having a causal relationship. The report further stresses that “New forms of work organization require greater responsibility and skills from the workforce, including problem-solving and communication skills” (p. 7) The report agree with Okorafor and Okorafor (2013) when it comes to the role that TVET institutions play in garnering those skills.

Mohamad and Graaff (2013) at the 4th International Research Symposium on Problem-Based Learning (2013) stress the importance of the transference of knowledge by using a problem-based

learning methodology. They recognize that in order to solve problems, the individual should have: “strong conceptual understanding of the subject matter; the ability to reason with incomplete information ...; motivation for self-directed learning...” (p. 128).

Mohamad and Graaff (2013) address the important issue of teaching problem solving skills to students using problem-based learning methodology. They recognize, as previously argued during my literature review, that in order to solve problems, fundamental components such as ‘strong conceptual understanding; ‘the ability to reason’ and motivation for ‘self-directed learning’ have to be part of the students critical generic skills uptake.

As discussed before, the Asian Development Bank (2009), in their report, ‘Good Practice in Technical and Vocational Education and Training’ agrees with Okorafor and Okorafor (2013) when it comes to the role that TVET institutions should play in inculcating problem solving skills into students. They argue that new forms of work organisation require greater responsibility and different skills from its workforce which include the generation of problem solving skills. This, according to them, would lead to greater productivity and reduce poverty.

Daud (2013), at the 4th International Research Symposium on Problem-Based Learning, argued that Technical Vocational Education and Training engineering students, who have completed a problem-based curriculum, would have enhanced human capital skills and would ultimately contribute towards economic growth. Okorafor and Okorafor (2013) concur with this view and say that TVET colleges have a major role to play in developing generic skills like problem solving among others which plays a crucial role in expanding the knowledge economy.

Arguments of Bhuwanee (2012) are similar to those of Daud (2013), Okorafor and Okorafor (2013), and Mohamad and Graaff (2013) when he highlights the significance of generic skills in the workplace and its importance when it comes to applying knowledge and skills. He mentions solving problems among others as examples when he makes this argument. He pronounces that, “... generic skills focus on the capacity to apply knowledge and skills in an integrated way in work situations” (Bhuwanee, 2012, p. 28). Daud (2013) makes similar arguments when he asserts that, “Though generic skills are important for the graduates during the job hunting, it is also a need for them to acquire technical skills through hands-on experience that will enable them to solve problems which emulate industrial problems” (p. 89).

Critical thinking as a skill for the knowledge economy

Critical thinking skills additionally are another generic employability skill that is sought after in the 'new knowledge' era as discussed by Thompson (2011) Brotherton (2011), and Gamble (2013). Gamble (2013) asserts that the 'knowledge economy' is in need of workers who have developed "higher-order skills of reasoning, conceptual problem - solving and communication" (p. 207).

Thompson (2011) defines critical thinkers as individuals with curious natures and they possess the ability to realise that some situations require 'multiple approaches' and that for some questions there can be more than one answer. He further declares that,

"... critical thinkers are cognizant of potential barriers and difficulties and are always prepared to identify solutions to these problems. In doing so they are systematic and methodical in their approaches to solving problems" (p. 2).

Brotherton (2011) agrees with Thompson (2011) and Gamble (2013) and emphasises the importance of critical thinking in a new knowledge economy when he states that,

"With the continuous economic upheaval, the speed of technological change, and the on-going need to deal with uncertainty and complexity, critical thinking skills have risen to the top of the list of competencies needed to lead organizations effectively into the future" (p. 1)

South African TVET colleges, the NCV and generic employability skills for the knowledge economy

Kruss et al. (2012) asserts that workers need to respond to new technologies that is information intensive and seek creative ways to respond to the challenge of new production methods to ensure that the South African nation state become competitive on the global stage.

Gewer (2009) blames apartheid for colleges' inability to effectively impact on economic developments. He says that, "Colleges have inherited a legacy of a disjointed institutional and labour market created under apartheid and this invariably has an impact on their capacity to respond to the needs of the economy in which they operate." (p. 98). Kruss et al. (2012) support the arguments made by Gewer (2009) and claim that the ever-changing 'shifting mandate' the TVET college

system has to endure, makes it difficult for those institutions to adequately prepare young adults for the current labour market. This legacy has led to a credibility question that colleges have to overcome with the industrial stakeholders in order to develop better communication strategies in order to develop better bilateral relationships. Kruss et al. (2012) propose that, “The institutional and structural arrangements between education, the labour market, the production system and other social and economic institutions do not always facilitate appropriate, responsive and up-to-date development of skills and capabilities that will enhance global competitiveness” (p. 1).

Wedekind (2012) supports the arguments of Kruss et al. (2012) and Guison-Dowdy (2012) that the technical colleges need to make a fundamental shift in order to become more relevant, or as he puts it, ‘more responsive’ to an ever emerging knowledge economy. Wedekind (2012) urges those stakeholders within the college sector to fully comprehend the challenges associated with developing responsiveness towards contemporary industrial requirements. He suggests that the challenges facing vocational institutions worldwide are fairly similar but raises an argument to exclude South Africa in this statement as he regards the South African vocational institutions as unique, with their additional responsibility of redressing their apartheid past. He states that, “While the issues or external factors are broadly similar for vocational institutions throughout the world, there is an argument that suggests that South Africa’s colleges have additional matters on their agenda through the role they are expected to play in redressing the past” (Wedekind, 2012, p. 4).

Papier et al (2012) similarly recognise the importance of TVET institutions in playing a key role in issues of redressing apartheid wrongs and furthering equity. Papier et al. (2012) reflect on a road long travelled by TVET/FET colleges in South Africa and articulates their challenges in “... shedding their inglorious past, from their time as technical colleges for the training of white workers in a former exclusionary, apartheid-driven employment dispensation” (p. 2) to institutions that need to focus on the redress of past inequalities.

The diverse nature of the South African TVET institutions concerning the various programmes they offer, the diverse student population, the ‘shifting mandates’ from education authorities and the pressure from industry to prepare students for a knowledge economy, place a lot of pressure on the TVET colleges (Gewer, 2009).

In a comparative study of technical colleges in South Africa and England, McGrath et al (2010), express caution and warn that we must not succumb to employers’ interest as employers understanding of economics can become ‘part of the problem’. Developing the ‘knowledge

economy' cannot be confined to the needs of employers but it should be more expansive in its outlook. McGrath et al (2010) and Wedekind (2012) concur that developing skills for employment is much broader than just pleasing the narrow interest of employers. They argue that workers have to be prepared for the volatility of global economic markets. As previously argued by Khambayat and Majundar (2010), Young and Chapman (2010) and UNESCO (2012), Wedekind (2012) additionally argues that instilling skills into students would enable them to adapt to the future demands of the 'new knowledge economy'. He argues that, "the labour market cannot predict future need and so colleges also need a predictive response that pre-empts future demands" (p. 5). They, similar to many others, reiterate the need for communication between the various role-players in the economy.

McGrath et al (2010) in their study, however, solely concentrate on the vocational subjects and fail to note contributions made by the fundamental subjects, in the NCV stream. These subjects include Life Orientation, Mathematics and English. Wedekind (2012) similarly misses the opportunity to expand on contributions from the fundamental course, when he states that, if the need for generic skills is so in demand, it should "work across all aspects of the vocational curriculum" (p. 14) He further alerts that, "... there is little work on the ways in which employability skills are embedded (or not) within the curriculum" (p. 14). My research contributes to this limited investigation into generic employability skills in the LO course.

Papier et al. (2012), in a comprehensive report on contemporary issues in public TVET/FET colleges in South Africa are complementary in their analysis of the NCV course, curriculum design. They state that, "The design and underpinning philosophy of the NCV can be traced to debates on the kind of knowledge and skills required in a 'modern knowledge economy'" (p. 5).

However, Papier et al. (2012), in their research also neglect to recognise the contributions of the NCV course, fundamental subjects, in developing crucial critical employability skills but recognise that TVET curricula are positioned to enhance employability. This can be seen in their conclusion that, "From a macro policy perspective, conceptual frameworks have largely positioned FET Colleges to drive skills training for successive economic imperatives, though this has not been reflected in official curricula and programmes according to those who believe curricula should reflect a stronger occupational orientation" (Papier et al. 2012, p. 14).

Researchers such as Kruss et al, (2012), and Gamble (2013) similarly suggest that the South African economy cannot operate with a workforce that only possess technical knowledge, but lacks generic or higher level skills, if it wants to be globally competitive. Gamble (2013) verbalizes that. "... it is

claimed that the so-called knowledge economy now requires all students to develop higher-order skills of reasoning, conceptual problem-solving and communication,” (p. 207). Kruss et al pronounce that, “It is now widely accepted that the skills of the workforce is a critical determinant of global competitiveness, as new technologies become more complex and competition is increasingly driven by quality, flexibility, design, reliability and networking” (p. 1)

TVET colleges in South Africa, however, are unapologetically working in partnership with industry to frame their curricula within human capital principles. The White Paper for Post-school Education (2013) clearly states that, “This means that training systems, including curricula, need to be designed around close cooperation between employers and education and training providers (p. 9). In its executive summary, the White Paper (2013) outlines that, “Employers should also be in a position to advise the college system and individual colleges around issues of curriculum, and experts from industry could teach at colleges on a part-time or occasional basis (p. xii).

The various institutions are challenged to produce graduates who will be able to adapt to work situations that are increasingly becoming flexible and complex as their needs changes. The White Paper (2013) pronounces on this and states that,

“The post-school education and training system is a centrally important institutional mechanism established by society and must be responsive to its needs. This includes responding to the needs of the economy and the labour market through imparting skills as described above. It can also lead to technical innovation and economic advancement that can have a major impact on the strength and effectiveness” (White Paper, 2013, p. 10)

Watson (2014) explains the South African educational authorities’ drive to reconstitute post education sector. She declares that, “The need to innovate, to find our place in the global knowledge society, to develop the country’s infrastructure and to expand the manufacturing sector, are some of the key imperatives energising the government’s drive to reconfigure the post-school sector” (p. 17).

Watson (2014) sees the call for workers to be employable as in line with the human capital framework in which education and training are being administered, She says that,“ Within the employability debate, the skills needs of the country are, in line with conventional human capital development models, linked to economic prosperity for individuals” (p. 17).

Watson (2014) questions the need for higher order skills in the modern knowledge economy. She argues that this would erode worker security. She claims that in this human capital developmental

model, workers are perceived as autonomous and responsible for developing skills that are required by industry, at their own expense. “Simply put, students and workers are pressurized to make themselves employable...” (Watson, 2014, p. 8). She envisages that the increased restructuring in industry is a neo-liberal ploy to recapture control over workers. She laments their increased intervention and contributions in curricula developments and sees this as ‘control education’.

