

**A QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF BURSARY GRANTING  
AS A FORM OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AMONG EMPLOYEES IN A PUBLIC  
SERVICE DEPARTMENT: EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS**

**By**

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**AUGUST 2017**

## Declaration

I declare that this thesis entitled "*A qualitative assessment of the impact of bursary granting as a form of skills development among employees in a public service department: Experiences and perceptions*", is my own work, and that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references in APA format.

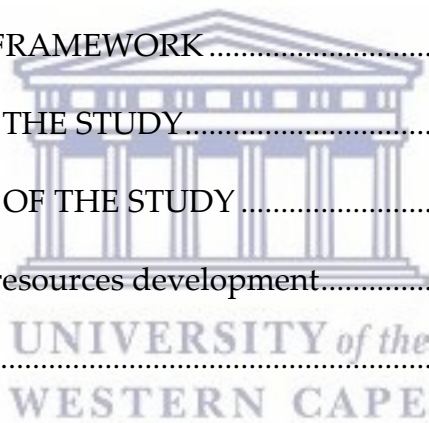
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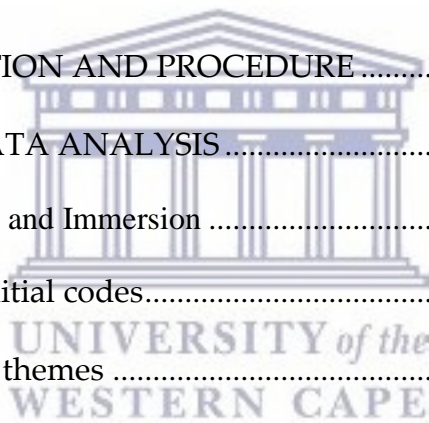


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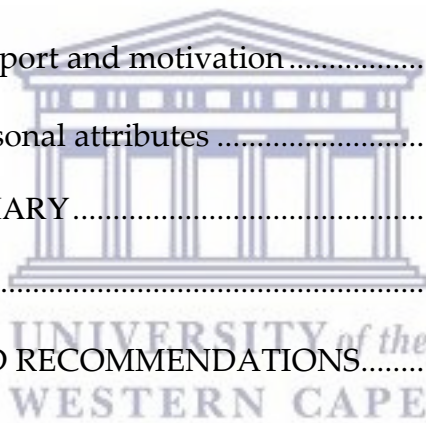
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# Abstract

Effective employee development is more than just mentoring or holding seminars. Ideally, it takes an individualised approach in which the organisation talks to an employee, finds out his/her goals and builds a plan to achieve them. Staff development involves sponsoring programs that offer training or continuing education to employees, or help employees plan their own professional growth. Organisations that support staff development expect to benefit from having employees with greater skills and deeper expertise. Staff development can include in-house training, tuition assistance or policies that make it easier for employees to take continuing education classes. The aim of this present study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of Fisheries branch employees who benefited from bursary programme. The study utilised in-depth semi-structured interviews to collect data. Fifteen participants from the department consented to be part of the study. These were recruited using purposive sampling. The ethics considerations of the study adhered to the guidelines stipulated by Ethics committee of the University. Data was transcribed, and analysed using thematic analysis. The findings showed that beneficiaries reported different forms of impact as a result of staff development in the form of bursary grants. Findings also vary according to form and stage of study in terms of undergraduate or post graduate. Personal attributes also come into play as tertiary education impacts on both the personal and organisational levels. Implications of this particular study include contributions to government policy decision making with regards to funding as well as training and development practices.

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Firstly, I would like to give thanks and glory to God the Almighty for providing me with the wisdom, strength, good health, courage and opportunity to face the challenge of adding more to my knowledge.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

An organisation does not grow if its employees never improve (Lee & Bruvold, 2003). Staff development involves sponsoring programs that offer training or continuing education to employees, or help employees plan their own professional growth (Garet, Porter, Desimone, & Birman, 2001). Organisations that support staff development expect to benefit from having employees with greater skills and deeper expertise. Staff development can include in-house training, tuition assistance or policies that make it easier for employees to take continuing education classes (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000). In addition, most countries and multilateral institutions acknowledge the need to give systematic attention to the role of developing staff in supporting national economic growth and development programmes (Presidency, 2001). The South African government is not lagging behind in this aspect considering the below average literacy levels compared to the world and even other African nations (Statistics South Africa, 2015). The National Development Plan 2030 set aside goals to develop civil service employees in order to improve service delivery (Presidency, 2012). One of the main forms of staff development applied is offering financial grants for tertiary education tuition fees.

Effective employee development is more than just mentoring or holding seminars. Ideally, it takes an individualised approach in which the organisation talks to an employee, finds out his/her goals and builds a plan to achieve them. Several government departments conduct performance reviews as a starting point. Line managers might arrange for the employee to cross-train with other workers to gain

new skills, or authorise paying (in the form of a grant) for a tertiary course. Among other things, this requires that those who serve within the public service should have the necessary skills to provide the required goods and services as well as commitment to serve the people. Skills development as part of Human resources development seen in this context is therefore not only a way to improve capacity for individual employees of the state. It constitutes the strengthening of the most important vehicle available to the state to achieve its goals of changing the entire South African society. Skill development has to be aimed at making people better at the roles that they play in the developmental state (Bennett, Dunne, & Carré, 2000). In addition, skill development becomes an important vehicle through which we can transform the less tangible aspects of the public servants – their attitudes, their commitment and the manner in which they engage with our people. As a very important spin-off, it is expected that public servants that make up a significant proportion of our working population, play an increasingly important role in their respective communities to accelerate the achievement of the overarching goals for this country even faster.

Empirical findings of the impact of training on employee motivation and job satisfaction are reported (Tabassi, Ramli & Bakar, 2012). One of the major debilitating effects of the legacy of apartheid is a high level of illiteracy in the South African population. Encouraging the corporate sector through levies to promote skills development, seems to have been received with mixed feelings. The importance of Human Resource Development (HRD) as a means of ensuring that organisations maintain their competitiveness in an ever-changing environment has never been so important. Griese and Parker (2008) remarked that it makes no sense to spend time, money and human resources on the appointment of the right people in the right positions, and then to ultimately relinquish such staff to other organisations because they are not being looked after. Organisations should make it possible for employees to attain their own objectives, whilst achieving the objectives of the organisation (Mavin, Lee, & Robson, 2010). Success for most organisations depends on finding the

employees with the skills to successfully perform the tasks required to achieve the company's strategic goals (Robbins & De Cenzo, 2014). To improve performance, an organisation or a manager will have to identify two categories of people; first, those whose motivation is satisfactory, but whose skills or abilities need developing, and second, those whose abilities and skills levels are satisfactory, but who lack motivation. It is the motivational problem that is likely to be the more difficult to deal with. After all, the quality of an organisation is, to a large degree, determined by the quality of people it employs (Naong, 2014).

Government Departments are also assisting most of the previously disadvantaged individuals through making funding available at workplaces through their Bursary Programmes which can be accessed by all in endeavour to also address the issue of scarce and critical skills as well as the improvement of the educational levels of the staff (National Planning Commission, 2013). The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries runs a Bursary Programme for the purpose of assisting the employees and the organisation as a whole. The Fisheries Management branch located in the Western Cape Province also runs the Programme to address the serious shortage of Researchers and Scientists to perform the country's Fisheries Research and Management mandate (Director, May 2016) This programme is also aimed at assisting the staff in improving their levels of qualifications and to subsequently improve their standards of living through the possibilities of better job positions once qualified, thus yielding monetary benefits which will assist them to invest for the future. In this regard, the provision of tertiary education results in the fulfilment of those dormant self-actualisation needs present in all. It also offers a wider opportunity of career choices, provides status and position in society.

The Ministry over and above assisting the officials who are studying on a part-time or distance learning basis with the funding of their studies, also offers special leave days through its current leave policy for preparations for exams, sitting for exams,

attendance of compulsory practical contact classes and for writing and submission of thesis.

Despite attempts by the Ministry to offer bursary assistance and support, Koen (2007) reported that each year, many students leave universities without completing their studies. Earlier on Tinto (2002) had also documented the growing concern around the retention of student at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Only 15 % of students graduate successfully, this makes South Africa a country with one of the lowest graduation retention rates worldwide (Ministry of Education, 2001). The problem has since worsened with Letsaka and Maile (2008) observing that one in three university students dropped out between 2000 and 2004, while a study conducted by Letseka and Maile from the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) between 2006 and 2007 found that 58.8 % of students dropped out. Around 50% to 60% of students at higher learning institutions drop out during their first year (Van Zyl, 2015). Out of those who make it through, just under half of them graduate. This is the same scenario experienced in the Fisheries Management branch with the problem of student failure and low throughput rates. The difference between the numbers of learners registered and the throughput numbers is not only attributed to student failures but also includes dropouts.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

One of the major goals of the South African government is to develop its workforce in line with the National Planning Commission of 2012 but there seem to be a big task towards reaching the set level of having capacitated civil service employees of a million. No notable studies have been conducted to explore the experiences and perceptions of those employees who are and have benefited from bursary assistance programmes. The Fisheries management branch have up to date, since 2010, used

about R10 million to assist its staff. However, an average of only 13 staff members, out of 40, has completed their studies per annum. There seems to be problems relating to the throughput.

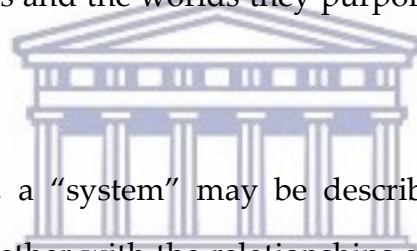
Although a few studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of the grant holding scheme in the public sector (Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), 2006, 2007), these studies have ignored the dynamics of each public sector department or ministry. There are several dynamics depending on the size and a function of each department hence studies cannot assume the similarities of these departments. The structure of Fisheries Management branch is unique and complex. The complexity lies, not only in the number of units, the diverse areas of technical focus in its staff, but in the physical fragmentation of staff in different building regions and zones. This complexity has increased with the recent merger where departmental components were absorbed without their HRD components. This physical separation requires a particular structure for HRD and a well-established process for delivering on HRD services in order to build and sustain the organisational synergy needed for an effective and dynamic operation in training and development.

The purpose of the present study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of those employees who are benefiting and those that have benefited from bursary assistance programmes. The research initiating question is therefore, “What are the experiences and perceptions of those employees who are benefiting and those that have benefited from bursary assistance programmes?”

### **1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Systems theory as prescribed by Patton and McMahon (2014) was applied for this study. This theory can be defined as an entity, which is a coherent whole such that a boundary is perceived around it in order to distinguish internal and external elements

and to identify input and output relating to and emerging from the entity (Mele, Pels, & Polese, 2010) . A systems theory is hence a theoretical perspective that analyses a phenomenon seen as a whole and not as simply the sum of elementary parts. Systems theory provides an analytical framework for viewing an organisation in general (Bertalanffy, 1968). The focus is on the interactions and on the relationships between parts in order to understand an entity's organisation, functioning and outcomes. This perspective implies a dialogue between holism and reductionism. The relationship between systems theory and the study of perception is one of critical importance to our understanding of the changing nature of human cognitive maps. The advantage of systems theory is its potential to provide a trans-disciplinary framework for a simultaneously critical and normative exploration of the relationship between our perceptions and conceptions and the worlds they purport to represent (Mele, Pels & Polese, 2010).



In its broadest conception, a “system” may be described as a complex chain of interacting components together with the relationships among them that permit the identification of a boundary-maintaining entity or process. Since social and psychological phenomena tend to resist quantitative modelling by posing basic difficulties already on the plane of boundary identification, alternative approaches must be relied upon. One such approach draws on the body of knowledge derived from General System Theory and its application in the domain of human activity systems. The line that separates the aspects of a system from those of its environment tends to be blurred as the unit of observation moves from natural and designed physical systems to human and conceptual social systems.

While the former are easier to define and have relatively clear-cut aims or purposes, the latter are more difficult to define; most often they do not have clear-cut and agreed upon aims or purposes, and even when agreed upon, these may change over time. In addition, human activity systems tend to have multiple and overlapping purposes, of

which it is possible to distinguish at least three levels: the purpose of the system, the purpose of its parts, and the purpose of the system of which it is a part, the suprasystem. The method proposed by systems theory is to model complex entities created by the multiple interaction of components by abstracting from certain details of structure and component, and concentrating on the dynamics that define the characteristic functions, properties, and relationships that are internal or external to the system. The history of systems theories include contributions from such seminal thinkers as Alfred North Whitehead, Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Anatol Rapoport, Kenneth Boulding, Karl Menninger, Silvano Arieti, and, in more recent years, the dynamic systems theorists, the family systems theorists, and those who deal with dissipative structures and holistic paradigms.

Systems theory is the interdisciplinary study of systems in general, with the goal of discovering patterns and elucidating principles that can be discerned from, and applied to, all types of systems at all nested levels in all fields of research (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). A central topic of systems theory is self-regulating systems, that is, systems self-correcting through feedback (Brown & Campione, 1996). In this instance, employees who benefited from bursary funding form part of a sub-group and a larger system. They receive feedback from various tertiary institutions and the Fisheries departmental structures all represent various subsystems. Employees adjust and readjust according to the feedback provided by various subsystems and facilitated or moderated by the government of South Africa. The boundaries around these subsystems need to be permeable to allow the flow of transition and also application of attained skills.

#### **1.4 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

The Government has to render better services using the scarce financial resources amongst many competing social needs and different Departments in funding higher



education are increasingly demanding greater accountability for utilisation of these resources, therefore in trying to provide adequate answers of what exactly causes this triple challenge of Drop out, poor retention of students and low throughput will assist in coming up with effective interventions of mitigating the loss experienced.

This research study will inform the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and specifically the Fisheries Management branch in the Western Cape Province in identifying challenges faced by bursary beneficiaries thereby curbing throughput, implementing support structures and resources, and therefore getting Return On its Investment for the money spent through the Bursary Programme.