Locally employers are increasingly demanding employees to not only have the hard skills required for a job, but also the soft skills (generic employability skills) that would augment their employability and productivity for a new knowledge labour market. The White Paper (2013) states that, “The main purpose of these colleges is to train young school leavers, providing them with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for employment in the labour market” (p. 11). McGrath et al (2010) advise that this transition into employment can be enhanced by ensuring that critical technical and generic skills get developed by education and training institutions in liaison with the labour markets.

The South African Government’s expressed aim of establishing the TVET colleges was to ensure South Africa has enough employable workers to ensure economic prosperity and to alleviate poverty. Including a general soft skills (generic) course could be viewed as a necessary step in order to compensate for the time most people had to endure an inferior educational system under the Apartheid system. The NCV skills course should thus directly contribute towards students’ employability and thereby reducing the poverty levels in South Africa.

Researchers are generally in agreement that the South African college system has a credibility problem that needs to be addressed. In order to be more responsive to the needs of industry, the educational hierarchy needs to forge closer links with industry as suggested in the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013).

In the next section I discuss the design and methodology for investigating the incorporation of generic skills for employability into NCV students.

SECTION 3

Research design and methodology

Research Approach

My research followed a qualitative approach to investigate whether the NCV Life Skills programme has enabled students to communicate effectively; think critically; solve problems; display leadership skills and if they are able to work within a team within their work environment.

My research followed a linear path but the structure was flexible to accommodate the qualitative strategy of this specific research, as suggested by Bryman (2012). I used open-ended questions to allow for the exploration and comprehension of participants' social reality.

I conducted face-to-face interviews with the participants at their workplace by using an interview guide. Bryman (2012) describes the interview guide as “a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered” (p. 471).

The ontological position of my research can be described as constructivist as I reflected a social reality that cannot be regarded as stagnant, as it can be revised to reflect a different social reality as time passes. Bryman (2012), states that, “... the researcher always presents a specific version of social reality, rather than one that can be regarded as definitive” (p. 33).

Research Method

The research instrument that I used was a semi-structured interview guide, which allowed me to pose questions to all participants as I had the advantage to ask follow up questions or to rephrase questions for clarity. I followed a semi-structured interview approach which was appropriate for the qualitative research design. Bryman (2012) highlights the appropriateness of the semi-structured interview in qualitative research in his discussion on how it differs from the structured interview in quantitative research. The less structured nature of the interview in the qualitative approach, according to Bryman (2012), encourages ‘rambling’ because “it gives the interviewer insight into what the interviewee sees as relevant and important” (p. 470).

Turner (2010) cautions researchers to be attentive of how they clarify questions when using an interview guide, as this could cause inconsistency as “researchers can interchange the way he or she poses them” (p. 755). Bryman (2012) suggests that, “... if an interview is properly executed, variation in people’s replies will be due to ‘true’ or ‘real’ variation and not due to the interview context” (p. 210). I ensured that I was fully conversant with the questions I set to the participants, as suggested by Bryman (2012). Additionally I had to be cautious when rephrasing or clarifying questions so as to ensure consistency and not to lose the crux of the question asked. I was attentive to actions and reactions from participants as to gauge their easiness or uneasiness in answering questions. I ensured that an appropriate atmosphere was created in order for participants to partake in answering questions in a spontaneous manner as suggested by Bryman (2012). I cut short any line of questioning when noticing if they were becoming uncomfortable by their body language, as suggested by Bryman (2012).

I made sure that information given by participants, accurately reflected their perspectives by listening attentively, being non-judgmental, using quality recording equipment and respecting the dignity of participants. The estimated time taken to interview one individual participant was on average 45 minutes.

Boyce and Neale (2006) suggest that interviews “... provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as surveys. They also may provide a more relaxed atmosphere in which to collect information” (p. 3). Boyce and Neale (2006) recognise that interviews do have limitations as it could be ‘prone to bias’, ‘time - intensive’ and that untrained interviewers can make an interviewee uncomfortable (p. 4). Throughout the interaction between myself and the interviewee I tried to make them feel as comfortable as possible and demonstrated an

appreciation for their willingness to be interviewed.

Research Site

The workplace that I have selected for my investigation was the City of Cape Town, (Metro Police Department) where a number of students, who completed the NCV programme at TVET colleges, are employed.

I approached the site managers, where the participants were stationed, to identify a suitable venue for the interview to take place. Bryman (2012) suggests that an interviewer familiarises him/herself with the participants' geographical setting as this will allow for a better understanding of responses. Added to that Bryman (2012) reveals that an interviewer should ensure that the setting for an interview is not too noisy and the participant should be assured of privacy when answering questions. As different venues were used for interviews, the settings were of a mixed bag kind. The Metro Police officers were interviewed in their respective operational areas which included the Bonteheuwel Precinct, Phillippi East Precinct, Khayalitsha Precinct as well as the Metro Police Head Quarters in Cape Town.

Research participants and selection

The participants I identified for interview purposes are past students who have completed level 4 in Safety in Society in the NCV stream of two TVET colleges situated in the Southern Suburbs and Northern Suburbs of Cape Town and who have acquired jobs as Metro Police officers at the Cape Town local Municipality. I made approaches to the City of Cape Town for assistance with the selection of participants.

The target selection for the study was twenty but only thirteen of the total participants from the 2012 college cohort agreed to be part of the research project. This cohort was the first to receive employment with the City of Cape Town as Metro Police officers. The number of students, who initially received employment, was twenty-four. I had to choose from this limited population range and thirteen students was a number that could minimize sampling error and ensure 'likely precision'. Bryman (2012) argues that a large size does not guarantee precision but it does increase the "likely precision of the sample" (p. 198).

The participants were of a diverse range as far as their culture, language, race, gender, age and socio-economic status were concerned. I did not discriminate on the basis of gender, race or socio-economic status when I approached the officers to volunteer as participants. My initial idea was to

ensure an equal representation in gender when selecting my participants for the research project. However, I found female participants to be unwilling to participate in this study; hence the majority of participants were male.

Research Instrument

I used a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix 1) to collect the required data. The interview guide was set to investigate how or if participants had used their acquired skills to negotiate social and individual processes to negotiate obstacles, particularly in relation to adapting to their work as Metro Police officers. This method of data collection allowed for greater flexibility but could still be considered as being methodical in its approach, as suggested by Bryman (2012). He states that, “What is crucial is that the questioning allows interviewers to glean the ways in which research participants view their social world and that there is flexibility in the conduct of the interviews” (Bryman, 2012, p. 473). Similar questions were asked to all participants but the flexible nature of the interview guide allowed participants to enjoy a certain degree of freedom to express themselves in a spontaneous manner while being interviewed. The interview guide allowed me greater freedom to clarify questions and to ask additional ones as provision has been made for this within its structure.

I heeded the advice of Turner (2010) who warns against inconsistency when using a semi-structured instrument when interviewing participants as they, “... may not consistently answer the same question(s) based on how they were posed by the interviewer” (p. 755).

I have taken the time to ensure that questions set in this particular instrument, were clear, unambiguous and did not invade the privacy of participants. I used language which made the questions understandable to the participants. I have taken care to set the questions within the parameters of their experience and knowledge. In order to contextualize the answers of the participants, I have included ‘facesheet information’ of a general and specific kind in the interview guide, as suggested by Bryman (2012).

The questions in the interview guide have been grouped to facilitate the transcribing of information into various themes.

Methods of data capturing

The total number of potential participants given to me by the Human Resources Head official of the organisation, was 24. Of the total population, I interviewed 13 participants by making use of an

informal interview schedule.

I have recorded the interviews with the use of a good voice recorder. Bryman (2012) suggests that a good quality recording machine should be used when interviewing to ensure clarity when capturing information. I then transferred the recording to my hard drive on my personal computer and then transferred it onto my USB flash drive for save storage. I have made notes as participants responded to my set of questions, especially when they spoke softly. I personally conducted the interviews.

Data analysis

Bryman (2012) speaks about a ‘thematic analysis’ whereby data gets examined “... to extract core themes that could be distinguished both between and within transcripts” (p. 13). To simplify the identification of themes, the coding of each transcript was suggested. Data were grouped according to component parts and labeled (Bryman, 2012).

The thematic content analysis I used to analyse my qualitative data, allowed me to study social processes which explain human behaviour and experiences such as the practical application of generic employability skills within a work situation. Braun and Clark (2006) agree with Bryman (2012) when he proposes that the thematic analysis is an ideal method for identifying and analysing themes within the collected data. Braun and Clark (2006) acknowledge that identifying themes requires a great deal of judgement from the individual researcher.

I arranged the data in ways that enabled me to identify different common themes. The questions in the interview guide were numbered to facilitate the encoding of themes.

I encoded each transcript and grouped and labelled component parts as suggested by Bryman (2012) and Braun and Clark (2006). I used pseudonyms when referring or quoting the research participants to ensure that their identity will be protected.

I used an Excel worksheet to facilitate the categorisation of various themes that could be extracted from the transcripts. I gave careful consideration when transcribing recorded transcripts, as to reflect the accurate responses of participants by comparing my notes and what is recorded on the voice recorder. I transformed data gathered into evidence that supported the credibility of the research question, as suggested by Marton (1986).

Ethical Considerations

Bound and Campbell (2012) argue that “Social scientist working within the methodology of qualitative research have specific duties to the profession, discipline and participants of research projects” (p. 1). They further argue that fundamentally ethical guidelines must be adhered to, in order to protect the most important element of the research project, the participant. The code of ethics is necessitated because researchers have different life experience which lead to diverse morals and ethical standards.

Sture (2010) , Hammersley and Traimanou (2012) and Bryman (2012) view the ethical principles of ‘minimizing harm’, ‘respecting autonomy’, ‘protecting privacy’, ‘offering reciprocity’, ‘treating people equitably’ and ‘beneficence’ as important issues when conducting research. All of these principles were relevant to me while I was conducting my research. Adherence to these principles was important so as not to impede the dignity of participants.

My research took into account that confidentiality for Metro Police officers was an imperative and steps have to be taken to assure them that no person’s position would be compromised and that records obtained during my data collection period, would be held in the strictest of confidence. I informed them that pseudonyms would be used to protect their identities and that no one will be able to identify them, as suggested by Sture (2010), Hammersley and Traianou (2012) and other research and ethical committees of various institutions of higher learning.

The primary data gathered (interview schedules and voice recorders), were safely stored on a hard drive and a backup was stored on a USB flash drive. The analysed information was captured on a computer file and saved on a computer hard drive and additionally backed – up on a USB flash drive. After ownership of the information has been established, the records will be safely stored for 5 years preferable at a site identified by the University of the Western Cape. Thereafter, saved files and scanned copies of interview guides on the hard drive will be deleted to ensure confidentiality for participants.