## **1.5 KEY CONCEPTS OF THE STUDY**

### **1.5.1 Staff/human resources development**

Staff/human resources development is the process of improving and increasing capabilities of staff through access to education and training opportunities in the workplace, through outside organisation or through watching others perform the job. Professional development helps build and maintain morale of staff members (Nadler & Wiggs, 2008; Kamfer, 2005). Staff development in public service mostly takes the form of off-the-job training such a training courses or development programmes that take place away from the person's immediate work area. In deciding to support a staff member's request for off-the-job training, the line manager has to consider the time implications of the person attending and how this will impact the staff member's own work commitments as well as that of the entire team/department. It is reasonable for a line manager to expect the staff member to ensure that his/her work output and commitments do not suffer as a result of involvement in the training and development activities. The possible inconvenience of the staff member being away from work has to be balanced with the longer term career interests of the individual and the interests of one's own department and the institution in having the person capable of doing the

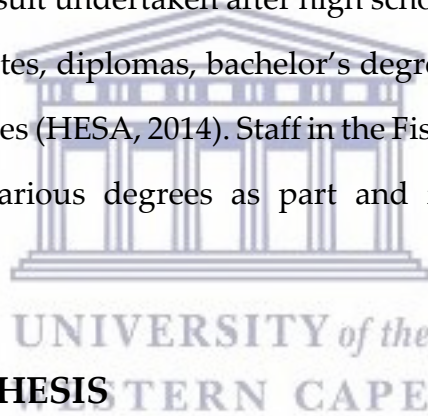
job to the best of his/her ability and/or preparing the person for his/her next job in the institution (Nadler & Wiggs, 2008).

### **1.5.2 Bursary**

A bursary is a “monetary award made by an institution to individuals or groups of people who cannot afford to pay full fees.” Retrieved December 3, 2017 from <http://www.nfsas.org.za>. In return for the bursary the individual is usually obligated to be employed at the institution for the same duration as the bursary.

### **1.5.3 Tertiary education**

This refers to academic pursuit undertaken after high school. In South Africa, tertiary education includes certificates, diplomas, bachelor’s degrees and other postgraduate studies up to doctoral degrees (HESA, 2014). Staff in the Fisheries Management branch are getting involved in various degrees as part and form of human resources development.



## **1.6 STRUCTURE OF THESIS**

The thesis will be presented in five chapters namely; Introduction, Literature review, Method, Findings and discussion, and lastly Conclusion.

### **1.6.1 Chapter One - Introduction**

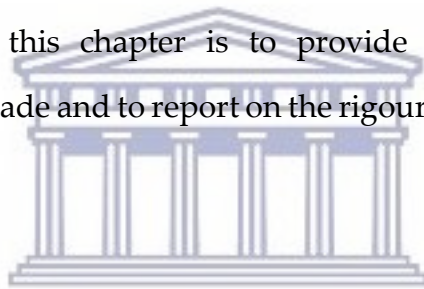
This Chapter One provided a background of the study by outlining some of the main aspects of Staff development in the South African public service and the way it is moving towards capacitation thereby contributing to economic development. The chapter also includes the problem statement and rationale of the study. Systems theory was also introduced in this section. Lastly, key concepts of the study were described briefly.

### **1.6.2 Chapter Two – Literature Review**

This chapter presents a review the body of literature relevant to the topic of this research study. Therefore, it will consider empirical studies on human resources development in particular long term in the form of tertiary education. The focused review will attempt to provide an academic rationale for the study by highlighting the gaps in the literature.

### **1.6.3 Chapter Three – Method**

The method implemented in the study will be described in this chapter. The research design, participant selection, procedure, data collection and analysis, reflexivity and very importantly, the ethics guidelines followed in the execution of the study will be reported on. The aim of this chapter is to provide a process account of the methodological decisions made and to report on the rigour with which those decisions have been executed.



### **1.6.4 Chapter Four – Integrated results and discussion**

This chapter presents integrated results and discussion in which the findings of the study are reported relative to the literature reviewed and the methodology employed. The themes derived from thematic analysis using (Braun & Clarke, 2006) approach will be presented with illustrative quotes. Each theme is also related with the literature reviewed, as well as the social constructionist framework.

### **1.6.5 Chapter Five – Conclusion**

The last chapter of the study offers an executive summary of the study in relation to the stated aims and objectives. The chapter also summarises the limitations acknowledged, as well as recommendations made for future research and the significance of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The literature review chapter is structured as follows: first section includes main aspects of human resources development then the second section includes main aspects of tertiary education (a form of skills/human resources development) in general. The final section summarises the main findings of the literature review, identifies research gaps, and proposes focus of this current research. This will lead to rationale of this current study.

#### **2.2 HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT**

Recognising, that not all employees possess knowledge and skills that are of equal strategic importance, Lepak and Snell (1999) drew on the resource-based view of the firm, human capital theory, and transaction cost economics to develop human resource architecture of four different employment modes: internal development, acquisition, contracting, and alliance. They used this architecture to derive research questions for studying the relationships among employment modes, employment relationships, human resource configurations, and criteria for competitive advantage. It was concluded that human resources development is vital for enhancing productivity in any organisation (Aladwan, Bhanugopan & D'Netto, 2015; Lepak & Snell, 1999).

In addition, there is a growing body of evidence supporting an association between what are termed high performance or high commitment human resource development (HRD) practices and various measures of organisational performance (Guest, 1997). However, it is not clear why this association exists. His paper provide a convincing explanation of association required to improve our theoretical and analytic

frameworks in key areas of the nature of HRD, and especially the rationale for the specific lists of HRD practices; the nature of organisational performance; and the linkage between HRD and performance. A model is presented within which to explore these linkages. The existing literature on HRD and performance is reviewed in the light of this analysis to identify key gaps in knowledge and help to focus further the research priorities. The belief that individual employee performance has implications for firm-level outcomes has been prevalent among academics and practitioners for many years (Guest, 1997).

(Jones, 2004, p. 96) also conducted an empirical taxonomy identifying two types of human resource systems, “control” and “commitment.” This study tested the strategic human resource proposition that specific combinations of staff development policies and practices are useful in predicting differences in performance and turnover across steel “minimills.” The mills with commitment systems had higher productivity, lower scrap rates, and lower employee turnover than those with control systems. In addition, human resource system moderated the relationship between turnover and manufacturing performance.



Delaney and Huselid (2012) conducted a study in 590 for-profit and non-profit firms from the National Organisations Survey. They found positive associations between human resource management (HRM) practices, such as training and staffing selectivity, and perceptual firm performance measures. Results also suggest methodological issues for consideration in examinations of the relationship between HRM systems and firm performance. On top of that, U.S. companies have been urged to adopt a variety of performance-enhancing or progressive human resource development practices to improve their competitiveness in the global marketplace. Such recommendations are unsurprising given that professionals and academics have long asserted that the way in which an organisation manages development of employees can influence its performance.

To examine the effects of organisational strategic variables, such as management values regarding human resource management (HRM) and the sources of competitive advantage, Bae and Lawler (2000) developed a model and tested it with data from 138 firms in Korea. The workers studied were non-managers involved in training. Firms with high scores on valuing HRM and people as a source of competitive advantage were more likely to have high-involvement HRM strategies. These variables also had positive effects on firm performance (Wickramasinghe, 2015).

A systematic review of the literature on organisational learning and knowledge with relevance to public service organisations was conducted by Rashman, Withers and Hartley (2009) showed that organisational learning and knowledge are important to public sector organisations, which share complex external challenges with private organisations, but have different drivers and goals for knowledge. The evidence shows that the concepts of organisational learning and knowledge are under-researched in relation to the public sector and, importantly, this raises wider questions about the extent to which context is taken into consideration in terms of learning and knowledge more generally across all sectors. A dynamic model of organisational learning within and across organisational boundaries exists. This model depends on four sets of factors: features of the source organisation; features of the recipient organisation; the characteristics of the relationship between organisations; and the environmental context. The review by Mayes et al. (2017) concludes, first, that defining 'organisation' is an important element of understanding organisational learning and knowledge. Second, public organisations constitute an important, distinctive context for the study of organisational learning and knowledge. Third, there continues to be an over-reliance on the private sector as the principal source of theoretical understanding and empirical research and this is conceptually limiting for the understanding of organisational learning and knowledge. Fourth, differences as well as similarities between organisational sectors require conceptualisation and

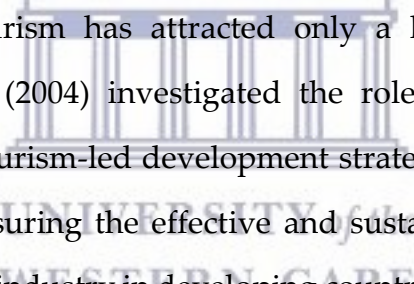
research that acknowledge sector specific aims, values and structures. Finally, this study concluded that frameworks for explaining processes of organisational learning at different levels need to be sufficiently dynamic and complex to accommodate public organisations.

Studies also examines the direct and moderating effects of human resources development on professional service firm performance (Bhalla, Sidhu & Kaur, 2017; Hitt, Biermant, Shimizu & Kochhar, 2011). The results show that human capital exhibits a curvilinear (U-shaped) effect and the leveraging of human capital a positive effect on performance. Furthermore, the results show that human capital moderates the relationship between strategy and firm performance, thereby supporting a resource-strategy contingency fit. The results contribute to knowledge on the resource-based view of the firm and the strategic importance of human capital.

For a developing country such as South Africa, with a large proportion of its populace unemployed and possessing very low levels of skill, a privileging of high skills is inappropriate as the single focus of HRD. (Kraak, 2005) argues the case for a multi-pronged HRD approach, comprising a joint high-skill and intermediate-skill strategy on the supply side, underpinned by a demand-driven strategy that seeks to stimulate large-scale labour-absorbing employment growth and is supported by appropriate inputs of training for the unemployed. The analysis then examines the actual skills deficit in South Africa in each of the three (high, intermediate and low) skill bands, drawing on evidence from the recent HRD Review (2003).

This paper explores the expectations of higher education responsiveness of key employer, education, and training constituencies in South Africa. Empirical data was gathered through a series of focus group and individual interviews, and analysed in terms of distinctions in the ideal relationship between education and the workplace. The paper demonstrates that there are clear differences in the way the call for

responsiveness is framed and legitimated in the expectations of representatives of the private and public sectors, Professional Associations, Sectoral Education and Training Authorities, and higher education institutions. Nevertheless, a common new model of 'employability' that assumes a direct link between higher education and the labour market increasingly underpins these expectations. The tacit skills, knowledge, and attitudes formerly developed through work experience are now expected to be an integral part of higher education programmes and curricula, to provide the 'soft', 'transverse', 'life', or 'high' skills—as they are variously termed by different sectors. In developing these insights, the study aimed to inform the ways in which the higher education sector in South Africa can actively negotiate the terms of its engagement in a new global and national policy context that assigns it new economic roles (Kruss, 2007).



Skills development for tourism has attracted only a limited scholarship in the developing world. Kaplan (2004) investigated the role of skills development in advancing South Africa's tourism-led development strategy. Skills development has a central role to play in ensuring the effective and sustainable transformation and development of the tourism industry in developing countries and, in the case of South Africa, in ensuring that the poorer South Africans begin to benefit from this industry. It is argued that the current lack of an integrated and coordinated approach to tourism skills development seriously limits the potential of skills development impact positively on tourism transformation and development (Kaplan, 2004).

Another study investigates the contribution skills development can make in promoting South Africa's wider socio-economic development. It provides a broad overview of the emerging gap between those who are benefiting from South Africa's transition to democracy and those who are not. Overcoming these worsening social conditions has become a major priority in government's new policy framework. It has been referred to as the challenge of the 'second economy', a polemical device aimed



at drawing attention to the two-fold challenge of promoting economic growth, whilst reducing poverty and inequality. The study then goes on to describe the new skills development policy framework and the ways in which the Department of Labour is attempting to deal with the 'second economy' through a variety of skills development strategies. The progress made in implementing this new approach is then interrogated. Several problems are identified. The analysis concludes by arguing that both government and employers are currently falling short of the capabilities required to effectively rollout these ambitious reforms (Kraak, 2005).

A study was conducted to gain an understanding of what are the key characteristics of learning organisations, how they develop, how to measure organisational learning, and where does one start if a learning organisation is to be created. This article views the organisation as a learning system and focuses on three key characteristics of a learning organisation. They are the learning process, the learning orientation, and the facilitating factors within the organisation. The purpose here is to understand how an organisation learns, what it does well, and what it does poorly, and where should it be improved. For an organisation to become a learning organisation it is critical that both a measurement methodology and communications medium be formalized. The communications medium proposed here will be an organisational learning model, and the measurement technique will be a survey instrument described within learning orientations. This article will develop a model against which a desired state can be defined for an organisation within a specific industry and a survey instrument which examines actual behaviours displayed in the organisation. (Appelbaum & Reichart, 1998).

Researchers, commentators and policy makers have stressed the importance of investment in Human Resources Development (HRD) to enhance the quality of human capital and create sustainable competitive advantage (Aragon- Sanchez et al., 2003; Nolan & Garavan, 2016; Scheel et al., 2014). HRD as a concept emerged over four

decades ago (Hamlin & Stewart, 2011), however, it remains understudied in the Public Service context, in spite of the fact that it is prominently practiced in these organisations (Pajo et al., 2010).

The Public Service is the vehicle through which the government fulfils its promises by securing the wellbeing of the people in any given country. The effective performance of public officials and the capacity of departments to deliver services are both critical to all aspects of government's agenda for transformation and development. The capacity to deliver lies in the ability of public servants to undertake their assigned responsibilities as public officials, with the necessary level of skill, knowledge, experience and commitment to serve and perform to the best of their ability.

A Human Resource Development (HRD) strategy is therefore seen as central to developing this capacity, and is embraced as fundamental to the agenda of enhancing service delivery. The importance of any HRD Strategy is justified, not only by the inherited culture of training in the Public Service, but also by a legacy of historical socio-economic challenges including a disparate education and training system. A revised HRD strategy is presented with the hope that every employee in the Public Service will renew their commitment to serve, restore their motivation to excel, and rekindle their will to consistently develop their own capacity to contribute to our national agenda of ensuring a continuous pipeline of competent and committed, contributing and productive employees (Gazette, 2007).

After their study, Tziner and Haccoun (1991) argues that fundamental purpose of training is to help people to develop skills and abilities which, when applied at work, will enhance their average job performance. The process of training aims to eventually render trained and untrained groups indistinguishable. Traditionally, transfer and maintenance of trained behaviours has been improved by incorporating into the training context elements likely to increase transfer. They added that using goal-

setting theory, researchers have suggested that trainees are more likely to apply new learning when they are presented with a skill utilisation objective. Application of the skills learnt was also found to be influenced by several factors such as; the degree to which trainees feel confidence in their ability to use the skills and their beliefs about the relevance and applicability of the skills in the situation. It was also found that a situation which does not encourage the use of newly acquired skills may be frustrating to some individuals. How a person deals with that frustration may be highly relevant. A previous study have shown that, compared with 'internals' (subjects who obtain high scores on internal locus-of-control measures), 'externals' are more likely to demonstrate 'anti-output' behaviours as reactions to frustrations. The hypotheses predicted that employees who participated in the training intervention would show higher skill utilisation on ail training effectiveness dimensions. They also predicted that high internal trainees would score high on behavioural measures.

A study, involving a total of 58 graduates of South African medical schools, was conducted (Burch, et al., 2005). Each subject participated in a 7-station objective structured clinical examination of which six were self-assessment while the other was assessed in a seventh station in randomly allocated teams of 3 candidates. Candidates' opinions of their own competence was sought by questionnaire. There was a wide variation in competence between subjects and across the range of tasks studied. Mean scores ranged from 85.4% for phlebotomy to 55.3% for prescription writing. The average score across all stations was 67.5%, and no student obtained an overall cut-off score of 85% or more, which was established using a modified Angoff method. Results proved that various factors of age, gender and college of training had an influence as one apply skills learnt.

Another interesting study aimed to explore how employees were satisfied by e-learning technology as a form of training to improve organisational effectiveness. To this aim, the level of satisfaction using an e-learning platform as a complementary

instrument of training and education is measured in a multinational company operating in the energy sector (Capece & Campisi, 2013). This case study focused on two purely on-line courses that were conducted as part of skills development. 5395 employees, who responded to a questionnaire at the end of their learning activities on the basis of a Technology Acceptance Model, were involved. The major finding is that the usage of e-learning technology plays a full mediating role in the relationship between e-learning system service and measured employees satisfaction (organisational effectiveness in implementing knowledge improvement). This result has practical direct implications for companies with a distributed layout unable to implement conventional face to face training programs. Furthermore, investigation results ensure that well conducted e-learning programmes can effectively be adopted by a large amount of companies: more the users satisfied with e-learning service, the better in enhancing organisational learning.

### **2.3 TERTIARY EDUCATION LANDSCAPE**

Current general public including civil service employees in South Africa does not have enough highly educated people in most professions (Council on Higher Education, 2009; De La Rey, 2007; Dell, 2010). The throughput rate for students in South Africa is estimated to be higher than that of European countries (Dell, 2010). In other words, universities are “producing fewer graduates relative to the number of recurring students” (Council on Higher Education, 2009, p. xvi). This shortage has been attributed to an insufficient number of students coming through the education system successfully at postgraduate levels (Dell, 2010). This is the same challenge faced by the bursary system of HRD in the public sector. Regular throughput of qualified postgraduate students is of paramount importance as without them it becomes difficult for the country to compete successfully at a national and international level (Frostick & Gault, 2013). It also affects the ability of professions

within the country to “generate knowledge that is responsive to a wide range of societal needs” (Council on Higher Education, 2009, p. ix).

### **2.3.1 Factors impacting completion**

The thesis writing endeavour is so complex that it makes it difficult to highlight specific factors which may help or hinder the process however; several possibilities have been proposed throughout the literature with some factors occurring more frequently than others. Below is a brief exposition of the more frequently mentioned factors.

One of the factors most commonly seen in the literature is perceived isolation (Grant, 2003; Manathunga, 2005; Wisker, Robinson, & Shacham, 2007; Wright, 2003). Postgraduate research is a fairly isolated process, generally consisting of a student working with one or two supervisors. This is quite a drastic departure from undergraduate and postgraduate classroom dynamics where students are surrounded by their peers from whom they can draw social and academic support. So when transitioning into postgraduate research, some students may struggle to adjust to the new one-on-one learning dynamic (Wisker, Robinson, & Shacham, 2007). For example, Wright (2003) found that many students viewed their postgraduate research experience as incredibly lonely and that this sense of social isolation often resulted in them feeling overwhelmed and sometimes even depressed. One participant claimed that she basically had to teach herself and went on to say “I had to give myself my own kind of emotional and intellectual support...I was basically left alone” (Grant, 2003, p. 176). I use the term “perceived isolation” to emphasise the fact that it is irrelevant whether or not the supervisor is distant and unavailable. If, for example, the supervisor felt that s/he was performing her/ his duty well, but the student feels

inadequately supported this will adversely affect their relationship and ultimately the student's perception may affect the student's ability to complete.

The second contributing factor that has been identified in the literature, is when students and supervisors hold inaccurate or unrealistic expectations of each other (Kiley, 2011; Lessing, 2011; Lessing & Schulze, 2003; Wisker, Robbinson & Shacham, 2007). Wisker, Robbinson and Shacham (2007) found that problems sometimes arise when the expectations of the student regarding the supervisory relationship and research experience and those of the supervisor do not match. Similarly, Kiley (2011) postulated that it can be problematic when either supervisor or postgraduate student does not meet the expectations of the other. Failure of either student or supervisor to let go of these unrealistic expectations and adapt to the reality of the situation can lead to a variety of frustrations and misunderstandings later on.

Research also reported significant impacts of demographic variables on completion. For example, Sexual orientation (Long, 1997; Massey & Walfish, 2001; Messinger, 2007); Language (Albertyn, Kapp & Bitzer, 2008; Alwasilah, 1991; Jacob & Greggo, 2001; Malan, Marnewick & Lourens, 2010; Wan, Chapman & Biggs, 1992); Culture (Fuller, 2007; Hyun et al., 2007; Nilsson, 2008; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006); Race and ethnicity (Kiley, 2011; Mahtani, 2004; Shroeder, Andrews, & Hindes, 2009) and gender (Grant, 2003; Lee, 2008; Mahatani, 2004; Manathunga, 2005). These demographic variables all have the potential to impact completion directly. The most prevalent demographic issues identified in the literature were language and gender.

With regard to gender, female students often feel pressured to put on a front and maintain a strong facade lest they be perceived as soft or weak (Lee, 2008; Manathunga, 2005). This variable by itself reportedly can negatively affect the thesis endeavour in various ways. However, the supervisory relationship can positively moderate or further exacerbate the negative effects of the variables and make them

more or less of a significant hindrance to completion. In the case of the above example, if the student perceives the supervisor to be supportive, caring and non-judgemental they may be more likely to be open and honest in communicating and seeking guidance from their supervisor (Grace & Gouthro, 2000). Alternately, if the student perceives the supervisor to be chauvinistic and critical she may distance herself even more than usual and would thereby further aggravate the negative effects of gender and hinder completion (Humble et al., 2006).

Minority statuses, such as underrepresented racial or religious groups, female gender or homosexuality as demographic variables can make tertiary education endeavour difficult when they occur in isolation, but situations in which minority demographic variables occur in combination seem to be the most challenging for students to navigate (Mahtani, 2004; Subanthore, 2011; Williams et al., 2005). For example Williams et al. (2005) stated that the challenges women of colour must navigate in postgraduate education at a predominantly white institution go far beyond pure academic ability. Women of colour studying in predominantly male fields must deal not only with misinformed negative attitudes surrounding affirmative action from both students and lecturers who believe them to be under qualified students who gained acceptance solely because of the colour of their skin, but they must also overcome the social barriers that exist as a result of male lecturers bonding in a social manner with male students (Mahtani, 2004; Williams et al., 2005). Mahtani's 2004 interview with a tenured geography Professor found that geography departments are extremely hostile to women of colour unless they are the cleaning women or the secretaries. Not many people want to be in a place which is so unwelcoming. Due to this reality the professor emphasised that she could not "in good faith encourage students of colour to consider geography because of its whiteness (Mahtani, 2004).

Williams (2005) found that some students dropped out of their degree in their Masters year, not because of any academic difficulties encountered in the research process, but

because they grew tired of trying to gain acceptance and respect from their lecturers and supervisors. Some of these students moved to a more welcoming field of study while others dropped out entirely. The research illustrated that race and gender in combination with each other appeared to have played a significant role in the experiences of postgraduate students whilst conducting research. Research has also found that many students, women and men, who self-identify as belonging to minority racial groups identified tertiary education as the most important factor determining success or failure (Flynn, Sanchez & Harper, 2011; Levin, Jaeger & Haley, 2013; Maton et al., 2011).

A number of personal difficulties were also found to have bearing on completion rates, the most common of these were issues surrounding health and financial problems (El-Ghoroury et al., 2012; Lee, 2008; Lightfoot & Doerner, 2008; Sayed, Kruss & Badat, 1998). Personal problems, however, did not seem to lead to incompleteness of studies (Wright, 2003). What appears to have more bearing on completion rates is the relative approachability of the supervisor and mentor as perceived by the student. Manathunga (2005) found evidence that many postgraduate students felt unwilling or unable to approach their supervisors regarding personal issues. This author also found that a large proportion of students believed that their supervisors do not care about them at all. One student claimed “my supervisor doesn’t even recognize me in the hallway...I doubt she’d care [if I disappeared for a while]” (Manathunga, 2005, p. 225). Alternatively, Albertyn, Kapp and Bitzer (2008) found when students perceived their mentors and supervisors/lecturers as caring and approachable they were able to share their personal difficulties and in many cases the support they received within the supervisory relationship assisted them to persevere to completion when they may otherwise have dropped out. Additionally, Wright (2003) found that positive personal characteristics such as inner strength, confidence, and self-determination have the ability to enable an individual to succeed despite negative circumstances.

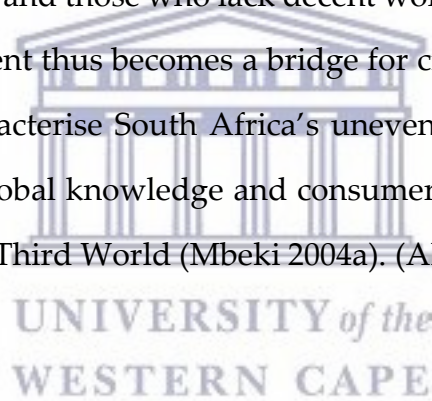


Wright (2003) reported that some learners who encountered personal difficulties with poor supervisory support during their postgraduate research asserted that they were able to push through the tough times by drawing solely on inner resources. They were thus able to succeed despite unsatisfactory supervisory relationships. However, students who did not possess sufficient inner resources and received inadequate supervisory support often failed to complete their research and dropped out (El-Ghoroury, 2012). The literature appears to support the notion that inherent or acquired personal characteristics and attributes greatly affect the ability of a student to complete their studies. It stands to reason, therefore, that supervisors need to become aware of the internal attributes of their students in order to provide appropriate levels of support and guidance.

A systematic critical literature review by O' Neill, Wallstedt, Eika and Hartvigsen (2011) of the international peer-reviewed research literature on medical education was performed. From a systematic review of 13 studies, a range of entry qualifications seemed to be associated with greater chances of a student dropping out. Struggling academically in tertiary education may be strongly associated with dropout. By contrast, no specific pattern of demographic variables was particularly important in relation to dropout. The effects of socio-economic, psychological and educational variables on dropout were not well investigated. More research into causal models and theory testing, which considers the effects of education, organisation and institution, is necessary if we are to learn more about how we can actively prevent medical student withdrawal. The research project explores how the management capacity of the managers could be enhanced through training, development and maintenance functions of human resource management. The literature study focused on reviewing outcomes-based education, training and development methodology. The conclusions and recommendations are based on the findings of the survey as completed by the participants. The guidelines for a training programme include

outcomes based learning principles to raise morale, skill and knowledge (Kamfer, 2005).

After a decade of democracy, South Africa has achieved much in the way of transformation. However, as the government itself has acknowledged, the pace of change is scarcely fast enough to keep up with accelerating social and economic challenges (Republic of South Africa 2003). In seeking to meet both social and economic aspirations, the government has increasingly identified skills development as a crucial issue. In President Mbeki's statements on a national development vision, skills are seen as both a constraint on socio-economic delivery and a means of simultaneously addressing the need for international competitiveness and the upliftment of those in poverty and those who lack decent work (Mbeki, 2004a; 2004b). In his vision, skills development thus becomes a bridge for crossing the chasm between the 'two nations' that characterise South Africa's uneven historical development: a nation that is part of the global knowledge and consumerist First World and part of the poor and marginalised Third World (Mbeki 2004a). (Akoojee, Gewer, & McGrath, 2005).



South Africa's transition from the apartheid system to a post-apartheid democratic system began in a historical moment that coincided broadly with the 'collapse' of the Soviet Union and the ushering in of a new global order of capitalist economic domination often referred to as the 'unipolar' world system. This moment was followed by large-scale global capitalist restructuring which pressured many developing countries to embrace neoliberal economic policy reforms. The post-apartheid state ushered in a period of wide-scale reform of public policies, amongst which were reforms to the country's education and training systems. These reforms were proposed as a means to begin to redress the historical imbalances created by apartheid's racialised labour market, which had resulted in what McGrath, Badroodien, Kraak and Unwin (2004) have characterised as a 'low skills regime'. A

key challenge facing the new government was to develop policies that could address this historical legacy while simultaneously overseeing the integration of the South African economy into a hostile global capitalist economic system. This resulted in an expectation that the post-apartheid state would develop policies that will redress the historical imbalances that occurred as a result of apartheid. Scholars such as Motala, Vally and Spreen (2010, p. 241) have argued: At the end of apartheid there was a real expectation that the death of a racist, fragmented, incoherent, yet planned education and training system together with its policies and practices – the manufactured bureaucracies spawned to give effects to the intentions of apartheid ideologues and political leaders and its deleterious outcomes, would be terminated once and for all.

In the light of the various, conflicting pressures for policy reforms from domestic and global forces, the democratic government has chosen contradictory approaches to development. These are directed at redressing the historical imbalances, on the one hand, and economic and social policy choices that have so far been unsuccessful in transforming the character of the South African economy, on the other. The discourse on skills development therefore is an expression of ideological and political contestations emerging within this broader framework of policy development in the period of the political transition. My contention is that the prevalence of human capital theory assumptions on skills as evidenced in the broad acceptance of outcomes-based education (OBE) reforms and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in the post-apartheid state have contributed immensely to the current situation defined as a crisis of skills development. According to Allais (2011a, p. 11), the key problem with skills development in South Africa is the underlying qualification model, which, despite rhetoric to the contrary, is based on, and reinforces atomised skills for fragmented jobs. The ensuing qualification model has been cumbersome and difficult to use, because of the tendency of competency-based systems to lead to narrow but lengthy over specified qualification. In post-apartheid South Africa, issues which has made the work of government institutions as well as providers difficult, and ironically

has made it harder for providers to be responsive to employers' needs (Ngcangu, 2014).

According to Tinto (2002) there is a growing concern around the retention of student at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Studies on student retention agree that understanding and addressing the issues of student retention is complex, with multiple reasons why students leave early. In the synthesis of research on the relationships between retention and dropping out of high school before graduation, Jimerson (2001) concluded that retention is "one of the most powerful predictors of" which students will drop out.