Keeping an open mind while conducting my research and respecting the cultural and social diversities I may encounter, are research imperatives to which I adhered. I was mindful to use the correct procedures and practices; adhered to the appropriate regulations and policies related to my research; ensured that research records were appropriately stored and endured to share my findings as soon as I established ownership status, as advised by the Singapore Statement on Research

Integrity (2010). I undertook to practice the principles of: ‘honesty, accountability, professional courtesy, fairness and good stewardship’, as espoused in the said document that was developed at the 2nd World Conference on Research Integrity 21-24 July 2010 and supported by Sture (2010), who refer to these principles as ‘scholarship issues’.

I accepted responsibility not to fabricate, falsify, plagiarise, and partake in dishonest practices and to declare my interest in my investigation as suggested in policy documents on research ethics by the University of the Western Cape, (Western Cape Policy on Research Ethics). I applied for consent to conduct the research at the City of Cape Town (See Appendix 3).

In addition I made sure that participants were informed of the research topic and its value to educators, researchers, government and others in general. An information sheet (Appendix 2), detailing the study, was attached to the consent form to ensure that participants were fully aware of the nature of the study, and what were expected of them. I had designed a consent form (Appendix 4) which, in detail, explained the study in which they partook and I gave them time to consider their consent.

I was, in general, mindful that the ethics applied when conducting my investigation, were beyond reproach and were consistent with principles and responsibilities as adopted in the Singapore Statement on Research Integrity, (as summarized by Mayer and Steneck, 2010) and the research ethics policy of the University of the Western Cape where this research project is registered.

SECTION 4 – Data Analysis

I chose to investigate whether the relatively newly appointed Law Enforcement officers, who all completed the Life Skills course at TVET colleges, gained value from it by becoming more employable. The interviews took place at various Law Enforcement precincts within the Cape Peninsula. These included places like Bonteheuwel, Parow, Mitchell's Plain, Ottery and Bothasig. What complicated my schedule of interviews is the fact that some participants were working a 24 hour shift. Apart from gaining the approval of the head of Human Resources, Law Enforcement, I had to negotiate with various precinct principal inspectors, to use their venues and to interview the prospective participants.

On more than one occasion, a venue was not available and I had to be creative in establishing one. With Lindiwe, I had to use my car as an interview setting. With Sarah, I had to use a stoep (staircase) overlooking a busy taxi rank as an interview venue. Most venues were unfamiliar to me and after using Google maps and getting directions from potential participants I had to go in search for the venue. On occasion I had to go into sub-economic areas, known for its gang warfare (Bonteheuwel and Mitchell's Plain). In Mitchell's Plain the venue was on the Town Centre and after struggling to find the venue I had to ask a car guard to direct me to the venue.

Demographic information about participants

TVET College attended and course completed

The participants are all law enforcement officers who studied the three year Life Skills course through the, NCV, Safety in Society course at TVET colleges. All participants registered in the year 2010 and completed the course in 2012 except for one participant who started in 2009 and completed the certificate course in 2011. All of the participants matriculated at various high schools with the exception of one who passed his grade 10. All of the participants completed the Life Skills course after studying at the college for three years.

Current employment status of participants

All of the participants interviewed identified their job title as 'Law Enforcement Officer'. They serve in various units with diverse responsibilities, e.g. Rapid Response Unit, Administration, Crime prevention, Traffic Unit, Problem Buildings Unit, Informal Trading Unit and Court Section. Their skills requirement is generally similar but could vary from unit to unit as their responsibility changes. All of them identified their duties to include enforcing the bylaws of the City of Cape Town.

Herman was responsible for mainly enforcing traffic, street and public bylaws.

Sarah responsibilities were mainly enforcing general public bylaws.

Monray and Bongani were responsible for the protection of council property apart from their duties to protect people of the municipality and enforcing general public bylaws.

Mandisi's duties included ensuring peace and ensuring the smooth flow of the traffic.

Ethan's role was that of investigating problem buildings. He inspects it to see if they are not in contravention of a municipal bylaw. He checks on derelict, abandoned buildings and houses that are selling illegal drugs.

Tembalani enforced general bylaws of the City and sees to it that no illegal land invasions occur.

Melany is what they identify as being office bound and sees to all administration work, deals with statistics and monitors the work ethics of officers, e.g. punctuality and attendance.

Peter's role was that of investigating problem buildings, upholding the City's bylaws and in general safeguards the community he serves.

Sunette and Lincoln saw their role as generally enforcing all of the City's bylaws to the community they served.

Lindiwe identified her role as, apart from enforcing bylaws, crime prevention and ensuring that traffic laws are applied by motorists.

Brandon, apart from enforcing all City bylaws, was mainly responsible for responding to all alarms of City council buildings and protects the staff of the council.

All of them were employed within three to six months of receiving their NCV certificates except for one participant who had alternate employment before entering the Law Enforcement department and entered one year later.

The range of their employment status was between three months and two years and 3 months.

Gender, age, race and marital status

Of the 13 interviewed, 4 were females and 9 were male. 13 were between the ages of 20 to 29 years while only one was in the age range of 30 to 39 years. 9 participants identified themselves as being coloured while 4 identified themselves as being black. Of all the participants, 12 were of single status, while one them was married.

The National Certificate Vocational (NCV) and generic employability skills

There are a variety of skills that an individual needs to become completely employable. Barrie (2006), states that a “bewildering array of terms has emerged...” (p. 217), to define generic employability skills. He underlines the fact that there is no common understanding of what generic employability skills is among academics and appeals for a common understanding. There is globally no consensus on which generic skills should be taught to ensure that students become employable. In South Africa TVET colleges (NCV stream) a multitude of generic skills are taught to ensure employability and good citizenship. I have chosen to focus on mainly five generic employability skills namely: communication skills; teamwork skills; leadership skills; problem solving skills and critical thinking skills as these skills generally get emphasised when discussed by researchers. These skills I have chosen to investigate proved to be crucial in their area of employment

Communication skills

As previously debated during my literature review, the skill of communicating effectively with others, is seen as crucial by employers in creating employable workers for a ‘new knowledge economy’ and thereby increasing their productiveness. Academics, investigating the impact of generic employability skills on employability would very rarely neglect to identify communication skills as a fundamental skill to possess in the ‘new knowledge economy’. Barrie (2006), Singh and Singh (2008) and Gamble (2013) and others highlight this specific skill as they emphasise the need to develop ‘well adjusted’ and productive individuals for the workplace.

Communication learning outcomes in the Life Skills course:

Communication skills are included in the NCV Life Orientation curriculum. The subject guidelines for NCV, Life Orientation (2007), in TVET colleges of South Africa, do not specifically identify communication as a topic. Instead it gets mentioned when the link between Life Orientation learning outcomes and the Critical and Developmental outcomes is discussed. It states that, “The student is able to communicate effectively in presenting relevant information by investigating different types of work environments and discussing available training opportunities” (NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines, 2007, p. 1). Communication as a topic however, is inserted as a sub - topic of the topic ‘Good relationship’ and forms part of the learning outcomes in the Life Orientation Subject Guidelines (2007). The importance of communication skills is contained in the learning outcome (LO) which discusses the importance of a positive relationship. “The student should be able to: discuss the characteristics of a positive relationship (respect for opinions, empathy, sharing,

listening, and inclusion)” (NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines, NQF level 2, 2007. p. 5).

As already suggested, communication skills proved to be an invaluable asset to all participants. All of them were required to interact with members of the community and found that approaching people, understanding their language, listening and being aware of their diverse backgrounds, are important fundamental skills to have in dealing with people of different cultures, class and backgrounds. Communication is a basic skill to have to build upon other generic skills as reflected later in my study. Being diverse in their approach to others is similarly fundamental in their success in interacting with people of different cultures, as proposed by Nam (2009). He states that, “One must have the capacity to interact and engage effectively with others in heterogeneous groups.” (p. 6)

Communication skills learnt during the Life Skills course

The outcome, referring specifically to communication, is reflected upon by participants as they answer questions relating to what they have learnt in the Life Skills course, relating the need for it in their place of work and how they apply in in work situations.

“The student should be able to: discuss the characteristics of a positive relationship (respect for opinions, empathy, sharing, listening, and inclusion)” (NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines, NQF level 2, 2007, p. 5).

Participants indicated that they learnt the following communication skills in the Life Skills course:

“Listen to others when communicating” (Mandisi)

“You must be clear when speaking” (Melany)

“There are two sides to each story. Analyse information and don’t make assumptions” (Monray)

“About discipline, keeping eye contact and how to approach someone.” (Ethan)

“In LO Skills class I learnt how to communicate better.” (Sarah)

“Whilst doing Life skills at college. Presentations was part of our assignments.(sic)” (Monray)

“Speaking in front of the class prepared you for your job. I find it easier now to communicate with individuals and more than one person.” (Monray)

The need for communication skills in the workplace

Reflecting on the need for communication skills, participants revealed that verbal and written communication skills are essential for performing their tasks effectively. The need 'to explain' and the need to 'educate' were frequently mentioned.

Those who thought that writing skills were important when communicating are listed below:

"Yes, while doing complaints. Paperwork is required when giving feedback in writing or by telephone." (Herman)

"Yes every day writing fines." (Sarah)

Melany related the need for e-mail communication skills

"Yes, email owners of buildings." (Melany)

Several participants used their verbal communications skills when having to communicate with members of the public

"I give verbal warnings or else fines." (Tembalani)

"Yes, we speak English the whole day. I am becoming fluent." (Sunette)

"Yes, you have to liaise with complainant and defendant." (Lincoln)

"Yes, when we tend to complaints and feedback to the control room." (Brandon)

Several participants linked communication with 'the need to explain'.

"Yes, every day writing fines. I have to explain what they did wrong and communicate a lot." (Sarah)

"Yes, while giving fines you have to explain why." (Mandisi)

"Yes, while interviewing people you have to explain how to remedy the situation." (Ethan)

Several participants linked communication with the need to educate people:

"Yes, I must educate people about bylaws. Courtesy and a great attitude are required. I apply the principles of Batho Pele." (Bongani)

"Yes, I give notices. When doing inspection, we explain why we are doing so and explain why we have to come onto their property. I communicate and educate." (Peter)

"Yes, you can't issue a fine without informing and educating the public first. They have to know why they are being punished." (Monray)

"Yes, a lot. You communicate with people you deal with. When people do wrong, first try to educate

them. Not all of them are aware of the laws. Give verbal warning before punishing.” (Lindiwe)

Communication skills were found by participants to be valuable when engaging in conflict situations; when having to share information and when developing plans to maximise operational strategies. The Life Skills course was thus acknowledged as an important cog in them developing their communication skills.