## **2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter reviewed literature that examined a range of factors that influence human resources development in general. Presented literature showed that none of the studies with regard to human resources development were conducted locally not to mention studies that focused on the vital public sector. The studies discussed confirmed the need to use qualitative methods assess the perceptions and experiences of employees involved in human resources development programmes. Gaps in the literature were also identified thereby informing method choice for this current study. The discussion of literature also informed the theoretical framework of this study. The following Chapter Three will unpack the method involved with conducting this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter outlines the elements of the research methodology employed relative to the aim and objectives of the present study. The chapter aims to report on the methodological decisions taken by the researcher and the motivations underpinning those decisions. The chapter further attempts to demonstrate the methodological rigour applied and the methodological coherence achieved between the various elements of the study against the backdrop of the stated theory.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH SETTING**

The research setting was the branch of Fisheries Management which falls under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. The branch of Fisheries was moved from the Ministry of Environmental affairs in 2010. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) is a national department with national competence in the execution of the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries mandate. This Ministry was formed in 2009 when the fourth Parliament of South Africa came into power and DAFF is the results of the amalgamation of the three former Departments of Water Affairs and Forestry, Agriculture and Environmental Affairs and Tourism. The role and responsibilities of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) have emerged as critical for the National Development Agenda and pivotal in addressing the major development challenges and priorities of our time. The national priorities of rural development, job creation, agrarian reform, food security and the protection of our environmental assets and natural resources are central in the responsibility of DAFF. DAFF manages these three sectors of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries with a total staff complement of about 6 500 in total of which around 620 employees are based in the Branch: Fisheries Management located in the Western

Cape Province. This branch is one of the major contributors to the National Gross Domestic Product.

### 3.3 PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING

Eligible participants were (2010-2015) beneficiaries of staff development grants in the department. The branch of Fisheries Management has been awarding approximately 30 to 45 Bursaries per year to its officials for Tertiary Education studies since the year 2010 paying around R2 million annually towards their studies and so far only an average of 13 employees per year complete their studies and more than 60% drop out of the tertiary institutions without completing their studies. Participants were given pseudonyms from 1 to 15 according to interview schedule. Demographic information that could lead to identification of participants was not requested. This decision was merely to encourage full participation in terms of information provided. Table 3.1 gives a demographic description of the fifteen participants for this study.

Table 3.1

*Demographic profile of participants*

<b>Black African=9</b>		<b>Coloureds=5</b>		<b>White=1</b>	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
4	5	1	4	1	0

Purposive sampling technique was applied since interviews were conducted to only those who went through or are still under the bursary programme. Purposive sampling has proven to increase transferability of the study results and maximise the range of information that can be obtained about the object of study (Babbie & Mouton, 2007). Purposive sampling methods can be used to select cases based on the specific criteria (Babbie & Mouton, 2007; Neuman, 2003). In the present study, bursary

beneficiaries between years 2010 and 2015. Purposive sampling requires selecting participants who are knowledgeable about the issue in question, because of their sheer involvement in and experience of the situation. Creswell (2003) states that purposive sampling refers to selection of participants that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question, they must be willing to reflect on and share their knowledge. In this study, staff were able to reflect on their entire process of being part of the development programme through attending tertiary education. In an attempt to balance the data produced from the study, potential participants were contacted through various supervisors in the department. Potential participants were also identified according to their stage of completion in the programmes they were enrolled in. Although all eligible participants from various stages of completion were targeted, the study managed to recruit fifteen staff members. Recruitment of participants continued until saturation was reached in the analysis in keeping with data collection.

In addition, participants were drawn from a small sampling frame (Fisheries Management branch) and thus disclosure of certain demographics, age for example, in combination with other information might make it possible to identify the participants. Limited information is reported here to merely provide an idea of the sample contextually. Also information is provided for the group rather than for individuals, which would inadvertently disclose identities.

### **3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH**

The study was phenomenological in nature. Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual and it seeks essentially to describe rather than explain, and to start from a perspective free from hypotheses or preconceptions (Husserl, 1970). A variety of methods can be used in phenomenological-based research, including interviews, conversations, participant

observation, action research, focus meetings and analysis of personal texts. If there is a general principle involved it is that of minimum structure and maximum depth, in practice constrained by time and opportunities to strike a balance between keeping a focus on the research issues and avoiding undue influence by the researcher. The establishment of a good level of rapport and empathy is critical to gaining depth of information, particularly where investigating issues where the participant has a strong personal stake (Plummer, 1983).

The use of qualitative methods in the present study allowed for the researcher to capture information of phenomena in the words of and from the perspective of the informants. The researcher was the key instrument of data collection and sought to deeply engage with the staff (participants) through reflective discussions. As such, the adoption of qualitative methods of data collection and analysis in the present study was appropriate to content, aims and processes. This was pertinent to a study of this nature as it was not the wish of the researcher to generalise findings, but to gain an understanding of the experiences of staff under development programme through acquiring a tertiary qualification in their particular context (Fisheries Management branch).

### **3.5 DATA COLLECTION AND PROCEDURE**

Data was collected by means of in-depth semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used because of the sensitive, personal nature of the staff development experience and perceptions. It allowed the interviewees to talk freely and extensively about their reflections without being concerned about how their contributions might be perceived by other participants for example, in a Focus group discussion. This aided in freely exploring, probing and asking questions to expand on or clarify particular topics to generate extensive and rich data consistent with Howitt's (2010) recommendations. Interviews also avoid isolation of participants from their



normal context and to provide human interchange that brings meaning to language (Flick, 2002). In addition, interviews increased their level of comfort (Stevens & Wrenn, 2013). The Researcher's aim for data collection was to keep the interviewees at ease, so that they can talk freely in order to get some rich information. I wanted to create a more conversation-like interaction so that the interviewee would not feel inhibited by the formality of the interview. This was achieved by use of a semi-structured interview technique.

The interviews lasted between 30 to 45 minutes; this was merely because the duration of lunch breaks in the branch is an hour. English was used as the language of the interview as it is the medium of instruction in the branch but participants were given an opportunity to respond in any language of their choice. There were IsiXhosa and Afrikaans translators in place should some participants have chosen to use any of the other two languages mostly used in the Western Cape Province. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured Interview schedule (Appendix A). This schedule was derived from objectives of the study and gaps in the literature. A pilot interview was conducted to assess the initial interview schedule. Afterwards, the Researcher changed the sequence of questions and rephrased some questions to make them more appropriate for further interviews. This promoted longer sections of talk and detailed accounts of their experiences. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. There were fifteen transcribed interview sessions.

### **3.6 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS**

Thematic analysis was selected for the data analysis in the present study. According to Croatia (2012), thematic analysis should be seen as a foundational method for qualitative analysis. Thematic analysis is seen as a basic method for qualitative analysis and encompasses everything from identifying and analysing patterns within data reporting (Larkin, 2009). Descombe (2010) asserted that a thematic analysis is

compatible with both essentialist and constructionist paradigms thus emphasising its flexibility despite Giorgi's (2009) recommendation that a discourse would be most applicable when working within a social constructionist framework. Thus thematic analysis was appropriate in this study because the focus was on participants' experiences and perceptions of the bursary assistance programmes.

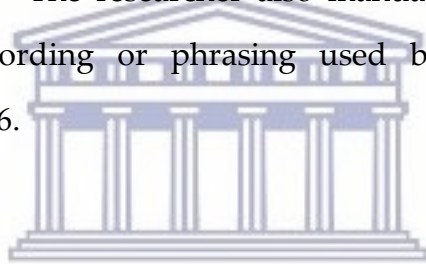
Braun and Clarke's (2006) steps for conducting a thematic analysis were adopted for the present study because they allowed the researcher to combine analysis of the frequency of codes with an analysis of their meaning in context. These authors identified a six-phase guide to conducting a thematic analysis which is briefly outlined below:

### **3.6.1 Familiarisation and Immersion**

Phase One involved familiarising with the data. The key to this step is completely immersing oneself and becoming knowledgeable of the transcripts. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that this provides the 'bedrock' for the remainder of the analysis. Accordingly, it was important to become immersed in the transcribed scripts. This was achieved in two ways: Firstly, I conducted the data collection myself which provided the opportunity to establish an early awareness of the content of the data. Similarly, I developed an idea of the themes that may arise based on my field notes and reflections. Secondly, I refined my initial impressions through engaging in a process of reading and re-reading the transcripts that provided a better idea of the depth and breadth of the content of the data. I read transcriptions and listened to each of the audio interview recordings several times in order to gain a sense of the data and to understand the experience of the participants.

### 3.6.2 Generating initial codes

Phase Two entails the generation of initial codes. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommended that the researcher should systematically work through the data, paying complete attention to each data item and identify interesting aspects in the data on the basis of repeated patterns. Another important recommendation was that the analyst codes the information as far as possible. Generation of codes was done using Atlas-Ti (a qualitative data management tool). 165 codes emanated from the combined transcripts. In keeping with Braun and Clarke's recommendation, the researcher erred on the side of having as many codes as possible rather than too little information since it would not be clear in the initial coding what may or may not be essential information later. The researcher also manually verified these codes to reconcile the differing wording or phrasing used by staff. The codes were subsequently reduced to 126.



### 3.6.3 Searching for themes

The third phase was the search for themes in the transcripts. Once all the data had been coded, the focus narrowed towards coding to a broader level and focused on the themes the codes were indicative of. The analyst may not initially see the bigger themes, but rather sub-themes. This is not necessarily a delay of the analysis process, since sub-themes could later be identified as larger themes. For example, there are a number of codes that were changed to themes and other themes to codes. At this stage the researcher came up with 8 themes some of which were combined as they were focusing on similar aspects.

### 3.6.4 Examination and reviewing of themes

Once the preliminary list of themes was drawn, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that step four involves an examination of these themes. In this phase the researcher

reviewed the themes under consideration carefully. In some instances, some themes overlapped and other times some themes were realised as not being valid. Once this process was completed, the researcher was able to see the importance of certain themes based on the manner in which it complimented or contradicted each other and the overall results of the analysis. At this stage, it became quite confusing because it was not easy to put themes into categories. The supervisory process assisted in clarifying the work process and final outcomes.

### **3.6.5 Defining and naming the themes**

Here, the researcher identified the 'essence' of each theme, as well as the feature of the data that each theme captures. This information is then also used in the naming of the theme. At this stage, themes were named according to their functions. These themes were taken to my supervisor for discussion and additional input. We had to change other themes to codes for they were falling under other major themes. I ended up with seven themes that fell into two categories.

The above steps then led to the sixth step, that is, the production of the report which in this case is the entire thesis with specific emphasis on Chapters Four (Results & Discussion) and Five (Conclusion).

## **3.7 REFLEXIVITY**

Reflexivity is the act of reflecting on the role that the researcher plays through their own personal, political and intellectual autobiographies in creating, interpreting and theorising data (McKay & Ryan, 2003). Identifying pre-conceived ideas, thoughts and opinions, which each individual possesses, is important for a researcher, especially when conducting a study that could be of specific bias for that individual (Morrow, 2005). I am a black male employee working under this Fisheries department as well and I am one of the beneficiaries of the bursary programme. I am originally from

Gauteng, Pretoria and I have been in the Western Cape for the past ten years. I found it very easy to create rapport with all the participants black, white and coloureds using English, Xhosa and Afrikaans as dominant languages used in the Western Cape and I am fully fluent in communicating in written and verbal forms of these languages, which made it easy to be accepted by the participants. Being cognisant of my own experiences, I was continuously and consistently aware of how I am positioned, its impact on participants and construction of the research findings. As such, I was reflective and reflexive in the manner in which I conducted the study from beginning till the end.

### **3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Trustworthiness is established through credibility, transferability and dependability (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 2001; Golafshani, 2003). The purpose of establishing trustworthiness was to increase the rigour of the methodology and to enhance the credibility of the study by ensuring that the findings, interpretations and conclusions were supported by the data.

#### **3.8.1 Credibility**

Credibility in qualitative research is involved in establishing that the results of the research are believable (Golafshani, 2003) and this was insured by prolonged engagement in semi-structured interviewing, the adoption of well-established research methods and developing early familiarity with the participants. Interviewing is one of the most common methods of data collection in social science research and bursary beneficiaries are well versed with this kind of method. I am an Industrial Psychology Masters student who has been trained in methods of data collection at Master's Degree level and the way I must present myself in such situations. In addition, during my Honours Degree year, I conducted several interview sessions for my other courses that gave me the opportunity for feedback and refinement of skills.

### **3.8.2 Transferability**

Transferability is similar to generalisability in quantitative research (Golafshani, 2003) and it was ensured by a thick description of phenomenon in sufficient detail so that one can begin to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings, situations, and people. To this end a clear description of the research setting/context and participants was provided in this study.

### **3.8.3 Dependability**

In addressing the issue of dependability (reliability) of this study, a description of all research practices followed were provided and of other researchers who were not directly involved in the research process, but assisted with the process of data collection and analysis. The two involved researchers were Master's Degree holders who are also trained in data collection and analysis. To promote trustworthiness of data and because of time constraints, I transcribed seven interview sessions and the other eight were equally divided between two fellow researchers. My fellow researchers are in their fifth year of Psychology training that includes methods of research and they are currently enrolled for a Master's Degree in Psychology. However, I went through the outsourced transcriptions for verification of the accuracy of the transcription and to familiarise self with the data. My research supervisor also verified the process.

## **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Eligible employees received an invitation in the form to participate in the study after they indicated their willingness to find out more about the study. They also received an information sheet (Appendix C) outlining the aim and nature of the study, rights and responsibilities of researchers and participants, what participation entails, as well as recourse in the event of dissatisfaction.

Permission to access the employees was requested and granted by the Human Resources department of the Ministry (Appendix D). This particular recommendation is in an attempt to remain aligned with the Protection of Personal information Act of 2013(PoPi) that promotes the protection of personal information processed by public and private bodies (Gazette, 2013). This Act recognises and provides that everyone has the right to privacy. The right to privacy includes a right to protection against the unlawful collection, retention, dissemination and use of personal information. In this regard, employees' information kept by the Fisheries department is not available to me. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Ethics Board and Senate Research Committee, Clearance number HS 17/2/6 (Appendix E).

Participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time without loss of perceived benefit or fear of negative consequence. Identifying information such as names was anonymised and kept confidential. This was achieved by replacing any identifying words/phrases with general words. In addition, any information that could lead to the tracing of participants was omitted, for example date of birth or age. Written consent was provided by participants. Data is only accessed by the researchers and supervisor directly involved in the study. The data is stored in a safe and secure location and will only be handled by the researchers involved. Participants were furthermore informed of the dissemination protocol that includes 1) an unpublished thesis; 2) conference presentation and 3) peer-reviewed manuscript.

### **3.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has described the method of the research study. A sketch of the research design was delineated, supporting the aims and objectives of the study. Participant selection, data collection, data analysis and reflexivity were also described. Furthermore, crucial ethics concerns were also discussed which were maintained throughout the research process. Chapter Four of this thesis will present and explain

the findings of the study in terms of the literature reviewed, as well as the theoretical framework considered.





## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results and discussion of findings emanating from the thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews, as well as a brief discussion of each of the themes. This chapter is divided into thematic categories namely; Personal factors and Organisational factors. Generation of codes was done using Atlas-Ti (a qualitative data management tool). 165 codes emanated from the combined transcripts. Codes were then grouped together to form themes. Some codes were thrown away in that process since they seemed redundant. These categories were named in relation to major aspects in the literature and systems theory applied in this study.

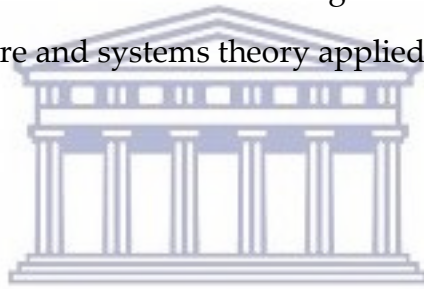


Table 4.1

<i>Thematic categories</i>	
Thematic category 1: Personal factors	1) Impact of staff development 2) Experiences and Perceptions 3) Time Management 5) Administration/Registrations
Thematic category 2: Organisational factors	6) Support and Motivation 7) Personal Attributes

#### 4.2 THEMATIC CATEGORY 1: PERSONAL FACTORS

This category comprises of themes that has to do with all the factors relating to the impact on staff development that has to do with the beneficiaries themselves. Themes under this category are impact of staff development, experiences and perceptions of

the programme, time management and personal attributes. The following passages are presenting themes under this category.

#### **4.2.1 Theme 1: Impact of staff development**

The first theme to emerge addressed the impact of skills development as expressed by participants. Participants reported the impact of staff development in various ways. It emerged that there were two different forms of impact, that is, impact on self and impact on organisation. Some participants expressed that skills development had a huge impact in their lives considering disadvantaged backgrounds of not affording tertiary education. However, other participants expressed negative or no significant impact of staff development applied by the South African government, specifically in the Fisheries Management Branch. The following excerpts express the positive impact of staff development:

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*"I believe that it's an effective form of staff development. It motivates and encourages, and fastens organisation learning, culture. It also increases productivity and efficiency and quality of the organisation and self-development of the individual. I can benefit because I have the subject knowledge. That subject knowledge that I can sort of further my development within the department I can apply for certain positions whereas I couldn't apply for I wasn't qualified and so even my personal development that has been a key point in getting that up to standard"*

**Participant 1**

*"I think the bursary programme is a good thing for the employees as I think that the purpose of the bursary is to support and encourage the education of the department employees. Err in order to promote learning culture within the department and culture within the department and the other thing is that it assists employees in addressing the shortage of skills and empowering them in terms of knowledge and development."*

**Participant 3**

*“Ok, here is an opportunity, ok not necessarily an opportunity because you have to take initiative and apply for it but it was like here is an opportunity now for you to reach that goal that you have always had all these years but without means so it’s just something that shows that the department actually cares. I remember I would contribute now when we sit for things like review or development of permit conditions because now things started to make sense. I started understanding things, I could now give input, and you know those kinds of things. Now after completing the program, I mean, I was like you now, I understood, I saw now what the managers have been saying, you know when they talk about certain developments and all those kind of thing and you are like what is that but now I understand. Ok, I graduated in June 2015 and December 2015. I got a promotion.”*

**Participant8**

*“First of all I would just want to say that bursary itself is playing a critical role when it comes to the skills gap. More especially we are a country where we were divided before and some of the people, funding was a challenge to them to enhance or to develop, to carry on with their studies.”*

**Participant 9**

*“Firstly, I think it is a good initiative from the department to, empower, colleagues that would otherwise not be able to, study in fields and to, grow in terms of their career. So for me, the bursary initiative is a very good initiative. I feel that also coming from our socio-economic status, a lot of us could not study. So the bursary programme is giving us disadvantaged people the opportunity to also, grow in our careers. And also, to you know. Some people have got a dream “I always wanted to” so now you’re given this opportunity of here you can, you know what I mean, so the bursary programme for me I can only say positive things about.”*

**Participant 2**

*"I completed my diploma in human resources, it is a benefit to my work because for example, in human resources, you are told, you studied about the business hours, about your rights and everything, so once you completed or you started to understand everything, it makes easy for your work to understand which ones you must stop and what you must do at work."*

**Participant 10**

*"I will become an expert in the field; first of all, I will be the first expert in South Africa and also international I will become one of the few in the world. By doing that I will be able to engage at the international level and also advise the department on the way forward particularly as I am responsible for developing and implementing the food safety programmes."*

**Participant 6**

*"First of all, I come here, coming from a disadvantaged background. So I did not go to school, I was not even having a Matric. But when I come here this department from 2007 it was department of environmental affairs and tourism before it transferred to department of agriculture and so there is this opportunity of getting a bursary its more I become interested because of this bursary that I saw in this department. I didn't go to school so I was at school but my school was so low, but now got, managed to get a national diploma without having a Matric certificate before."*

**Participant 4**

*"I believe that it is contributing in bettering our services through education and will help our officials who are working in the department for the benefit of the whole South Africa including the fishing industry and whoever is interested or affected by the service of the department."*

**Participant 11**

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However, participant 7 reported that, *"I don't have a problem with the bursary program itself, I have a problem with the output that you are studying, you have passed but at the end of the day, you can't implement it, you can't get advancement*

*or career advancement in this department. So, there are actually limited career opportunities especially for people that got post graduate studies as well so it doesn't make sense for someone that has a post graduate and is sitting in a lower level. So I still think that is what they need to look into as well."*

This quote shows that the positive impact of staff development in the department was not experienced by all beneficiaries. In addition, the following participant 12 also shares the same sentiment although with mixed feelings.

*"I have benefited personally but I believe the department have not got what I have enhanced because there is no chance for me. I have done that course and it gave me clear understanding of how to manage people, how to understand people, how to treat people, how to do customer service. The whole module is basically the psychology which I believe is needed to be able to deal with different type of people coming from different environments."*

This theme demonstrates that all beneficiaries experienced the impact of staff development at a personal level through bursaries, although with mixed perceptions. Employees were looking forward to apply what they learnt from their various tertiary degree or diploma studies. Although 2 participants expressed dissatisfaction on the application of their new skills, they reported development in their personal capacity. Thus, the perceptions of the impact are based on a set of individual attributes, goals and historical background. Employees expect up skilling that can impact their lives and that of the department and South Africa as a whole. A study by Tziner and Haccoun (1991) also showed that perceptions on a training strategy depend on several factors such as age and gender of the employee. They added that using goal-setting theory, trainees are more likely to apply new learning when they are presented with a skill utilisation objective.

#### 4.2.2 Theme 2: General experiences and perceptions

The second theme to emerge addressed the experiences and perceptions of participants on the whole programme of bursary funding. Participants reported different experiences encountered and perceptions were formed on the studies and utilisation of the Bursary Programme. Eight of the participants expressed having had a very good experience on the programme accompanied by very pleasant formed perceptions, while on the other hand like any other Programme some unpleasant experiences as expressed by 5 participants were met also forming obvious unpleasant perceptions. The positive and encouraging experiences showing the welcomed support and the benefits of the Bursary Programme to participants are captured as follows:

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*"I would say it was a good experience and it could assist you if you feel like you are overwhelmed with all the subjects that you need to take for the modules and assignments while working and studying at the same time, it was beneficial to take those breaks at times, but if it was in my hands I would have completed it without taking any taking any breaks between."* **Participant 1**

*"My experience with the bursary programme, firstly I think it is a good initiative from the department to empower colleagues that would otherwise not have been able to study in different fields and to grow in terms of their career without the financial support. So for me, the bursary initiative is a very good initiative."*

**Participant 2**

*"I started studying in 2011 I think, 2011, and ever since I started I didn't experience any problems because with [name], I could always go to [name], if I didn't understand anything, I would go to Miss[name] who was here previously and the guys were always willing to assist and help out where they could. I really*

*want to do it and I really want to finish so definitely nothing is going to stand in my way because it is something I have to do"*

**Participant 5**

*"It is very tough it goes back where I said first of all I was interested in education because my education was not on the appropriate level, I did not have a matric certificate, I had experienced other people having diplomas and degrees but my interest was to have a degree, so I decided to take this opportunity and I did not want to let it pass, I did not want to lose this opportunity I got in this department."*

**Participant 4**

*"First of all I had very good experience in this programme studying through the bursary from the department, probably the experience I gained was because of the preparation I made before I committed myself to studying. Before I studied I planned on what is it that I want to study, how much time do I need to study, where do I need to study, how much time do I have to invest on the studies. It took me a year to decide on what I wanted to study. In the fishing industry you have to communicate with the Fisher men to get more information. If you can remember earlier I did say the other reason why I took up this course was that it deals with people as much as it deals with animals. This was a bonus for me as I realise the importance of the fishermen"*

**Participant 11**

*"The current practice experienced in the Department is that when posts are advertised, experience does not matter much, only qualifications serve as a requirement, which means somehow that we all have to try and get the qualification in order for one to grow within the department and this programme will assist in that regard."*

**Participant 12**

*"I always wondered what I wanted to because when you grow up you have certain goals and dreams but because I did not have financial resources at that time, as I*

*have a lot of beneficiaries to take care of, I did not afford to pay for my fees. So when the department give the opportunity then I have to grab it."*

**Participant 14**

*"I tried to study Law after matriculating but I later decided against it and when I got an opportunity to get a bursary it was another motivation for me to study and get a degree and so far it has been a good experience and I see myself going far."*

**Participant 15**

*"I will be honest with you, the courses that we are covering at the university cover practicality of governing for an example Public accountability, Compliance and Control amongst many others. One interacts with the community and gets to find out what they are doing and what is the Department doing to be relevant in the fishing community. The reality of the experience is the more the Department provides skills development opportunities to equip its own people the more this will give credibility not only to the community they are working in but also to the international community to indicate that we have our own people who are researchers who are also bringing and adding value to the sector."*

**Participant 15**

*"Once one starts studying and interacting with other students at the university level, he/she feels the need to adapt to a standard of the university, a learning environment or else you will feel as if you do not belong there and adapting brings with it the sense of readiness, improved performance and happiness when dealing with the school work."*

**Participant 4**

*"Though the work is too much, I believe it is not something that one cannot handle, for instance if one can forfeit his/her lunch periods for the duration of the studies*



*and concentrate on doing his/her researches, I think that can also work in someone's favour"*

**Participant 12**

*"I believe that one stand a good chance for better job prospects and upward mobility with a qualification, because the posts requirements have now changed and with a lot of Interns now joining the Department with higher qualifications like Honours and Masters, the competition is a bit tougher unlike before when the entry level to positions was just a matric."*

**Participant 13**

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There were also unpleasant experiences from the beneficiaries' side. Some mentioned that the programme is straining them considering pressure from both the branch and tertiary institutions. The following excerpts present some of the sentiments shared;

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*"I think the limitation of the study or whereby you have to study something that is within your directorate is a unfair as it is currently practised and I think if the officials had a freedom to choose any field of study aligned to their interests, it will may improve their chances of completing. The other thing is that when you have registered you have to buy the textbooks and you must bring the receipts and I think that is also another challenge because when you buy the books you have to obtain a lecturer 's letter confirming that you are doing the specified course which unfortunately in my experience in the first year I did not claim any money for the textbooks because on my first year my lecturers send me from pillar to post to get that letter until I gave up on sourcing the required letter and I continued in the past 3 years buying my own books without claiming back the money."*

**Participant 3**

*“I think having to attend classes after work puts a lot of strain on adults who have limited time from work to be in class in time and also have to rush home to the family after evening classes as parents. This has led to us missing some of the classes more especially in winter time which at time resulted in frustrations and dropping out”*

**Participant 4**

*“I think it is very difficult in the Directorate where I am stationed, because when you want to apply for a bursary to study project management, you are told that you cannot do the course as it is not relevant to customer service. Every year since I started working in 2008 we are doing the professional client service course, the writing skills training, repeatedly over the years and that is not helping because we know how to deal with difficult clients but we are told that you cannot go to other courses because they are not relevant to our work. It is also frustrating that after completing my HR diploma, I keep applying for specific HR positions in the Department even for lower positions just to access the field that I have qualified in, but so far I was never shortlisted even though I am a Bursary recipient”*

**Participant 10**  
UNIVERSITY of  
WESTERN CAPE

*“I am passing but there are also other challenges because I also found out that at UNISA there are no tutorial classes for the module that I had registered for at that time, and sometime you don't find anybody that is also registered for the same module in the Branch and therefore you will not have a study group” it so you cannot be in a group. So you are only on your own with no assistance.*

**Participant 14**

*“I am currently studying as a second time bursary beneficiary in the department, but unfortunately I did not complete my studies the first time around as I had to drop-out of the programme for a simple reason that I have since realised that the environment in which one is studying in the employment does not make it*

*convenient for one to study. There is a lot that is exerted on you, though you cannot quantify that eventually the studies take the second place, but I have told myself that that is not going to be the case this time around as I will work hard under all the circumstances to complete my studies.”*

**Participant 15**

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Participant 6 expressed unpleasant perceptions created by how the bursary policy is implemented. The participant mentioned that, *“For me personally is that it is causing me a lot of stress to learn that the policy states that if I do not finish my studies in 5 years as per the contract, then I will have to pay back close to R100 000.00 paid for my studies, which unfortunately I do not think I will afford.”* In addition participant 10 also reported similarly by saying, *“The reason we apply for the bursary assistance is because we have financial problems and it is so scary to know that so once you fail, you must pay for yourself to complete the studies or else you will have to pay back all the money that was already paid towards your studies”*

The experiences and perceptions as listed above clearly shows that different participants have mixed experiences on the programme and it is also interesting to note that the same participant like with participant 4 below can have different experience and perception about the same programme:

*“It is very tough it goes back where I said first of all I was interested in education because my education was not on the appropriate level, I did not have a matric certificate, I had experienced other people having diplomas and degrees but my interest was to have a degree, so I decided to take this opportunity and I did not want to let it pass, I did not want to lose this opportunity I got in this department.”*

**Participant 4**

*“I think having to attend classes after work puts a lot of strain on adults who have limited time from work to be in class in time and also have to rush home to the family after evening classes as parents. This has led to us missing some of the classes more especially in winter time which at time resulted in frustrations and dropping out”*

**Participant 4**

Some of the participants indicated that even though they had good experiences and perceptions about the programme, more can still be done to make the programme very successful like Participant 10: who said *“I think assisting us by assisting us with the skills how you answer the multiple choice questions and the essay questions because most of the studies now in the institution are essay questions, because even us who are already in that industry are struggling and how much more struggle is experienced those who started have just started.”* and Participant 13 *“the first three months in to the studies, the mistake I made on my part is that I took too much modules enrolled for four subjects and later on I was advised by the Training Advisor Mr [Name], that I should’ve actually taken less because he had experienced the same mistakes made by other bursary recipients before.”*

This theme is showing that individual employees are unique and that they experience and form perceptions in different ways. This brings to the attention that the Fisheries branch requires to focus on beneficiaries at individual level since the experiences and perceptions are influenced by a wider range of aspects. Beneficiaries are from different walks of life and have different interests and goals of development. Systems theory also argues that a phenomenon must be seen as a whole and not as simply the sum of elementary parts (Bertalanffy, 1968). The focus is on the interactions and on the relationships between parts in order to understand an entity’s organisation, functioning and outcomes. In this case, there are various parts of the bursary funding programme as a form of staff development.