The application in the workplace of communication skills learnt during the Life Skills course

As a backdrop to analyzing participants’ responses in relation to the application thereof, one must take into account the stated outcomes and the communication skills learned in the Life Skills course. Several participants said that they applied the communication skills while carrying out their duties. Bongani, Ethan and Sunette said that communication skills help them to solve problems in conflict situations:

“Yes, to avoid conflict. It’s important to communicate with members of the public. Using the radio demands good communication skills.” (Bongani)

“Yes, in violent situations you have to raise your voice to take control.” (Ethan)

“Yes, ask questions when you are not clear.” (Melany)

During operations. You have to be more effective to deal with situations.” (Sunette)

“Not so intensely, I do my job, I am professional. The college prepares you for communication.” (Mandisi)

Diouf (1994) argues that the ability to communicate effectively helps to build collective and strategic visions among people and thereby ensuring efficiency in their respective organisations or institutions. Participants echoed this requisite as they had to be strategic in their approach to a diverse range of issues and people. Next I will look at the generic employability skill ‘teamwork’.

Teamwork skills

Wickramasinghe and Perera (2012) contend that teamwork skills are a capacity skill that needs to be prioritised for human capital development. It is seen as a fundamental human capital generic skill enabling employees to be effective in their work environment. Research participants echoed Wickramasinghe and Perera’s (2012) contentions when they expressed that teamwork skills were

crucial to them being productive in performing their duties in their ‘new knowledge’ workplace.

As with Wickramasinghe and Perera (2012), Ghorbanhosseini (2013) sees teamwork as an essential element to ensure commitment from workers and thereby ensuring better productivity which is consistent with the principles of HCT. Ghorbanhosseini’s (2013) argues that,

“... teamwork had direct and significant impact on human capital and organizational commitment. Its implication is that mobilization of actions, knowledge, skills and expertise of all employees in the form of team activities is very crucial in the organizations” (2013, p. 1024).

Teamwork Learning outcomes in the Life Skills course

The NQF level 3 NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines (2007) emphasises the importance of teamwork as a generic skill by focusing on it as a topic. There are four subject outcomes and multiple learning outcomes which fundamentally demonstrate or emphasise the importance of participating in a team. Below are listed the different subject and learning outcomes:

“Subject Outcome (SO) 1: Identify with examples advantages and disadvantages of working in a team.

Learning Outcomes:

The student should be able to:

- Define a team.
- Describe the different types of teams, e.g. groups, working groups, task groups, informal vs. formal groups.
- Identify and explain with examples advantages of working in a team.
- Identify and explain with examples disadvantages of working in a team.

Subject Outcome 2: Identify, using relevant examples, the characteristics of an effective team or group.

Learning Outcomes:

The student should be able to:

- Define an effective team or group.
- Identify and explain the characteristics of an effective team or group.
- Identify and explain the formation of teams or groups and how this impacts on effectiveness.

Subject Outcome 3: Identify, using relevant examples, behaviours and attitudes that affect positive relationships within a group.

Learning Outcomes:

The student should be able to:

- Define behaviours and attitudes.
- Identify and explain, using relevant examples, how behaviours and attitudes can contribute positively to the working of a group.

Subject Outcome 4: Identify the responsibilities of each member or team in relation to the purpose and goals of the group.

Learning Outcomes:

The student should be able to:

- Describe the different roles and responsibilities required for a group to achieve its purpose and goals (leader, secretary, vice – leader, treasurer, portfolio members).
- Identify and explain how the identification of roles and responsibilities within a group enables the group to reach identified goals” (NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines, NQF Level 3, 2007, p 5 and p. 6).

While King and Palmer (2007) and Okorafor and Okorafor, 2013, speak about teamwork contributing to economic growth, the idea can be supplanted to teamwork showing its value in insuring that there will be progress in service delivery institutions as with the case of my participants. Tikly (2013) and Ghorbanhosseini’s (2013) theoretical analysis of teamwork is validated by participants as they are compelled to work in teams to be successful in their workplace. While it practically impossible for participants to have identified all the stated outcomes in their responses to what they have learned during their Life Skills lesson, there is a juncture in some instances between the two. The types of teams, the characteristics of an effective team, and the advantages of working in a team and the behaviours and attitudes that contribute positively towards the working of a group are seen as essential by participants.

Teamwork skills learnt during the Life Skills course

Some responses from participants, related to learning teamwork skills in the Life Skills course, correspond to certain learning outcomes included in the broader subject outcome 1 statement which

generally refers to the advantages and disadvantages of teamwork. Bongani referred to one such outcome as specified below:

“Describe the different types of teams, e.g. groups, working groups, task groups, informal vs. formal groups” (NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines, NQF Level 3, 2007, p. 5).

“There are different types of teams, task teams, working teams. Teams have different functions and everyone participate.” (Bongani)

Subject Outcome 4 identifies ‘the responsibilities of each member or team in relation to the purpose and goals of the group’. The data reflect that certain participants’ responses matched to the following Learning Outcomes:

“Describe the different roles and responsibilities required for a group to achieve its purpose and goals (leader, secretary, vice – leader, treasurer, portfolio members” (NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines, NQF Level 3, 2007, p. 6).

“Different tasks get performed by different people during the course.” (Herman)

“I learnt that you need to participate and bring your part.” (Ethan)

“It is better if you prepared your task at first. Then you decide on duties then the team work will be effective.” (Melany)

“Outdoor activities were where I learned the most about teamwork. Breaking the chain can cause problems. If you don’t communicate it can cause problems. Team planning takes place.”(Sunette)

“Team – planning and being strategic is important.” (Lincoln)

Another learning outcome, that forms part of the broader Subject outcome 4, was recognised when data from the participants were collated. Listed below is the learning outcome that Tembalani and Peter responses represented:

“Identify and explain how the identification of roles and responsibilities within a group enables the group to reach identified goals”

“When presenting tasks you support one another.” (Tembalani)

“Teamwork is important to get certain jobs done.” (Peter)

Other participants looked differently at the impact of teamwork and its implementation.

“Be positive, Different views get shared.” (Lindiwe)

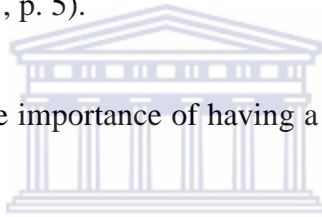
“Yes. A team is more than one person. No ‘one’ in team.” (Brandon)

The need for teamwork skills in the workplace

When asked about the significance of teamwork in their workplace, all participants agreed that teamwork is compulsory for all during security operations. Tikly (2013) and Ghorbanhosseini’s (2013) theoretical analysis of teamwork is validated by participants as they are compelled to work in teams to be successful in their workplace. In subject outcome 1 of the Life Orientation Subject Guidelines (2007), data collected from participants, pointed to the learning outcome:

“Identify and explain with examples advantages of working in a team” (NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines, NQF Level 3, 2007, p. 5).

Participants responded by affirming the importance of having a good teamwork for their own safety and efficiency.



WESTERN CAPE

“Yes, during backup operations with different units. When land invasions occur, you must work in a team for protection.” (Tembalani)

Yes. Law Enforcement you can’t work one on one. You to protect each other’s back.” (Peter)

“Yes, for the past 2 months we had a Vagrant Operation that was split into 2 groups which required teamwork. We found it to be more effective.” (Herman)

“On a daily basis yes. Because you are only as strong as the weakest link. We have to cover one another's back. Have to be sure about your partner.” (Monray)

“Yes, when on operations, you have to bet on one another. Each has a task to complete. We depend on each other.” (Melany)

Some participants responded that teamwork made it easier to carry out their operational tasks.

“Yes. We work in teams with people from different backgrounds I have learnt not to personalize

arguments.”(Bongani)

*“Yes, you and your partner work hand in hand. The older guys are helpful. They assist you.”
(Mandisi)*

Subject outcome 2, of the NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines (2007), which focuses on the ‘characteristics of an effective team or group’ was given consideration by participants by way of emphasis on the following learning outcome:

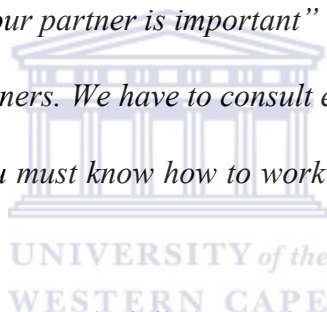
“Identify and explain the characteristics of an effective team or group” (NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines, NQF Level 3, 2007, p. 5).

Sunette, Lincoln and Brandon found that working in teams require your communication skills to be of a high standard.

“Yes, communicating information to your partner is important” (Sunette)

“Yes information sharing between partners. We have to consult each other” (Brandon)

*“Yes every day. During operations you must know how to work in group or you and your partner.”
(Lincoln)*



The application in the workplace of teamwork skills learnt during the Life Skills course

When asked to indicate if they used any of the teamwork skills learnt during their Life Skills course in their workplace, most of the participants agreed that teamwork skills assisted them in carrying out their duties in their workplaces.

Participants referred to subject outcome 3 which speaks about ‘ behaviours and attitudes that affect positive relationships within a group’ in relation to the following learning outcome:

“Identify and explain, using relevant examples, how behaviours and attitudes can contribute positively to the working of a group” (NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines, NQF Level 3, 2007, p. 6).

Participants indicated that communication is an imperative when working in teams in their workplace. Listed below are their responses:

“Yes, communicating information to your partner is important.” (Sunette)

“Yes, communicating in groups is challenging. Some do not participate. They find it difficult to listen.” (Lincoln)

“Yes, when sharing information between partners. We have to consult each other.” (Brandon)

“How to work with people, as mentioned before.” (Mandisi)

“Yes, forgive one another and working together. It’s important to solve conflict” (Tembalani)

Planning and operational requirements were also indicated as an important factor when working in teams

“Yes, in the vagrant operation as already mentioned” (Herman)

“Yes. During planning we use teamwork.” (Ethan)

“Yes, in operations. Police and other role players depend on one another.” (Melany)

“Yes, teamwork is important especially when doing mind maps and spider diagrams.” (Peter)

“Yes, we work in different areas. More manpower gets added. Team gets together to be more effective. (Lindiwe)

Monray could not recall using teamwork skills at work that was taught in Life Skills. Other participants emphasised the importance of teamwork in their job environment.

“Can’t remember” (Monray)

“Yes, I must. If you don’t work in teams, they call in people for a counselling session” (Bongani)

“Yes, every day we practice teamwork. You have to work with your partner and within groups.” (Sunette)

“Yes, it is policy to work with a partner and there should be 2/3 officers in a vehicle.” (Brandon)

“Yes, we work with partners so we have to work in teams.” (Sarah)

Even though communication is not seen as an exclusive subject or learning outcome, participants saw this as crucial for good teamwork. Team planning which is emphasised as an application they have learned from Life Skills could be questioned/raise a few eyebrows as ‘team planning’ is not identified as an exclusive outcome. Here, as in communication skills, they could have projected skills they have learned during their workplace experience, onto what they have learned in the Life Skills course.