#### **4.2.3 Theme 3: Time management**

The information from the participants below indicates that time is of essence when one decides to study through this programme as the officials have a lot of responsibilities as full time employees, parents and family members running households and also as part-time students. Even though the challenges vary from person to person, time management plays a critical role for the participants to be able to balance the demands of all these responsibilities as mentioned by 11 out of 15 participants interviewed.

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*“I think it was a heavy work load more especially that one was required to attend the class after work which also possessed another work load, but it required one to be strong, committed and dedicated to face those difficulties in such a short resting time between the two. The transport in the evening was also a challenge and the safety of the places where we stay is not guaranteed as our classes ended up so late sometimes even till 09:30pm.”*

**Participant 4**

*“Juggling work and family life was hard as you have to sacrifice the family time and sometimes your family is not always very supportive because our parents did not grow up in the learning culture and they did not understand how things go, that you have to work and after work you also have to attend classes. Unfortunately with family and studies conflicting, the pressure is just too much and time very limited.”*

**Participant 1**

*“Although it was not easy but my performance was not bad, I did my studies within the stipulated time because I had to learn how to manage my time efficiently. The challenges like I said was going to work then attending classes afterwards which were starting at 17.15pm and sometimes we had two classes meaning arriving home very late at night, again having to do some school work, and also prepare for the following day.”*

**Participant 3**

*“It is quite difficult sometimes because classes of some subjects were finishing late at night and the challenge for me was that sometimes I had to leave classes early and relying on getting notes from other people that are not in the same class with me the next day. The time spend on the travelling was also a challenge for me that is why I had to leave the class earlier as some classes were going up until like 21:15, I don't have my own transport and I had to make use of the bus and the train and unfortunately there is no trains at that time and it is quite dangerous.”*

**Participant 5**

*“I am not given enough time to apply my mind to my PHD, I need to work overtime at home and my supervisors are impressed with the amount of work done*

regardless of the strain experienced. If they can allow me time to focus my mind to the PHD say 14H00 in the afternoon or 16H00 then I can replace those hours with the first 2 hours of the day early morning, which will allow me time to focus on the PHD it will go a long way, because at the moment I grab bits and pieces of time here and there and it is not equally productive.

**Participant 6**

“Beneficiaries in the Branch Fisheries are on a high risk of failing because time constraints and work load during the day. You are here for work and then you must also do your studies, so you do not have much time and when you go home to do your things the time is very short. I think it is time that is mostly giving us a problem for those of us who are studying at CPUT as the classes start at 5pm after work, which means having to rush immediately after the whole day of being busy with the day’s work.”

**Participant 10**

“In preparation for my studies the previous year, I had decided not to take leave so as to accumulate days that I might use when once I have registered for my studies in the event that I needed more time to invest in my studies I will be covered. I also had to prepare my family as well by telling them that I will not be visiting home in the rural areas like I used to in the past year. I needed to balance my work and studies time so that is this course does not interfere with my work or vice – versa, to perform and not fail at school and disappoint my station and also perform hard at work not to make my department and my subordinates suffer. I had to schedule my time carefully so that I can be able to study late at night. Lastly maybe the Department might have to consider looking at the adequacy of the days allocated for study leave. There is not enough time to study for us who are studying part-time and also working full time. We need to be given more study leave days as additional days would help,”

**Participant 11**

“The time is limited for those of us who are working full time, we have responsibilities during the day, unlike the full time students who just go the class and come back and revise with other students. We get home tired after working overtime which means that one does not really have a dedicated time as a student to prepare for the exams because exams are written in May and June, unless one has to sleep at 4am and come back to work at 5am, which is a serious challenge.

*Time is more important, because if you do not have time for your studies, you will not make it. In my case the financial year end case is always strenuous in our area of work and if I can be excused not to perform some of the duties during the time I am preparing for the exams then I will have more time to prepare. I do not mean that my work will be neglected, but some of the duties be assigned somewhere else just as a form of support granted to me by the section because at the end of the day when I get the qualification, the department will also benefit from it.*

**Participant 12**

*“It is a challenge to be between your work, your family life and to study part-time as you are required to seriously divide your time between the three areas and obviously there will be some area which will be neglected. I could have done better but I did not have the time, because I had to come to work in the morning, take care of my children in the evening after work and by the time I get to my books, know the time is gone and very exhausted.”*

**Participant 13**

*“Well, there is only one problem we are working, we are studying and we have families. Our jobs are too challenging because there is not time and we cannot say that is not my duty when work is given to us, sometimes when we come to work you do not know when you are going to get home or off duty. We start work at 7H30am with an expectation of knocking off at 16H00, but sometimes before you knock off, there is a call that we have to go somewhere, Bloemfontein or wherever there is an abalone bust and it needs to be collected. Maybe by stealing time from my family time [laughs] then I can save my studies somehow”*

**Participant 14**

*“We had 16 assignments in the first two months and we had to work extra hard and lots of sleepless nights, thus far it has been quite good because I passed all my assignments. I can safely say it has been a great learning curve. To be honest I really want to have a qualification I have decided to do dedicate all my time to the Department as they have paid a lot of money for my studies and I also need to prioritise my time after work and spend as much time as possible on my studies in order to realise my ultimate goal.”*

**Participant 15**

Time management is very important as beneficiaries partake in the staff development programme considering that employees they still work normal hours. Most of the participants also mentioned that they have life outside of work and studying thereby making it difficult to manage studying time. This leads to dilution of focus on both work and studies thereby influencing staff development in a negative way. Time management also tend to be influenced by the stage or level of tertiary education one is at. Previous studies (e.g. Grant, 2003; Shacham, 2007) have also reported several factors influencing how individuals manage their time and how that can influence effective completion of a programme. Wright (2003) also reported that tertiary education can bring about pressure, especially when one is involved in a number of other responsibilities.



### **4.3 THEMATIC CATEGORY 2: ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS**

This thematic category is presenting themes that have to do with all the factors impacting on staff development emanating from the environment; namely Fisheries Management branch and tertiary institutions. Three themes fall under this category. Paragraphs below will present results under this section.

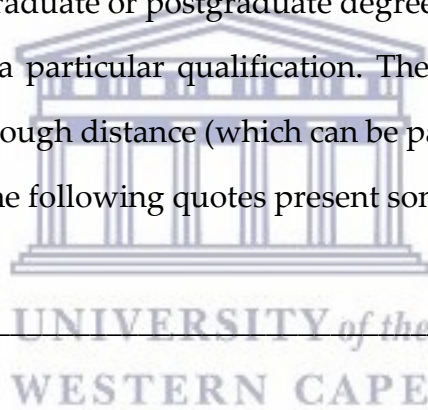
#### **4.3.1 Theme 4: Form, stage and level of study**

The bursary programme within the Fisheries Management branch is mainly for providing the financial support to staff members who are working on a full-time basis, but still wish to obtain their tertiary qualifications to increase their possibility of career advancement, but as indicated by the participants below, studying part-time is very challenging because of the unavailability of face to face tutorial classes for this adult learners who might have left school some years ago and also that they still work on full-time basis while studying.



It is also interesting that even employees who are in possession of junior degrees and diplomas already and pursuing post-graduation qualifications still find it hard to study on part-time basis like participants 6 who mentioned, *“It is possible to complete my studies using this form of studying part-time through the financial support granted by the Bursary Programme and I told my supervisor that I really want to try and finish this within the stipulated time in my bursary contract, though my supervisor is encouraging me not put myself under a lot of pressure as he says PhD is done when it is done. My years in doing PhD part-time in this programme, has taught me that sometimes it takes 7-8 years if not longer, It all depends on the direction the PhD is going.”*

The rest of the participants also developed different perceptions depending on their level and stage of studying. In this study, a level of study meant whether a beneficiary is doing a diploma, undergraduate or postgraduate degree; then stage of study meant the progress made within a particular qualification. The form of study also meant whether one is studying through distance (which can be part time or full time), online or face to face education. The following quotes present some of the sentiments shared by participants;



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*“Studying part-time is very hectic as it also took me close to four year to complete because there were some semesters that I have skipped. I started my studies in 2010 and I took some breaks in between the years. I have substantial distinctions but not so many but the in the second year I was struggling with was accounting, fortunately the curriculum was changed and that worked in my favour, the finance part of the B.Com HR was changed into finance for non-financial managers.”*

**Participant 1**

*“The Department provides us with the opportunity to also attend short courses, the university diploma or degree carries which is covered by the Bursary Programme carries more weight in terms of when you are applying for jobs and for career advancement than the short courses. So for me, the short courses would basically be if you are brushing up on something.”*

**Participant 2**

*“I did not complete my studies because I had few personal challenges which made it difficult for me to focus on my studies as studying part-time needs undivided attention and I am planning on finishing because that is something I really want to do for my personal growth.”*

**Participant 5**

*“The bursary programme helped me to go to a recognised learning institution, so that I can get the formal tertiary qualification while working at the same time, so this form of study is helpful for employees like me because you do not have to be in class.”*

**Participant 3**

*“Beneficiaries who are part time students are on high risk of failing because the work demands are very high for someone who is also studying. I made use of the Departmental Bursary Programme to study part-time doing a Diploma in Human Resources which took me three years before I could complete instead of the two year I was allocated for my bursary. It took long because I failed and the limited time I had for my studies. Eventually I paid the rest of the funding to complete my Diploma and now I am pursuing my post graduate Diploma which I expect to complete anytime soon.”*

**Participant 10**

*“Studying part-time we are not always in the class and more especially, people who are corresponding via the UNISA or other institutions where there are no contact classes find it very hard to complete their studies compared to the officials attending classes after work. I studied part-time doing the B.Com Supply Chain Management through the bursary Programme because it is a formal qualification which is something you need in order if you wish to develop in your career.”*

**Participant 12**

*I applied to do Honours in Environmental at UNISA on part-time basis and I was lucky to get in and also very fortunate to have been awarded a Departmental Bursary which made it easier to study.*

**Participant 13**

*“I am doing a BA Degree in Criminology majoring in Criminal Psychology and studying on a part-time basis through UNISA. I am only left with three modules to*

*complete my studies which I am planning to do next year 2017, but the unfortunate part of it is that these are difficult modules that according to my knowledge do not have any tutorial classes at UNISA and that is going to be a serious challenge for me because in my first two years of studies, most of the modules' assessments were multiple choice questions and in third year essay questions are asked and I have never had the opportunity to learn how to write an essay."*

**Participant 14**

*Combining the short courses that gives you credits towards Tertiary Qualifications helps a lot because in my case, I was given an opportunity to attend different short courses that were in line with my work and when I registered for my current Diploma, I was credited with the first year of study because of the credits received from the short courses and it therefore left me with only three years to complete my qualification. This Bursary Programme is very important because having a Tertiary qualification like my diploma helps with having more valuable and widely recognised qualification as compared to a short course."*

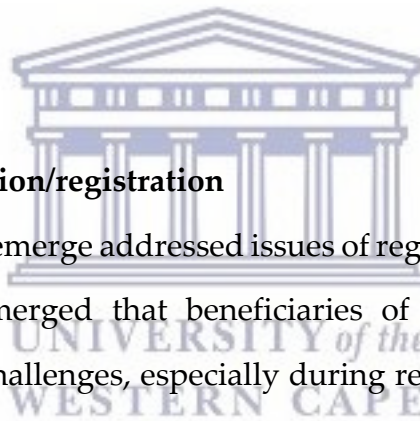
**Participant 15**

The Bursary Programme which concentrated on the Tertiary qualifications and part-time studies as a form of study to be supported, it has been shown that the short-term training interventions like skills programmes and short courses as provided by the Department are good in helping the officials in addressing their immediate work place skills gaps and can also work towards assisting the officials in achieving their long term tertiary qualifications goals as expressed by Participant 5 saying:

*"Combining the short courses that gives you credits towards Tertiary Qualifications helps a lot because in my case, I was given an opportunity to attend different short courses that were in line with my work and when I registered for my current Diploma, I was credited with the first year of study because of the credits received from the short courses and it therefore left me with only three years to complete my qualification. This Bursary Programme is very important because*

*having a Tertiary qualification like my diploma helps with having more valuable and widely recognised qualification as compared to a short course."*

This theme is almost like a bridge to all other themes for it is demonstrated that form, level and stage of studying influence almost every aspect of this strategy of staff development in the Fisheries Management branch. Participants were been involved in a wide spectrum of studies that are believed to benefit either the person or and the organisation. Findings from this study show that beneficiaries in post-graduation studies expressed feelings of loneliness. This was also reported by Wisker, Robinson and Shacham (2007). Staff development in the form of Doctorate studies involves research so the beneficiary is merely on his/her own. This may defeat the intend goals of bursary funding.



#### **4.3.2 Theme 5: Administration/registration**

One of the major themes to emerge addressed issues of registration for various tertiary degree programmes. It emerged that beneficiaries of staff development project encountered a number of challenges, especially during registration. Challenges were reported to be caused by both the branch and tertiary institutions. A major challenge was that of timely fees payment or processing. These challenges had a huge impact on how beneficiaries settled for their various studies. Codes under this theme include; challenges, errors, delays, difficult and accountability. Almost every participant interviewed reported having challenges or difficult when it comes to registration at various institutions with UNISA in the forefront. Excerpts below illustrate experiences and perceptions of beneficiaries;

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*"Sometimes it might be a bit challenging getting in that sort of information or registration that needs the stamp of the university or stamps needs the payment of the university and that might be challenging when you studying correspondent so*

*that's what I found was a bit of a challenge cause I had to physically go into UNISA to get those stamps and necessary paper work that the bursary program required."*

**Participant 1**

*"That is, but I think that is not the department error, that is error from UNISA side but I have also made alternative arrangements so that I could, because there are some of my colleagues that are doing the same course so I have just, I am borrowing their books to, to, not to fall behind."*

**Participant 2**

*"Even sending email to enquire about something that you didn't understand, it will take two weeks for the lecturer to get back to you with whatever that you wanted to know and time is ticking. In my case I would say even the time frame of the exams was affecting me a lot, the financial year starts from March until the end of July."*

**Participant 12**

*"Masters is a bit difficult because you are now this is like 100% thesis, there is no like exams and staff so you have to continuously be reading and trying to...currently we are still waiting on the topic to be approved so once the topic is approved, we will have to send through our proposal. I don't know maybe it's a finance thing but when it comes to paying the institutions, we don't really get communications stating that it has been paid; we don't get notifications or like a remittance that says it has been paid. The reason why I say so is, the institution, they will send us the invoices, I know I got one a couple of months back, I haven't checked on it yet but we don't any feedback to say when it has been paid because when we do phone the institution because like I said, it has been approved, yes it has been paid."*

**Participant 7**

*"I think it helps in having a person responsible and committed to just make follow-ups on the administration and registration part. The way you push hard to make sure that payment is done, people get registered before the closing date, you do the same in terms of purchasing books, to make sure that immediately when a person is registered all the necessary materials, books are there so that you can start getting on with your studies."*

**Participant 8**

*“There needs to be accountability all the time so that if people feel that look, I need to report this month if all my assignments, what was my percentages that I got, you know, people will feel that they need to answer to somebody. Not only to themselves but you know they, they, aware that look this is serious and this is government money and I need to be accountable all the time and also for, they actually support us and you know previously when, we were nominated for OSD (Occupational Specific Dispensation) and even now with the process still going on, the mediation process that was restarted.”*

**Participant 13**

*“It’s been a tough year sir if I would put it in the sense that there have been delays by the University and the first semester was even tougher.”*

**Participant 15**

This theme is touching on the whole process of training and development strategies. It shows that proper planning of a training process is vital towards achieving set goals. Some of the participants above (e.g. participant 8) illustrate the need of support for beneficiaries from the department side. Participant 15 also reported delays by the institution thereby influencing progress. This comes back to the very aspect of planning a development programme. A programme can only be successful when there is proper planning, especially by the organisations involved.

#### **4.3.3 Theme 6: Support and motivation**

Support and motivation emerged as one of the strongest themes for this study. Participants expressed various issues with regard to support and motivation. These two themes of motivation and support were combined since they seem to have similar foci. Almost every participant mentioned having negative experiences because they perceive as being neglected by the department. Beneficiaries also mentioned that no one from the management check on them to see if all is going on well. They also mentioned that they do not know where or who to go to if they are having challenges during the skills development programme. Other participants also mentioned the

need of counselling and guidance even. The following excerpts illustrate experiences of participants:

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.....“I think there needs to be a reminder that there is support here. if they struggling they need to support and counseling and some people they just feel like they not sure and I think that when they give up when they are not sure if they studying the right thing so just sort of that guidance in terms of someone sitting with them, a professional saying, this is what looks best for you.”

**Participant 1**

“I think the problem is passion. We are not progressing but for us to progress, if someone has got a bursary to study Law, the person studying should be allowed to attend our Legal department meetings. This may help the beneficiary to have at least insight of the job.”

**Participant 9**

“The initiative is so simple, the initiative should start from line managers by saying that you understand what your subordinates is studying and to ensure that you check on him. How is their studying going? As I conquered with you, we just get bursaries, you can ask someone how far, they can't even know how far the bursary holder is whether he is still doing first year or second year. They have no follow up so I think that's the support to say, guys if you think you got less than the required marks, please study hard man, that kind of motivation. I think we just give money bursaries and you stop there so I think there is as I said, most of the things, wellness need to be brought in to be mostly part and parcel because why people are struggling it has got to do not because the studies is tough.”

**Participant 7**

*“This is where you fit in even taking what you call those metric assessments to see where they would fit in and that just that sort of guidance so I think that would help a great deal with getting people through.”*

**Participant 4**

*“For some people, studying in groups which is a disadvantage for me personally I don't, I get distracted when I study in groups. But that might help. What would also help is networking with people who are also studying your field or your subjects. Just bouncing off ideas and if you don't understand something you can talk to them, giving maybe notifying people that look, these are the groups, they are also studying your field or they are also studying your subjects for the semester. As the department maybe, giving more time or during you know, giving more time to people while studying. Because we might think the amount of time and because we spend so much time with work, what's happening is people are utilising most of their, of their annual leave for their studies. So by the time that they, they are so exhausted when it comes to September, they already rushing now into January. So not, I am acknowledging the 50/50 rule that the department is giving but I am saying that time is, that is not enough. Also maybe allowing staff an hour extra to say look, we are giving you this for like assignments and stuff like that. Maybe the library needs to be involved.”*

**Participant 2**

*“People when they do assignment, allow to go to libraries because if you go to library, what are you doing there by library that's why I'm saying...that library we have here is supposed to have all the books which because when I go to the library, you only find it covers certain fields...it needs to cover each and every one who study here.”*

**Participant 9**

*“The thing is I said my challenge was the transport and I know it's a lot for the department to ask of the department to because you are already providing us with*



*a bursary which is great and so asking to provide us with transport as well, that would be very challenging because people don't live in the same areas, people finish at different times and but that is a suggestion to the...of the transport although I know it's a very big thing to ask ..., like maybe get the names of the people that is doing similar courses or study at the same campuses at similar times and maybe people that work in similar areas can be transported to...like people that live close to each other can be transported at the same time. Yeah that is just a suggestion. I can't speak for everyone but some people maybe need more motivation, you know everyone is different. I really don't know of the top of my head now what you can do like as I said everyone has different challenges but yeah I think maybe someone to talk to, like give them motivation."*

**Participant 5**

*"For work and for school, we have tests and assignments, you have to meet with groups to discuss the assignments sometimes, there people that are in groups they are not co-operating so you have to sometimes do the work alone or maybe they have done something that it's not good so you have to start again so those were the challenges I managed."*

**Participant 3**

*"All I can say is that, I just want to encourage the department to keep it up and try to improve as much as you can because it is a very good thing for us and it is uplifting for the department and for the staff and as I said people that were disadvantaged or unprivileged previously or disadvantaged so it's definitely a good thing and we are really grateful that this program is like available to us so with that been said, I just...I don't have any other suggestions or problems with it, I think it is a really great thing."*

**Participant 6**

*"I think if the department can upgrade the library because the library I think the books that are there are only for the scientists, I don't know. As much as I know*

*that if you want a book you can go to the library and can ask for the book from the institution but sometimes it's not quick and you need the book. I remember I once asked for a book but I got it after 3 weeks. They say they are going to get it from JHB. So I think if the library they can do something about the library."*

**Participant 7**

*"I think if you can get the study leave, more days from the department so that people can have enough time to study because I think it is not enough for a subject for 2 days study leave. But I have tried. Maybe to other people, 3 or 4 days will be enough. It helps sometime but we misuse our leave days so it's a problem because sometimes you for exams without having any leave day.*

**Participant 6**

*"The success of the PHD depends on the results received, which is a challenge if I can't produce results due to lack of chemicals. There was no way I could afford that kind of money, I had to get bursary from somewhere. Interviewee: Yes it would be, for that would also need the support of the department in terms of resources research facilities laboratories equipment that we have at present."*

**Participant 4**

*"There is a lot of pressure from my director and my line-manager to perform and to get my job done. I would like more support from them instead of pressure. I think the main thing was that I need more support from my line manager, supervisor and procurement. I would appreciate support from Human Resources in this case that we will work together to see if there are legitimate reasons why I did not finish on time and get an extension for another period. That will relieve a lot of stress on my side. Also I'm a bit worried about my work which needs to be done."*

**Participant 7**

*“Let’s say you have assignment that is due tomorrow or a presentation that you must do. So the presentation, first you don’t have the resources at home like computers and internet so you must also do it here at work in between your work day.”*

**Participant 10**

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*“The reason why I am doing it is because I don’t get support. Sitting there on different directorate, doing what you are doing, not gaining the experience, even when you go to people you think are relevant to what you are doing at school. They always tell you that we don’t have time, come back on certain times because I am busy with my work so you don’t get that support, fully support.”*

**Participant 11**

*“I think HR can do something as well since we are using them to study which is the bursary instead of giving just the bursary and just sit back and on the first quarter they are waiting for the results without even knowing how you are coping at work, what are the challenges and what makes you fail because most of the people that fail don’t even bring the results.”*

**Participant 10**

*“I am paying extra for the tutors on Saturdays. Like we have people from UWC that are tutoring us, so if you can get people, I think that will help. I think the motivation first from you guys. Acknowledgement from you guys. It was years back when we have been called to say, ok, you completed your diploma, well done and all that. Ok, it was only after you have completed or acknowledge that ok, so and so is doing this but now you can do it better.”*

**Participant 11**

*“Studying is strenuous on its own coupled with family responsibility and work it is another thing. All supervisors support is critical, that they understand that their subordinates are studying and encourage them. Maybe the department needs to equip the supervisors in that area. To say the department is sending this number*

*of bursary beneficiaries and they need your full support in any way possible. Access of information should not be interfered with."*

**Participant 1**

*"It is limited. I will suggest that even though there is a bursary that is awarded to us, at least within the department there are people who are already graduates from the courses that we have seen who experts are. And select some of the employees to be tutors during the same specific time owed to us in terms of understanding other things."*

**Participant 12**

*"Okay, in some of the institutions, they require that a student must have a device which is tablet or laptop or whatever that is helping and be registered on the internet, and believe me, some of us in our levels if you are not at work, you don't have access to internet. So if you are a bursary holder and you don't have access to internet like UNISA has required us to submit online, so if you don't have means that means it's the same as if you have to sit here in the office after hours and do your school work you see. The tutors can be very helpful. Internet connection is also important."*

**Participant 3**

*"I would say I am not sure if it was three years ago where the policy has been amended and where the department is actually now meeting people half way you know which is actually now better. To me that's a positive where people with this 50/50 basis, they can use some of their leave to study, you know or to attend classes or to have conferences, teleconferences."*

**Participant 13**

*“For example if maybe the department call the lecturers that they can talk to so that they can assist us. Or avail them if we’ve got challenges or problems, they can assist us with those problems, so that we can have a clear understanding of what we are doing. The only thing I can say is they can help us with the tutors. With the tutors it is easy because you can speak or talk to the tutor there, the full. So okay I have a problem with this type of question. I don’t understand and I need a clear understanding of that one so you can clear it or email it, so there’s way.”*

**Participant 14**

*“There are quite a lot of people who are qualified say in your department but when you approach these people for help they are not receptive or willing to help you to reach their level. Willingness to mentor others is lacking. The fact that one doesn’t have qualified persons to mentor you is a challenge for most people though you do get people who pass regardless of which it could be way better with some guidance.”*

**Participant 15**

*“Skills development department should approach the managers and inform them of their expectations in terms of assistance they need the bursary holders to get. Engaging the bursary beneficiaries themselves and finding out where they will need help also and in-turn informing the directors/managers or superiors of such in order to create some kind of working relations between the two parties for the enrichment of the department. This will also improve ownership from the bursary beneficiaries when they know that they need to answer to their heads and they are openly involved by the superiors.”*

**Participant 5**

*“You will find out that there are more than One person doing the same program in a department and it will help to get everyone to get connected and liaise with each other on the challenges they are facing and the solution thereof. Also the Skills*

*department needs to get involved and do a follow-up on these beneficiaries.”*

***Participant 14***

*“I knew what I wanted and why I wanted it, so I pushed. I think that’s the reason or the motive that I had behind for doing this is what kept me going when the road was steeper, otherwise it wasn’t easy but because I knew why I wanted this, so I kept pushing until. They need to be disciplined, they need to learn to balance, I mean you are here until 4 or 5, when you get home you have your you know, but out of that busy schedule, you have to make time even if it’s just an hour every day.”*

***Participant 8***

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This theme proves that support is as important as the results expected. Almost every participant reported experience or experiencing lack of support from Fisheries branch. Beneficiaries requested for support ranging from resources and mentorship. They perceive as being just thrown into the programme to fend for themselves. Some participants even requested for more leave days during examination days, an aspect they feel is being ignored by the funder. None of the presented literature reported on this. However, a study by Applebaum and Reichart (1998) looked at the learning characteristics of an organisation. They reported that a staff development strategy can be effective depending on the formalisation of communication channels that may enhance support.

#### **4.3.4 Theme 7: Personal attributes**

Although participants reported on a range of experiences and perceptions, it emerged that personal attributes are vital in the process of skills development. Determination and sacrifices of participants seem to play a big role on the impact of skills development. Attributes such as attitude, values and beliefs toward being a

beneficiary of skills development program emerged strongly in this study. The following participant 1 reported that,

*“I have now, I have sacrificed my Saturdays and I actually come to the office and I stay there, a normal working day, totally dedicated to my studies. It’s a quiet environment and I thank the department that there is such a space that I can utilise.”*

This shows dedication towards studies. The following quotes illustrate some of the responds from participants;

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*“What was difficult is to go in to work. Because sometime you are tired and a, maybe sometimes you didn’t have a good day at work, challenges then after that you go to school and concentrate so it was not easy. Dedication, as I’ve said that it was not easy but I’ve told myself that I have to work hard so that I can finish but it was not easy so studying, preparing I think that’s all that helped me and asking assistance from other people who, where I don’t understand, so it makes it easier at least.”*

**Participant 3**

*“I have a plan and I had a plan previously as well just because of certain situations that came my way, it was unstoppable, I couldn’t actually follow through but my plan is simple once again. I want to...like I was thinking to myself taking 3 subjects for this year or next year when I start if I do get the bursary and yeah, like 3 subjects a week.”*

**Participant 5**

*“It was a lot to do; it was a lot of work. I think it was a work load and then how you are going to class for another load that you are coming from but you must be strong and then you must be, though you encounter all those difficulties you must be string and you must be dedicated. I think its dedication and commitment.”*

**Participant 4**

*“There is a discouragement from other people, other people they told me that you are old why are you going to school, why are you going to school, what are you going to do about school? There are those things but as I said before, you must know what you want and this thing is on your part so there are things, one is that dedication is very important because there is discouragement. You must be disciplined because there is nothing easy on this world so everything you must know what you want, so I can say because it goes to dedication.”*

**Participant 6**

*“First it depends on the person, if the person wants to pass because if I look at someone...one of these people like there is one that has been in this and to me it's taking too long. I know the one person, she is prepared, she goes to classes to actually assist ensuring to pass but I would actually say it actually depends on the person really.”*

**Participant 7**

*“If I look at where for our official search period like they may be away at sea or on operations but what some of these guys do is they...but I will also say, while they are at sea or operations and they have free time they can also use that free time to go through their books and do whatever, but it comes back to planning.”*