Leadership skills

Leadership skills appear to be similar to communication and teamwork skills, as it is viewed as a fundamental skill that needs to be prioritized to ensure worker employability and productivity. Canwell et al (2014) claim that ‘leadership’ has to be viewed in a different light as to how we have viewed it in the previous decades. They propose that it is essential for modern-day leadership to be prepared to face new challenges and must possess the necessary skills to deal with diverse demands in the new knowledge economy. They have to deal with critical thinkers, be problem solvers, be prepared to adapt to new innovation and be diverse in their approach to managing human capital (Canwell et al, 2014).

Learning outcomes in the Life Skills course: Leadership

As with teamwork, leadership gets to be learnt as a topic within the Life Orientation Subject Guidelines (2007) of the level 3 course. It gets discussed and analysed with the use of two subject outcomes and multiple learning outcomes to create an understanding of the importance of leadership as a generic skill.

When analysing the different categories of responses and the stated outcomes, it is evident that there is a match among what they have learned in the Life Skills course, the stated outcomes and what they have applied during their workplace practices. The different leadership styles, behaviours and characteristics of leaders, as contained within the Subject and Learning outcomes in the Subject Guidelines (2007), feature prominently when participants responded to set questions. Listed below are the relevant subject and learning outcomes for the development of leadership skills:

“Subject Outcome 1: Describe the different leadership styles with reference to interaction between a leader and a team.

Learning Outcomes:

The student should be able to:

- Define leadership.
- Describe the different leadership styles (authoritarian, democratic, laissez - faire, humanistic)
- Discuss each leadership style in relation to the associated behaviour.
- Describe principles of leadership as formal measure of performance of a group effort.

Subject Outcome 2: Analyse the relationship between the follower and the leader within different contexts.

Learning Outcomes:

The student should be able to:

- Describe the relationship between the leader and follower for different contexts.
- Identify how the role of leader impacts on the relationship between the leader and other members” (Life Orientation NCV Subject Guidelines, NQF Level 3, 2007, p. 6).

Leadership skills learnt during the Life Skills course

When questioned on what they can remember about leadership skills learnt during their life skills course, they responded as follows: Their responses corresponded with subject outcome 1 of the topic ‘Leadership skills’ which reads: “Describe the different leadership styles with reference to interaction between a leader and a team” (NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines, NQF Level 3, 2007, p. 6), and specifically to its adjoining learning outcome which is specified below:

“Describe the different leadership styles (authoritarian, democratic, laissez - faire, humanistic)” (NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines, NQF Level 3, 2007, p. 6).

Participants recalled the different leadership styles learnt during the Life Skills course

“I remember learning about democratic leadership style. Different leadership styles including autocratic etc.” (Herman)

“How to distinguish among leadership styles. We had to do an assignment to research various types of leadership including Nelson Mandela (democratic) & Mugabe (autocratic). I chose democratic.” (Bongani)

“Different kind of leaders. Different types of leadership styles” (Mandisi)

Other participants focussed on another learning outcome contained in the subject outcome 1 of the topic ‘leadership’ which broadly focus on the various attributes of leaders: Below listed are the leaning outcomes together with responses from selected participants:

“Discuss each leadership style in relation to the associated behaviour” (NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines, NQF Level 3, 2007, p. 6).

“The qualities of troop leaders and class leaders. Leadership by example. I had to study it.” (Tembalani)

“Leaders should influence positively. Be confident and bold.”(Peter)

“Set an example in the way you present yourself. The way you dress and in your approach and in the way you conduct yourself.”(Sunette)

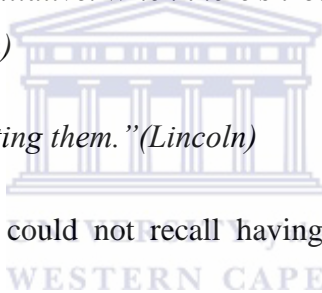
“The way to behave.”(Ethan)

“Being a leader does not mean you have full control. You must listen to others. Lead them by example in the right direction.”(Lindiwe)

“When a real leader speaks, people listen. You must not be scared to take risk. Lead by example.”(Brandon)

“Yes sometimes you have to take the initiative. When there's trouble in the taxi rank even though it's not our work, we try to solve it.”(Sarah)

“Yes, you can inspire others by motivating them.”(Lincoln)



Sarah, Monray, Melany and Lincoln could not recall having learned anything about leadership during their Life Skills lessons

“Can't remember” (Monray)

“Can't remember.”(Melany)

“Can't remember” (Lincoln)

“I know it was a topic we did” (Sarah)

Canwell et al (2014) emphasise the importance of having leaders that would inspire others, are flexible in their approach, are innovative and have the skills to adapt to a dynamic technological knowledge economy.

From answers received, it could be inferred that participants do meet with the criteria, espoused by Canwell et al (2014), as they appear to be inspirational, flexible, innovative and good at motivating

others.

The need for leadership skills in the workplace

On questioning participants of this research to establish if leadership skills are required while carrying out their duties, they responded as follows:

Leadership in being supportive of other less experienced officers and being mentors to them.

“Yes, currently I am one of the more senior guys. New guys - I show them the ropes and how to go about complaints” (Herman)

“

Yes, I am in charge of the new guys in the caravan. When they need stuff they come to me. I teach them how to write in log book. I am responsible for Station Rd.”(Bongani)

“Yes, in operations. When giving directions, others will follow. In communities we teach about bylaws to avoid fines. Getting your fellow officers’ respect at the workplace is important.”(Tembalani)

“Yes at times when people from other areas join for operations in my area, Gatesville, I will take the lead as it is considered to be my area. I know where the hotspots are.”(Lindiwe)



Some participation found it to be natural selection process.

“Yes, Most of the time we don’t work with senior officers around and has to show leadership if required. On the day someone must take the step. I am one of them.” (sic) (Monray)

“Yes, contractors assign leaders as team captain. They asked me a couple of times. It is based on a rotating basis.”(Ethan)

“Sometimes when leaders are not here, I have to step in.”(Melany)

“Yes, ensure smooth flow of traffic. You must take command.”(Mandisi)

“Yes, if you are the driver, you choose the route you’re going. Who has the keys and are able to reset the alarm is important.”(Brandon)

Application of the leadership skills they learnt during the Life Skills course

On the question if they applied the leadership skills they acquired during their Life Skills course in their work environment, Moray, Melany and Lincoln said that they don't have any recollection of having studied it.

Herman and Bongani emphasised the democratic style of leadership when involved in solving problems e.g.

"Yes, democratic style of leadership is effective" (Herman)

How to distinguish among leadership styles. Assignment to do research on various types of leadership including Nelson Mandela (democratic) & Mugabe (autocratic). I chose democratic." (Bongani)

Here again participants' responses corresponded with subject outcome 1 of the topic leadership in the Subject Guidelines (2007) and its attached learning outcome which reads, "Describe the different leadership styles (authoritarian, democratic, laissez - faire, humanistic)" (NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines, NQF Level 3, 2007, p. 6).

Participants additionally applied communication skills that are essential to fulfil their leadership roles. Communication, as with the previous generic skill, features relatively prominently even though it is not identified exclusively as an outcome. Communication, as part of an outcome, only gets discussed as far as it is an essential for a specific leadership style. Listed below are the responses relevant to the need for communication skills in the development of their leadership skills.

"Yes, like I said before, listening to others view. Allow them to express their views" (Lindiwe);

"Yes, communicate even if you enforce. Communicate in a democratic way." (Mandisi);

Lindiwe emphasised the fact that,

"Being a leader does not mean you have full control. You must listen to others. Lead them by example in the right direction".

Some participants felt that problem solving is an imperative when having to show leadership.

Mandisi further stated that he needed it to

"...ensure smooth flow of traffic. You must take command."

"Yes, e.g. solving taxi rank problems." (Sarah);

Ethan felt that you need to apply certain characteristics when showing leadership

“Yes, I must set an example and be a role model.” (Ethan)

The next generic skill I will study will be that of problem solving.

Problem solving skills

As discussed before, the Asian Development Bank (2009), in their report, ‘Good Practice in Technical and Vocational Education and Training’ advocates that in the ‘new knowledge economy’, new forms of work organisation require greater responsibility and different skills from its workforce which include the generation of problem solving skills. This, according to them would lead to greater productivity and reduce poverty.

Bhuwanee (2012) argues that the generic skill ‘problem solving’ is crucial when workers have to apply accrued knowledge and skills when facing challenging tasks. Most of the participants indicated that solving problems are integral to their work situation.

Problem solving Learning Outcomes in the Life Skills course

The NCV, Subject Guidelines (2007) within the Life Orientation course emphasise the generic skill of problem solving by focusing on it as a topic. It gets taught at the NQF level 4 of the NCV programme. It gets taught within the context of five subject outcomes and through the use of multiple of learning outcomes which seek to transfer knowledge about solving problems creatively and to enable students to make informed decisions. The difference among problems and challenges are distinguished with examples. The influence of one’s approach on problems and challenges is defined in terms of its influence on individuals and relationships. Different techniques for solving problems are explained with reference to particular problems or issues. Listed below are the five subject outcomes for the topic ‘Problem Solving’ and their respective learning outcomes:

“Subject Outcome 1: Distinguish between problems and challenges and provide relevant examples.

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Define the problem.
- Define the challenge.

- Use the above definitions to distinguish between the concepts.
- Provide examples to illustrate the above.

Subject Outcome 2, 3: Demonstrate an understanding of positive and negative attitudes. Describe the impact of the above on individuals and relationships

Learning Outcomes

The student should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of positive attitudes through the provision of relevant examples.
- Demonstrate an understanding of negative attitudes through the provision of relevant examples.
- Describe, using relevant examples, how each of the above impacts on individual and social relationships

Subject Outcome 4: Explain the different problem solving methods and identify different contexts of usage

Learning Outcome

The student should be able to:

- Review the different problem solving methods.
- Explain them with the use of relevant examples.

Subject Outcome 5: Demonstrate an understanding of problem source, origin and extent by linking these to a real life issue.

Learning Outcome

The student should be able to:

- Review definitions of problem source, extent and origin.
- Demonstrate an understanding of above through the provision of relevant examples.
- Identify a real life situation to contextualize above understanding” (NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines, NQF level 4, 2007, p. 8).

When viewing responses on ‘problem solving skills’, of participants, it was evident that there is a substantive match between what is taught in the Life Skills course, the stated outcomes and how it is

applied during their work tasks.

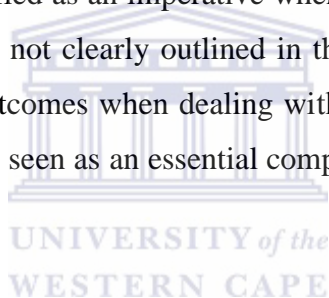
It would be unreasonable to expect participants to have identified all of the stated outcomes in their responses. From what was articulated, one could grasp that they generally referred to outcomes that were relevant to their work experiences. From their approach to solving problems, it is evident that participants have internalised skills that allow them to deal with it in a positive manner.

Problem solving skills participants learnt in the Life Skills course

With participants having received their education and training at a TVET college, they were asked to identify what specifically they can remember about ‘problem solving’ in their Life Skills course. They indicated that most important was to identify the problem and to listen to both sides. Problem solving skills they learnt in the Life Skills course include listening attentively, solving conflicts and having the ability to reason when doing planning.

Communication once again was identified as an imperative when having to solve problems. As with other generic skills, communication is not clearly outlined in the outcomes that deal with problem solving skills and is covered in the outcomes when dealing with ‘attitudes’. Listed below are those who indicated that communication was seen as an essential component in the Life skills course when having to solve problems.

“Listening is a skill” (Herman)



“College, LO, conflict resolution. I have to listen to both sides of the story. Be unbiased.” (Bongani)

The ‘identification of the problem’ runs like a thread through the collected data on the topic ‘Problem Solving’. The ‘identification of the problem’ is an outcome on its own and forms part of Subject Outcome 1 which states, “Distinguish between problems and challenges and provide relevant examples” (NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines, 2007). The specific Learning Outcome reads:

“Define the problem” (NCV, Life Orientation NCV Subject Guidelines, NQF level 4, 2007, p. 8).

“Yes. Identify problem first before solving. Few steps. I can’t remember them all.” (Melany)

“Find out what the problem is.” (Lincoln)

“Identify problem first before solving it.” (Lindiwe)

“Understand the problem first before coming with solutions ...” (Brandon)

Some participants identified its importance when engaging in strategic planning practices. This gets mentioned in Subject Outcome 4 which states, “Explain the different problem solving methods and identify different contexts of usage (NCV, LO Subject Guidelines, 2007). The learning outcomes reads:

“Review the different problem solving methods” (NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines, NQF level 4, 2007, p. 8).

“In LO, problem solving makes you think about the detail and basics.” (Melany)

“Yes, in planning and commitment” (Ethan)

The need for problem solving skills in the workplace

‘Problem-solving’, as a generic skills, is recognised as one of the most important skills to have as all, except for one participant, acknowledged encountering problems while carrying out their duties as Law Enforcement officers. Most participants responded that conflict arises between members of the public and themselves because the public is ignorant of the City’s bylaws. Communication was identified as a problem by Melany, Sunette, Brandon and Bongani. Bongani’s problem stems from his inability to understand the Afrikaans language. He argues that not understanding the language spoken by certain communities, can be life threatening.

“Yes, in terms of language, I am Xhosa and English. Colleagues and community speaks Afrikaans.” (Bongani)

“Lack of communication can be a problem” (Sunette)

“Yes, miscommunication. Next person might not bring across the message clearly.” (Melany)

“Yes, I deal with difficult complainants (Vagrants that do not listen) (Brandon)

The application of problem solving skills by research participants

Subject Outcomes 2 and 3 of the topic ‘Problem Solving’ state respectively that, “Demonstrate an understanding of positive and negative attitudes. Describe the impact of the above on individuals and relationships” (NCV, Life Orientation Subject Guidelines, NQF level 4, 2007, p. 8). This SO’s form a tread throughout all given LO’s.

The question put to research participants (which resonates with said SO’s), on whether they applied

their problem solving techniques in their workplace, elicited the following responses:

Monray stated,

“On a daily basis. Mostly with coloured people not familiar with bylaws. They trade without permits. They are difficult because they are ignorant of the bylaws and feel you are punishing them unnecessarily. Educate them – That’s the key. They will then comply with what is expected of them.”

Their communication skills were applied to solve relational problems amongst others

“Yes, we first talk and resolve at the bottom before approaching management.” (Melany)

“Yes. Some of the complainants are vague. After listening you get a broader knowledge of the complaint.” (Herman)

“Yes, Vagrants sleep on streets. When you are removing them, talk to them, and encourage them. Recommend shelters to them.” (Brandon)

Peter indicated that,

“Communicating while being proactive and using reactive measures” can solve problems.

Bongani indicated that he started learning the language that is foreign to him.

‘Learning to speak Afrikaans’

Ethan emphasised that he uses his problem solving skills when he is in a planning session. Lindiwe spoke about her reflection practice when dealing with specific problems.

“Yes, when planning.” (Ethan)

“Yes if someone complains, e.g. about loud music or illegal dumping, first see if this is true before giving compliance notice.” (Lindiwe)

Other participants could not recall at all how they applied the skills they learned during their Life Skills course or could not recall an example.

“No” (Tembalani)

“Can’t remember.” (Lincoln)

“Yes, just can’t think of an example now.” (Sunette)

“Yes, can’t be specific, inside. Can’t exactly say.” (Mandisi)

“At home through my parents’ guidance.” (Sunette)

Participants refer to planning in both ‘having learnt it in the Life Skills course’ and ‘applying it in workplace’ categories. Planning however, does not feature as a stated outcome. It stands to reason however that problem solving skills can be utilised when having to be strategic about your planning methods or the participants have incorrectly credited the Life Skills course for their ability to do planning while they should have credited their work place for its development. Other outcomes such as ‘looking at the problem source, extend and origin’ is partially covered as they speak about the lack of education of the public’ as an origin of the problem. Next I will look at the generic employability skill “critical thinking”.

Critical thinking skills

Brotherton (2011) asserts that within the new knowledge economy, and its accompanying technological changes, critical thinkers are needed to deal with uncertainties and complexities at expansive organisations.

As stated before, critical thinking skills is not specifically identified as an outcome in the Life Skills course curricula (2007). While critical thinking skills have subsequently been included into the Life Skills’ curriculum during the year 2015, these research participants did not engage with critical thinking skills as part of their Life Skills curriculum. However, viewed from responses received from participants (while administering the informal interview schedule on the question of ‘critical thinking’), most of them were prepared to use their critical thinking skills to find solutions to problems.

Similar questions, as asked for the previous generic skills, were set to ascertain their readiness to apply this skill.

Critical Thinking skills learnt during the Life Skills course

When asked to recall what they have learned about critical thinking skills in the Life Skills course, Peter, Sunette and Brandon had no recollection while other participants identified ‘considering different ways of looking at situations’ and solving problems as in need of critical thinking abilities.

“If you consider different ways, it gives you more insight.” (Monray)

A few respondents felt that critical think was essential when having to solve problems.

“How to solve problems and to learn from your experience”. (Bongani)

“Working in groups and how to solve the problem of conflict” (Tembalani)

“Break it into pieces and then come up with way to solve it.” (Brandon)

“Male and female fights can be resolved. There are better ways.” (Melany)

The ability to make critical decisions in life threatening situations was emphasised.

“The ability to make split decisions, especially with regard to firearms in life threatening situations.” (Herman)

Sarah felt certain she had been taught about critical thinking but could not recollect what she was taught

“A lot but I can’t recall right now.” (Sarah)

The need for critical thinking skills in the workplace

When asked if it is necessary to have these skills while carrying out their workplace duties, respondents had mixed responses. The greatest number of participants replied positively while other participants felt that they did not have much room for critical thinking and that issuing a fine and explaining it, did not require critical thinking.

“No need, I work within a chain of command. If you can’t fix problem then follow the chain of command”. (Peter)

“Not too much room. Need to issue fine. I need to explain fine.” (Mandisi)

Those who felt that critical thinking skills were important while on duty, pointed to certain complexities and situations as suggested by Brotherton (2011). They refer to the interpretation of bylaws; being active in court procedures; having to issue fines and having to justify it to transgressors; dealing with feuding neighbours and when dealing with people of diverse backgrounds.

Critical thinking skills were found to be important when having to make quick critical decisions.

“Yes, in court cases we use our own discession in different situations” (Ethan)

“Yes, you must know what you are doing wrong as you have to answer in court” (Tembalani)

“Yes, vagrants and complainants are difficult. When enforcing the laws.” (Brandon)

“Yes, especially in public. If I come across a bylaw that someone is contravening, I have to interpret it immediately in order to take action.” (Herman)

“Yes. At times neighbours use you to fight their battles. You must be aware of this and find other ways of dealing with this.” (Lindiwe)

Participants indicated that critical thinking skills are helpful when dealing with a diversified people

“Yes at DPU I worked with vagrants. I learnt to treat them differently to others.” (Sarah)

“Yes, sometimes people come from different backgrounds and act differently to others’ Give your cooperation and explain to others how to understand them.”(Monray)

“There is a need. Different people think differently. I need to put myself in the shoes of others when I explain to them. E.g. A house was burning down. The owner of the burning house tied his dog to a railway fence outside of the house. The dog bit a girl (13 years old). The mother complained. I listened to both sides and it turned out that the owner of the burning house was in his right to tie his dog to the railway fence.” (Bongani)

The application of critical thinking skills learnt during Life Skills

The transfer of knowledge is indeed a debate with many and varied opinions and theories from diverse participants. My research basically investigates whether lessons learned during the NCV Life Skills course impacted on the effective carrying out of their workplace duties

When faced with the question of how they used their critical thinking skills they have learnt in the Life Skills course to complement their workplace practices, Lincoln, Brandon, Monray and Sarah pointed to using ‘decision making strategies’ while busy with operational requirements. Lincoln uses ‘higher order skills of reasoning’ as suggested in his response to the question put to him.

“Complainants force you to think critically and you must be continually aware of the motive of their complaint”. (Lincoln)

“The ability to make split decisions” (Herman)

“Yes, when explaining greed for overtime.” (Tembalani)

“Learn from problems/experience. Know your procedures to follow.” (Bongani)

“Yes, in court cases.”(Ethan)

Sunette’s response emphasised the need for officers to possess this skill when she says that

“... during operational requirements, you have to think out of the box.” (Sunette)

Peter, Melany and Brandon did not value the use of critical skills and indicated that using it was not a job imperative to them. They instead chose to follow established protocols and procedures when faced with tough decision making processes.

Many participants however, identified critical thinking skills as being crucial in their working

environment. Participants identified ‘solving problems’ and ‘considering different ways of doing things’ as part of the learning matter of the Life Skills course. They however identified ‘diversity’ and ‘making quick critical decisions’ as skills they have applied in their workplace after they have learnt it during the Life Skills course. There is therefore a disjuncture between what they have learned and what they have applied when it comes to critical thinking skills.