**Participant 9**

*“Since I have my personal life outside work I decided to cut back on so many things in order to prepare myself for study. Under normal circumstances after hours I do my own things and how can I fit in this programme I want to study. I had to let go most of my social activities which were not productive and try to replace it with something that will be beneficiary to my studies and will show at the end of the year. When I concluded that I actually have time that will be beneficiary to me thus when I started on my programme. One major thing that I did was to start in June to*



*implement my strategy as if I was already studying. I started buying newspapers for example City Press and reading the articles that were relevant to my programme. I had to be prepared myself mentally."*

**Participant 10**

*"I think in terms of improving the programme the government need to be careful when it comes to selecting people who want to study. Having motivated so many people to study and those who took it are doing well. The department needs to select courses which are relevant to that particular section. So that whosoever chooses that course is aware of the direction the department is going and for me to get there I need to study this kind of courses. Also people are not sure what entails what. They come with an accounting degree for instance applying for a Nature Conservation Department. As you study you need to do more research in studies and that proves to be a challenge if it is got nothing to do with your line of work."*

**Participant 11**

*"If I chose to ignore what is happening at work then I would be performing well on the other side. Both the work load and pressure of academics on the other side. That was the problem that I was having and I believe if I have means, I would have not registered with UNISA because at least if you go to class, it is different whereby you get the book and you read on your own and when you try to contact the lecturer or whatever, you get late response. So it is not as quick as the lecturer that is in front of you at that specific time. And I wouldn't say much about beneficiaries who are studying with CPUT. I have no experience of how are all their difficulties because they have to go to class."*

**Participant 12**

*"In my personal, I in May I had some events that happened, I am a divorcee, I stay alone with my children, and they were in primary school and I had all that demands*

*and what happened is that the lady that was looking after my children, ah, she just didn't return, and it was getting close to the time I was about to write exams as well I had assignments due and what happened, I actually fell behind on my assignments and you know I couldn't, I couldn't catch up and err, but I did go and write the exams, I did try my best, I studied, but because of the handing in of my assignments which were late, I did not have such a good mark, semester mark."*

**Participant 13**

*"We have to prioritise our work. Because I have the bursary because I am working for the department, if it wasn't for my work I would not..... by sticking to all the deadlines, by committing myself, by trying to make the time. With my own pace, that's the problem. I think that we've got different challenges, so each and every one must come forward. So to assist with the department, so we must work all of us our different challenges and then combine them and how they can get from that."*

**Participant 14**

*"Also for the bursary holders to be realistic about the fact that we are working and it's up to us to put extra effort in order for one to finish what they studied. Also bearing in mind that they are using tax payer's monies even if they will have to pay it back they should be more honourable for their own progress."*

**Participant 15**

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It is evident that personal attributes such as values, beliefs and character cannot be ignored when conducting a staff development programme. Participants in this study clearly showed that they bring their persona in every aspect of being involved in tertiary education. Some can handle pressure that comes with the programme while others struggle. All the previously presented themes emerged because of how

participants differ when it comes to attributes. Although the environmental factors also play a big role on how beneficiaries experience and perceive the impact of bursary funding, personality also plays a part. Research also reported significant impacts of demographic variables on staff development strategies. For example, language (Albertyn, Kapp & Bitzer, 2008; Alwasilah, 1991; Marnewick & Lourens, 2010); and gender (Humble, Solomon, Allen, Blaisure & Johnson, 2006; Manathunga, 2005). These were the most prevalent demographic issues identified. With regard to gender, female bursary beneficiaries often feel pressured to put on a front and maintain a strong facade lest they be perceived as soft or weak (Lee, 2008; Manathunga, 2005). Most of female participants reported having similar experiences. Gender on its own was found to negatively affect completion of a programme.

#### **4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presented integrated results and discussion in which the findings of the study were reported relative to the literature reviewed and the methodology employed. The two categories of 'personal factors' and 'organisational factors' were derived from thematic analysis approach that was presented with illustrative quotes. Some of the major themes that were derived from quotes include 'impact of staff development' and 'support and motivation'. Each theme was also substantiated with the literature reviewed, as well as the social constructionist framework. Results from this study leads to the next Chapter Five where recommendations are made to all those who are involved in human resources development and for future studies.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

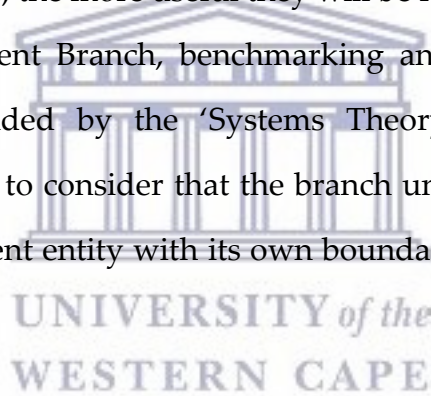
#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The present study addresses an important aspect for the development of public service employees in South Africa. There is a growing need to understand ways in which government departments can develop its workforce and increase their productivity. It is during and after a staff development programme that employees transfer of skills that can benefit the organisation and themselves takes place. It was found that description of perceptions and experiences of participants varied depending on their different personalities, demographic characteristics and level or stage of studying and forms of support. The review of literature explicated the need to explore staff development process in other areas including the public sector. This public service sector still seems to be lagging behind in staff development strategies as compared to the private sector.

The National Development Plan 2030 stressed the need to assist public service staff with easing up the financial burden of paying for their studies while at the same time targeting an improved and quality performance by the staff after completion of their studies and having acquired new skills, which will also ultimately result in increased productivity, meaning a good 'Return-On-Investment' for the organisation. The purpose of the present study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of those employees who are benefiting and those that have benefited from bursary assistance programmes.

The results suggest that the impact of staff development was embedded in social contexts and that the meaning assigned to the experience and perception of the

beneficiary was informed by a complex collection of historical, psychological and demographic factors. Since improving bursary granting and studies success is an important issue now and in the years to come for the Fisheries Management Branch, the Public Service as it is for other organisations, coordinated efforts should be to collect and monitor completion, drop-out and time-to-degree for staff members who are supported through different Bursary Programmes. These indicators are useful for informing policy-making, benchmarking higher education institutions and informing student choice. It makes sense to calculate indicators based on data that refers to one particular type (i.e. level) of degree (say, bachelor, master, professional), because publishing an overall rate for the system as a whole is a rather heroic exercise, given the diversity in programmes, institutions and students. The more disaggregated the study success indicators are, the more useful they will be for informing policymaking in the Fisheries Management Branch, benchmarking and informing (prospective) bursary beneficiaries. Guided by the 'Systems Theory' it is also vital, when implementing suggestions, to consider that the branch under study is a system that must be viewed as a coherent entity with its own boundaries including external and internal elements.



Though it assisted the staff members in the Fisheries Management Branch not to worry much about the funding of their studies, financial support through the Bursary Programme did not lead to overwhelming study success and to the intended effect. Secondly, the risk perception of bursary beneficiaries (students) is important when it comes to student failure and paying back the money granted. Further, it should be considered that staff members' behaviour is not primarily influenced by financial incentives or characteristics of the organisation of higher education. Often issues beyond the scope of the bursary programme policies – for example beneficiaries' personal situations – account for non-completion. Performance-based funding becomes more effective when goals are clear and feasible, the amount related to study success is significant and performance is measurable. When it comes to information

of the Bursary Programme policy, this study finds that only providing information on study programmes is too little to let staff make deliberate study choices. Providing data on the performance of institutions and later careers of graduates enrich the information and give students <sup>1</sup> more decision criteria. Testing interests and competences help students to better orient themselves. Nonetheless, information provided should be clear and give clear guidance as the higher education landscape has become increasingly complex and might be difficult to decipher for prospective bursary recipients.

It is therefore recommended that the Fisheries Management Branch's Staff Development policy which can help to address staff's needs be reviewed and aligned accordingly. Short programmes may be a chance for beneficiaries who are interested in a more vocationally oriented higher education without being "locked in" too long into the Bursary Programme. Flexible educational pathways give staff the possibility to gear their study programme according to their interests. Matching beneficiaries and study programmes before entering higher education is an effective mechanism to get staff to register for the right programmes. Matching instruments, however, need to be able to find the best match between programme and student. Continuous assessment allows students to assess their competences and probability to complete their degree successfully. Career advice has been identified and it is suggested to form part of the Staff Development Policy as it must be combined with the requirement for the Fisheries Management Branch to counsel beneficiaries adequately about their programmes and study progress in conjunction with the Institutions of Higher Learning. This allows them to make deliberate choices where and what they would like to achieve with their qualifications.

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<sup>1</sup> In this study, bursary beneficiaries are also referred to as students since they were enrolled at various tertiary institutions.

Government can consider developing national policy designs that reflect a mix of financial, informational and organisational policy instruments and address both staff members who are bursary recipients and higher education institutions. The policy instruments need to support each other, for example more flexible educational pathways need clear rules for the recognition of previous learning and study achievements. This enable institutions of higher learning and the Fisheries Management Branch monitor pathways of individual bursary beneficiaries to identify bursary recipients at risk of dropout. This also helps them understand specific patterns underlying dropout and completion and will inform future policy-making.

As most of the studies supported by the bursary programme in the Fisheries Management Branch are of more technical and specialised nature, the recommendation will be to have a closer working relationship and re-activate and revise the existing Memorandums of Understandings (MoUs) with the Institutions of Higher Learning to be fully involved in the development of curriculums and offering of learner support services to accommodate the full-time workers. The MoUs should fully cover the career counselling, matching of applicants' fields of studies to the Branch's objectives, orientation programme for the selected recipients which will include the time management training, studying skills, teaching and learning activities, continuous progress assessment of recipients on the programme, tutorials, mentoring and coaching, and basic report writing course.

The Fisheries Management Branch can consider publishing key organisational indicators on study success on their website to assist future beneficiaries in making the right study choices as well as to raise and sustain institutional awareness of study success. Organisational responsibility for study success can also include measures and facilities like 24hours operating library to assist staff in their learning process, assessment methods and feedback mechanisms. The Fisheries Management Branch can benefit from institutional research on the specific patterns underlying dropout and

completion, this will also enables them to formulate adequate measures to address study success within their own context, such as staff development, administrative routines, support structures, and career services.

## 5.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Staff development is seen as a major drive towards capacitating of employees thereby contributing to the development of economy. This study attempted to explore perceptions and experiences of Fisheries branch employees on the impact of bursary funding programme as a form of staff development. It was found that the nature of the research supervision and characteristics of the supervisor were motivational tools towards internalisation process. Furthermore, the findings of the study can be useful to stakeholders at institutional, policy and governmental level in that it underscores the dynamic nature of developing or capacitating employees through staff development.

This study could also contribute to intervention efforts by those interested in staff development in South Africa. Policy makers in government can also benefit from the findings of this study, especially the information of different attributes among beneficiaries. Policies may require to be streamlined according to each department's characteristics and staff expectations. The present study gives support to challenging issues in the public sector as discussed in *Chapter Two*, particularly the literacy levels of public service employees and excellent staff development strategies. It also focuses attention on the relational aspects of staff development. The findings of this study can also contribute to the development of theories fit for the South African context. There is a lack of published studies focusing on human resources development in the public sector. Since there are more than a million public service employees in this country, the practice of staff development can be enhanced.



### 5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A limitation of the study occurred during the data collection process in that potential participants were scattered around the country and some were offshore in the sea so had to wait for their availability. In addition, it was difficult to locate some of the potential participants because the identified department did not have an updated list of all beneficiaries. The identified department also allowed interviews to be conducted within 30 minutes each. Maybe could have encouraged participants for more information.

All interviews were also conducted at the premise of Fisheries department considering limited time available. Although some participants were willing to be interviewed somewhere else, they could not because of the location of the branch. This might have influenced the amount and nature of data collected. More importantly it impacted the extent to which potential participants were willing to participate in the study.

As transcribing took place, it was clear that participants were touching on several issues or experiences in one question, rendering the analysis process quite challenging. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed for greater flexibility in interviewing and responding. This in turn was taxing on the skill level of the researcher. Balancing the desired content and aims of the study with the fluid and dynamic process of reflection proved to be a challenge. A more structured schedule of questions might have improved the fidelity to the aims of the study and eased the analysis process. Thus the study could not report on all perceptions and experiences equally or separately. Themes seem to be overlapping on each other thereby making it difficult to separate information.

## 5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Regardless of some of the challenges occurring during the research, the present study identified pertinent staff development issues which can be addressed in future research. Although some of the experiences and perceptions of the participants were expected, they recognised the impact of bursary funding in developing them and the Fisheries branch. Interventions strategies promoting healthy and viable staff development processes could assist in fast tracking capacitating of the much required public service employees. Some of these interventions may be partnerships within institutions and technical organisations, mentorship and coaching within the organisation and across organisations, and internal training for staff within its own agricultural schools. Even so, modes and approaches will differ, adding complexity to the training and development mix.

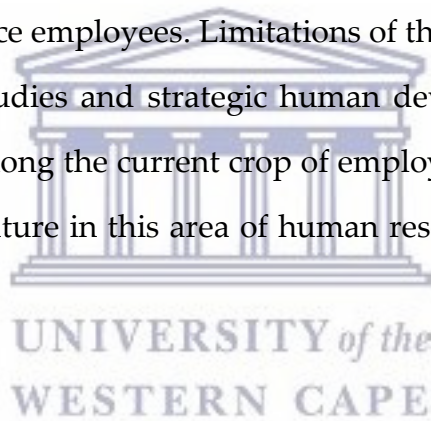
The analysis has discovered that while there are common areas of scarce skills across branches, each branch has its own profile of scarce and critical skills, and each branch has a particular understanding about the manner in which scarce and critical skills are managed. It is necessary to develop a comprehensive approach to the management of scarce and critical skills where each branch participates in an integrated departmental programme for the management of scarce and critical skills.

Perhaps a quantitative study could reveal whether the perceptions and experiences of my participants are common to other government departments. Future research should be conducted on other departments across South Africa. The impact of factors influencing effectiveness of staff development must also be explored. Additionally, participants described better communication and mentorship as a factor which could enhance staff development. Most participants believed that if they are given enough support by the Fisheries branch, they can apply their skills with ease. With more capacitated employees, development in the public service sector can be elevated.

There is very little research about effective policies and interventions. More research is needed to evaluate interventions and develop understanding of effective practice. More national data about who enters higher education with the bursary grant assistance provided and their outcomes is required to further develop this area of analysis.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

This section provided conclusion of this current study; linking all aspects involved in the study. Implications of the study were also presented including recommendations for future studies and the public sector. Interventions strategies promoting healthy and viable staff development processes could assist in fast tracking capacitating of the much required public service employees. Limitations of this study were noted. It was also evident that future studies and strategic human development plans must not ignore low literate rates among the current crop of employees. It was concluded that there is still dearth of literature in this area of human resources development in the public sector.



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