Prior experiences that developed participants’ generic skills

Although this investigation focuses on the generic employability skills that participants developed while completing the NCV programme, it is important to note that, they developed generic employability skills in several different contexts. I will focus on the five generic employability skills under investigation. The personal responses demonstrates as follows:

Experiences that developed communication skills

“At home, school, church and college” (Brandon)

“At home and more in-depth at college.” (Ethan)

“Church, college, friends. Everywhere I’ve been added to my life skills.” (Sarah)

“At church. Dealing with lots of problems and different people. The workplace helped a lot.” (Mandisi)

“Communication at workplace in form of jokes. It shows your character.” (Lincoln)

“Mostly in the military. I was forced to communicate because I was on my own. I was 18 years old when I left for the army.” (Peter)

“At school and most properly in workplace. You have to communicate by giving feedback.” (Sunette)

Experiences that developed participants’ teamwork skills

When questioned on identifying experiences that contributed towards them developing teamwork skills, specific areas were acknowledged. The majority of participants ascribed their ability to work in teams to college while other participants credited it respectively to sports and school. Participants Herman, Lincoln, Monray, Melany, Sunette and Lindiwe indicated that college played a vital role in developing team responsibility. Listed below are other areas besides college and the Life Skills course that impacted their development of teamwork skills:

Teamwork developed through doing sports

“Rugby. Sports prepare you. You can’t plan alone. Military work- you have to work as a team to work out strategies to be successful at what you do.” (Peter)

“Sports, family, church, choir and youth.” (Brandon)

Teamwork developed at school

“Since grade 7 when we started with LO -- Leaning how to work in groups. All the group activities.” (Sarah)

“School and playing rugby.” (Ethan)

“At primary school. A teacher told me ‘teamwork is good.’” (Tembalani)

Experiences that developed participants’ leadership skills

When participants were questioned on the factors (other than college and the Life Skills course) that contributed towards them having leadership abilities, various places were mentioned. Listed below are their responses:

Leadership Skills developed doing sports:

“College and sports helped a lot in leadership abilities.” (Herman)

“I was the captain of the rugby and pool team. I was the Bungalow bully (captain) in army.” (Peter)

Leadership abilities developed at home/family/community

“My family situation encouraged leadership. Circumstances dictate your leadership potential.” (Sunette)

“My friends in community I grew up had influence on me.” (Lincoln)

Leadership developed at the workplace

“Volunteering here at Law Enforcement taught me a lot about leadership.” (Monray)

Leadership skills developed at school

“School – I was the team leader for athletics and volleyball. I was chosen to be group leader at college.” (Brandon)

Experiences that developed participants’ problem solving skills

The experiences that prepared them to solve problems include a wide spectrum within various

communities of practices. LO skills and college were favoured as participants respectively identified them.

Listed below are their responses (excluding college and the Life Skills course) when questioned on where they gained the aforementioned generic employability skills from. The different areas are categorised into *sports* and *home and community*.

Problem solving skills developed though making use of sports

“I developed it at Sports & College.” (Herman)

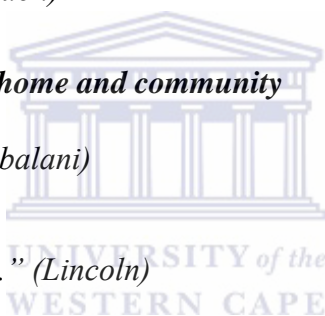
“Rugby & Military were the places where I learnt it. I had to work on commands and instructions.” (Peter)

“At Sports, college and church.” (Brandon)

Problem solving skills developed with home and community

“I learned it at home & college.” (Tembalani)

“At home, parents and priest at church.” (Lincoln)



Experiences that developed participants' critical thinking skills

When faced with explaining which life experience contributed towards them being critical, I was met with a plethora of responses. Here again most respondents elected to have more than one area which instilled this skill. Most participants pointed to college as being partly or exclusively responsible while Tembalani, Sunette and Lincoln responded that experiences right through their life contributed.

“Right through life you learn from your experiences. (Lincoln)

“Right through life and through other different experiences.” (Sunette)

“Mom and all my life experiences.” (Tembalani)

Other areas that contributed to the development of critical thinking skills, include family and community; church; military; school and sports.

Critical thinking developed with family and community

“My mom and all my life experiences.” (Tembalani)

“College, church, and family. Being involved with a diverse group of people helps you to attain critical thinking skills.” (Sarah)

Critical thinking developed at church

“College and church. Scenarios were given to solve. Debates in class.” (Mandisi)

Critical thinking developed in military

“My time in the Military helped.” (Peter)

Critical thinking developed at school

“During my education - from primary school until my completion of my NCV certificate.” (Monray)

“At school and at college.” (Ethan)

Critical thinking developed at sports

“College and Sports, especially rugby.” (Herman)

As understood from responses of participants, the Life Skills course cannot be viewed as being exclusively responsible for inculcating generic skills into participants. Life Skills however, do account for a significant part in developing the required skills for employability. Next I will focus on participants' critique of acquiring generic employability skills

Participant critique of acquiring generic employability skills

When asked to articulate what they found most useful about the Life Skills course, they responded by listing an array of topics. E.g. time management, planning strategies, communication skills, morals and values, dealing with stress, conflict resolution skills, study methods, teamwork and diversity training. One of the participants says that LO skills,

“... guides him like a bible” (Bongani)

Three participants responded that they are completely satisfied with what the Life Skills curriculum had to offer. ,

“The LO subjects meet our requirements. It taught us to solve problems at work and nothing is personal. I do not wish to add anything.” (Lindiwe)

“Happy with what was taught.” (Tembalani)

“The skills I have acquired made me ready to take on the world and it equipped me to do the job.”

(Sarah)

When participants were asked what they would like to add to their generic employability skills base now they know what is required of them within their workplace, a host of suggestions were made. Listed below are some of the responses that were received from participants:

“More time should be spend on ‘communication’ How to approach people was emphasised by participants” (Ethan and Lincoln)

“Stress control or stress coping strategies should be given more prominence within the course.” (Ethan and Sunette)

“More time on computer skills. E.g. spending more time on a typing tutor to speed up report typing skills.” (Herman)

“Communication between different cultures. The need to learn about diverse cultures and to learn their languages.” (Monray, Sunette and Bongani)

“More emphasis on conflict management.” (Melany)

“Self-defence skills.” (Peter)

“Healthy living and the importance of physical fitness.” (Sunette)

“The strengthening of an individual’s spirituality.” (Sunette)

“Problem solving strategies should be emphasised.” (Mandisi)

Piecing the various responses together proved to be a complex process as generic employability skills have different or diverse meanings to different people, hence the wide array of answers to various questions during their interviews.

In the next section, I will summarise my investigation, look at the findings, propose further investigations and make specific recommendations.

SECTION 5: Summary, Findings and Recommendations

SUMMARY

Looking through the theoretical lens of Human Capital theory, I sought to access the inner world of participants within the Law Enforcement field to generate meaning from their interactive social processes which occur in their work situations. I used an interview schedule to gather data and categorised information by coding participants and their answers given in an Excel spread sheet.

The stated aim of the research was to investigate the extent to which the Life Skills programme offered, in the NCV stream of the TVET colleges, contributes to 'work readiness' and to generate theoretical insights about its contributions..

This investigation into the impact of generic employability skills, learned during the Life Skills course, on employees in 'new knowledge' working environments, was intricate as generic skills is a complex construct, which has diverse meanings for a variety of people. The questions given through the interviewing process were met by diverse answers and examples by the respective participants.

When interviewed, respondents were not very detailed in their answers and frequently provided brief, concise and sometimes vague answers. This can be contributed to their lack of life experience as the average age of participants was twenty one. The divergent and sometimes contradictory views and examples expressed by research participants, suggest a wide interpretation of how they view their life skills base and how they differ when applying it in real life situations. A few participants could not recollect any knowledge of having learnt anything about certain generic skills during their Life Skills lessons. They could simply have forgotten or did not place much value on what was taught as they felt they had the required skills to deal with various situations that they may encounter.

Contemporary HCT protagonists advocate that vocational and generic employability skills contribute significantly to the employability levels of people and are responsible for an increase in productivity and profits in the 'new knowledge' economy. This idea can be supplanted to other sectors of society where productivity for workers working within government service delivery sectors mean improved service delivery and the improvements of standards.

Findings

The Life Skills programme in the NCV course in TVET colleges offers the following generic employability skills: communication, teamwork, leadership and problem solving among others.

- The Life Skills course was responsible to a large extent for them developing their communication skills. Communication skills helped them to be more efficient at their workplace and therefore saved on time and person power. Communication skills allowed them to share crucial information and to develop strategies that are important for their development and for the efficient delivery of the services they provide.
- Communication is a key generic employability skill that underpins other generic employability skills. The need for effective communication is visible among participants as they have to engage with people with diverse backgrounds. Participants additionally identified the need to understand all of the regional languages to facilitate communication.
- Teamwork skills were crucial when active in their workplace settings. It was compulsory for participants to work in teams. Developing teamwork skills added to their employability and made it easier for them to adapt to their working conditions. Participants were ready to engage with diverse challenges and used their different generic employability skills to complement their leadership abilities. It was found that the Life Skills programme contributed in a fair extent to them developing their teamwork skills.
- Participants found it necessary to show leadership while engaging with the public in operational requirements. College was acknowledged as having made a significant contribution towards developing their leadership skills. The Life Skills course was recognised as having made a fair contribution to them gaining leadership skills. After two years in their workplace, some participants could take the lead to assist new recruits.
- Problem solving was another skill where participants felt they gained significantly from the Life Skills programme. The art of identifying the problem and listening was emphasised by a few participants as essential to solving problems. Participants identified this skill as essential to ensure their employability. They have to be innovative and diverse in solving problems among themselves and in various communities. Here problems stems mostly from

conflict situations between themselves and the general public.

- There were mixed responses from participants when having to gauge the value of critical thinking in their work setting. For the majority of participants it was an essential skill while for others it was not crucial as they could revert to standard operational procedures to solve problems they might encounter. Critical thinking skills were found to be essential when having to face the legal fraternity in court matters. Being able to critically interpret bylaws was mentioned as a necessity. The Life Skills course was acknowledged as having a significant impact on them developing critical thinking skills even though critical thinking was not included in the curricula as a topic.
- The Life Skills course was acknowledged by participants for providing them with general generic employability skills. The workplace, sports, church, college and school additionally contributed to their development of generic employability skills, hence it was found that generic employability skills were not isolated to formal instruction but can be done in informal settings as well.
- From responses received via participants I argue that the Life Skills Programme was partially framed within a human capital perspective. I can't conclusively claim that HCT was their only frame of reference when designing the curricula. This is viewed from the perspective that other civilly orientated generic skills were not part of my scope of study.
- I found that the female members of the study population were more receptive towards the Life Skills course. From their enthusiastic and comprehensive responses I could deduce that they appreciated the course more and were applying the skills learned more conscientiously than their male counterparts.

Theoretical Insights

The Human Capital value of the Life Skills course

The framework used for this research was to some extent successful. I emphasise 'partially successful' as other civilly orientated generic skills, which form part of the Life Skills curricula, were not part of the scope of this investigation. I consequently cannot conclusively state that the curricula for the Life Skills course were designed with the human capital framework in mind.

Generic Employability Course Structure

I am not in complete agreement with Barrie (2006) that the learning of generic skills should be ‘explicit but embedded’ into their courses. This I argue even though participants indicated that it would benefit them to place more emphasis (weighting) on certain aspects of the Life Skills course e.g. communication and conflict resolution skills and introduce others like ‘self-defence course’.

The difficulty I have with this approach is that it would further enhance the human capital nature of the programme as it would concentrate exclusively on what would be required to succeed in the ‘new knowledge’ economy. Inculcating values and attitudes that contributes to a responsible citizenry would be neglected, as previously stated by Bloch (2012).

I agree with Moutsios (2010), Block (1990), Hea – Jung (2012) and Gewer (2009) who state that social justice and civic issues should be part of a general profile template of generic skills but would further argue that different weightings should be given to specific generic skills topics that are more relevant to students within a specific vocational course. The general profile template should thus be course sensitive in its design, which in the case of my specific research study, would mean that more emphasis should be placed on certain generic skills in the Safety in Society course, as mentioned before, e.g. more emphasis on conflict management.

Employability for a ‘new knowledge’ economy

Even though it is acknowledged that the Life Skills course contributed substantially to inculcating generic employability skills into participants, it cannot claim to be absolutely effective in transferring the generic employability skills necessary in the working environments. With the ‘face’ of education changing from an ‘instructivist’ to a constructivist pedagogy, the need to apply various teaching methodologies becomes more apparent. Educators can contribute by ensuring that the Life Skills course gets taught in situational environments to further enhance the transfer of knowledge and that students become more employable for a ‘new knowledge’ economy. Learning strategies such as problem-based and project-based approaches could be encouraged to instil the required attributes demanded by a ‘new knowledge’ economy.

Further investigations

During my research I found that there is a need to investigate further to additionally substantiate the Human Capital influence when instilling generic employability skills into learners. I would thus suggest the following for further investigation:

1. Investigate students employability in other sectors of industry
2. Research views of supervisors and managers on the employability of TVET college students

3. Seek evidence to ascertain whether the Life Skills course contributes towards enabling student to lead an active civic life.

Recommendations

1. Workplaces, as in this specific research, the City of Cape Town, should start an Education Task Team with the dual task of upgrading the generic skills of all workers and to educate the public on bylaws.
2. The Life Skills course should be adapted to facilitate those skills known to be essential for different courses e.g. the Safety in Society course. The weighting on certain topics should be different to other courses. E.g. conflict resolutions and diversity training.
3. The Life Skills course should introduce more ‘authentic settings’ in their learning environment in order prepare students more efficiently for their work place settings.
4. Explore ‘navigationalism’, problem-based and project-based approaches as alternative teaching methodologies.
5. Integrate critical thinking skills into the NCV, LO, Life Skills curriculum.

Conclusion

Bilderici (2005) argues that in cases where education research focuses on the relationship between education and work, the principles of human capital features largely. This was largely true as life skills inculcated into participants contributed towards them being effective during their operational tasks in their working environments.

My research revealed that the NCV, LO Life Skills curriculum was skilfully designed to identify the necessary generic employability skills needed to enable students to become employable and to adapt to a ‘new knowledge economy. Additionally my investigation revealed that students benefited significantly from studying the NCV, LO Life Skills course. I was not in a position to measure if elements of social justice and citizenry skills learnt, had any impact on the participants, as my scope of investigation was not designed to consider that.

The research further advocates that different weightings should be placed on different generic skills for different courses in the NCV stream of the TVET colleges.

In a developing country like South Africa, where most people have been marginalized under the system of Apartheid, people battle to become employable and to enter the labour market. The South African educational authority’s recognition that generic employability skills need to be promoted to

ensure past inequalities are addressed and not reproduced could be viewed as being ground-breaking.

In conclusion I refer to Kavar (2011) who recognises the importance of developing human capital through the use of education and training strategies as contained in her report to the Doha Forum on Decent Work and Poverty Reduction. She skillfully summarises what needs to be done in order to make education in general more responsive to industrial demands. She states that,

“... the building blocks of any skills strategy must be: solid foundation for skills and stronger links between the worlds of education and work. This in turn requires: good quality in childhood education; good info on changes in skill demands; responsiveness of education and training system to structural changes; and recognition of skills and competencies. To be effective, policy initiatives in these areas will also need to be closely linked with economic and social policy agendas” (Kavar, 2011, p. 15).



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Appendix 1 – INTERVIEW GUIDE

PERSONAL DETAILS:

1. Name: _____
2. Surname: _____
3. Gender: Male Female Other
4. Age: 20 – 29 30 – 39 40 – 49
5. Marital Status: Married Single
6. Race: Black White Coloured Other
7. Duration in occupation: _____
8. Highest grade passed at school: _____
9. Highest Qualifications: _____
10. Other Qualifications: _____

TVET COLLEGE ATTENDANCE:

11. What is the name of the FET College you attended?

12. Which programme were you registered for?

13. In which year did you register for the programme?

14. In which year did you complete the programme?

15. Did you complete the Life Orientation course for each year you were at college?

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

16. Where are you currently employed?

17. When did you start working in your current workplace?

18. What is your job title?

19. What are your duties?

20. Did you start working immediately after completing your NCV course?

21. If not, give a reason.

LIFE SKILLS COURSE

22. What do you remember about the Life Skills course that was part of your Life Orientation course at college?

23. What did you find most useful about the course?

24. Is there anything that you found enjoyable about the course?



COMMUNICATION SKILLS

25. Are you required to communicate with people while carrying out your duties? If yes, give an example.

26. What kind of life experiences prepared you to communicate with people in your workplace?

27. What have you learnt about communication skills in your Life Skills course?

28. Do you use any of the communication skills that you have learnt in your workplace? If yes, give examples.

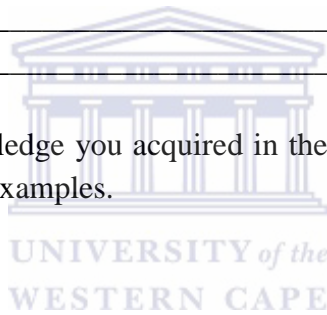
TEAMWORK SKILLS

29. Are you required to work as a team within your current job? If yes, give an example

30. What kind of life experiences prepared you to work in a team?

31. What did you learn about 'team work' in your Life Skills course?

32. Do you apply any of the knowledge you acquired in the LO course about teamwork in your current workplace? If so, give examples.



LEADERSHIP

33. Are you required to demonstrate leadership whilst carrying out your duties? If yes, give examples.

34. What kinds of life experiences prepared you for this kind of leadership?

35. What did you learn about 'leadership skills' in your Life Skills course?

36. Do you use any of your leadership skills you acquired in your LO course, in your workplace? If yes, give examples.

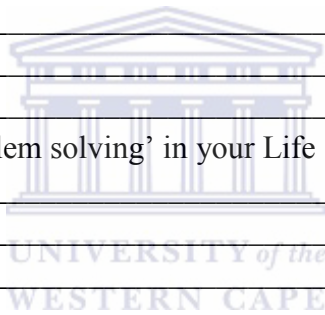
PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS

37. Do you experience any problems while carrying out your duties? If so, give examples

38. How do you solve those problems?

39. What life experiences prepared you to solve these problems?

40. What did you learn about 'problem solving' in your Life Skills course?



41. Do you apply any of the problem solving techniques in your workplace? If so, give examples.

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

42. Is there a need to consider different ways of solving problems at your workplace? If so, give examples.

43. What kinds of life experiences prepared you for different ways of thinking about solving problems?

44. What did you learn about ‘considering different ways of solving a problem’ in your Life Skills course at college?

45. Have you used these skills in your workplace? If yes, give an example.

GENERAL QUESTION

46. What skills requirements do you have at the moment that was not catered for during the LO course?



Appendix 2

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Private Bag X17, Bellville, 7535
South Africa
Tel: +27 (0) 21 959 2801
Fax: +27 (0) 21 959 2481
Website: www.uwc.ac.za
Email: zgroener@uwc.ac.za

Information sheet to participants

My name is Joseph Nefdt and I am currently enrolled in a Master's Programme in Adult Learning and Global Change.

One of the requirements of this master's programme is to conduct research and complete a research paper. I have chosen to investigate to what extent the NVC Life Skills course, offered at TVET Colleges, instills the required generic employability skills of communication; problem solving; teamwork; leadership and critical thinking into students.

I have selected the 2012 students for this study. As you have completed the NCV programme and are employed in the Metro Police department, I would like to interview you.

Please be assured that this process is entirely voluntary and you should feel free to decline my request for an interview. If you agree and later want to withdraw from the interview, no reasons will be required. Please be assured that all information will be dealt with in the strictest of confidence and you will in no way be compromised. Should you agree to partake in the study, I will arrange a meeting at your convenience.

If you have any questions for clarity, do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor, Professor Zelda Groener, on the numbers and emails listed below.

Regards

Joseph Nefdt

Tel: 0722676362

Email: jnefdt7@gmail.com

Supervisor: Professor Zelda Groener

Tel: 021 9593880

Email: zgroener@uwc.ac.za



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FACULTY OF EDUCATION

11 February 2015

Mr Barry Isaacs

Head: Resource Planning and General Administration
Department: Law Enforcement & Security (Support Services
City of Cape Town

Re: Permission to conduct research study

Dear Sir

I am currently registered as a student at the University of the Western Cape in the Master's programme in Adult Learning and Global Change.

My research investigates the extent to which the NCV, Safety in Society programme and in particular, the Life Skills course, contributes toward the work readiness of students.

I am thus requesting permission to interview 14 of your Law Enforcement officers, who have completed the NCV programme at TVET colleges in the year 2012. I will use an interview guide to interview the respective participants. All interviews held will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

All participants will be supplied with a detailed information letter about the purpose of the study. They will also be requested to sign a consent form.

Thanking you in anticipation

Joseph Nefdt

Tel: 0722676362
Email: jnefdt7@gmail.com



UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

Appendix 4 – Participant consent form

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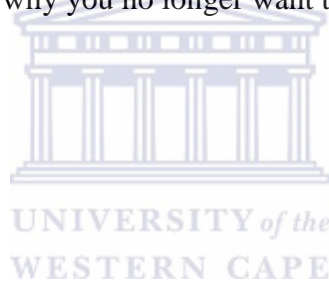
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Dear Participant

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this research project. Please be assured that information given will be held in the strictest of confidence and in no way will you be compromised.

By signing this consent form below, you agree that:

- You have read and understood the study sheet provided
- The researcher was available to answer questions
- You are willing to be interviewed by the researcher
- Your personal details will not be divulged to people outside of the research project
- You understand that your words may be quoted and used in publications, reports and in webpages but your name will not be used
- You understand that you can withdraw from the research project at any time and no question will be asked about the reasons why you no longer want to partake.



Please sign this form and return it to the researcher.

Name of Participant: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Signature _____

Date: _____



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