

## **CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS**

### **5.1 QUALITATIVE NARRATIVE**

As indicated in Chapter Two, this chapter presents a summary of the results of the primary data collected through interviews and the distribution of a structured open-ended questionnaire. The respondents were requested to complete the questionnaires which were e-mailed or faxed to them, after they had confirmed their willingness to participate. In other instances, telephonic or face-to-face interviews were used in order to complete the questionnaires. Most of the follow-ups, to clarify some of the emailed or faxed responses, were undertaken through telephonic discussions. A sample of 25 targeted people was able to provide their responses through completion of the questionnaire. The results were then collected and verified with all the respondents over a period of four months, from August to December 2005.

### **5.2 SUMMARY OF PURPOSE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The questionnaires were primarily used to gather substantive information on the views of diplomats with regard to the relevance of the FSI training programmes and their ability to implement South Africa's foreign policy in the global context. It was not intended to serve as an opinion poll for determining whether the FSI is necessary or not, nor was it an evaluation of the efficiency of the DFA in its implementation of South Africa's foreign policy. The selection of interviewees was designed to achieve a random or representative sample. The ethnography research methodology used provides an exploratory look at the views of the targeted group of South African diplomats who are actively involved in the implementation of their country's foreign policy diplomacy.

## 5.3 QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

### Part One: Personal Information

#### 1. Number of Years of Service in the DFA

The majority of respondents indicated that they had been working for the DFA for more than seven years.

#### 2. Position currently occupied by respondents

Forty-four percent (44%) of the respondents reported that they are at the level of Assistant Director, at mission First Secretary. Thirty-two percent (32%) indicated that they are at the level of Deputy Director, at mission Counsellor. Twenty-four percent (24%) indicated that they are at the level of Senior Administration Officer or lower, at mission Second Secretary, Third Secretary or Attaché.

The majority of respondents indicated that their work included political, economic, trade, tourism and investment promotion aspects.

#### 3. Number of postings

All the respondents indicated that they had been posted more than once. Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents indicated that they had been posted more than once and were now in their second posting, or back at head office. Forty percent (40%) of the respondents indicated that they had already completed their second posting, and are in their third posting or back at head office and providing support to the work of various missions abroad.

It became clear when talking to respondents on this question that the majority of them joined the DFA after the first democratic elections in 1994. This provides a clear indication that most of them understood the foreign policy positions of government.

#### **4. Last posting date**

The majority of respondents (84%) were still at posting and only sixteen percent (16%) were back at the DFA head office and providing support and coordinating mission work from the desk (offices responsible to coordinate and facilitate mission-head office communication and execution of activities).

#### **5. Highest educational qualifications**

All respondents indicated that they at least have one junior university degree. Twenty-eight percent (28%) indicated that they have more than one university degree.

### **Part Two: Organizational Information**

#### **6. The DFA Branch of the respondent**

Thirty-two percent (32%) of the respondents interviewed were from the Asia and Middle East Branch, sixteen percent (16%) were from the Europe Branch, twelve percent (12%) were from the Americas and Caribbean Branch, twenty four percent (24%) were from the Africa Branch, twelve percent (12%) were from the Multilateral Branch and four percent (4%) was from the Africa Multilateral Branch.

The participation of the researcher at the WTO meeting in Hong Kong in December 2005 provided an opportunity to interview targeted respondents who

are part of the study and who are working as South African representatives based at multilateral organisations.

## **7. Understanding of Branch objective in relation to South Africa foreign policy objectives**

Seventy-two percent (72%) of the respondents, which is a majority, knew that their Branch's objectives were the same as those underpinning South African foreign policy objectives and were stipulated in the DFA Strategic Plan. Twenty percent (20%) of the respondents pronounced mission business plan objectives as Branch's objectives in relation to South Africa's foreign policy objectives. Only eight percent (8%) respondents did not know what exactly constituted both the Branch objectives and the principles that underpin the DFA foreign policy objectives.

Respondents in the Administration Support Sections and those at lower levels, for example, third secretary or attachés seemed not to care about understanding what informs the core business of the mission. They saw their responsibility at the mission as the provision of administrative support, asset management, financial management and local human resource management rather the actual implementation of country's foreign policy objectives.

### **Sample Comments:**

- *'The Branch is responsible for monitoring the political, economic and social relations between South Africa and the countries that fall under the rubric of the Asian Branch'.*
- *'In addition, the Branch also advises our political leadership on the best policy approach to the US and how we can encourage the US to support our national foreign policy priorities'.*

- *'To establish, enhance and maintain greater political ties/relations with the People's Republic of China in a way that serves our national selfish interests'.*
- *'Pursue international relations of South Africa with the EU and Americas on matters that relate to national interests, political relations, development partnership, trade relations and economic dialogue between the North and South. Our overall approach is developmental'.*
- *'The attainment of peace and economic development in Africa remains the pillar that holds South African foreign policy and our Branch is mandated to ensure that this objective is realized in support of the overall foreign policy objectives'.*
- *'Multilateral organisations have become the centre of global deliberations in an attempt to influence scope and nature of the new global order. Developing countries still find themselves one way or another marginalized through this process and our country remains in the frontline and is advocating for the reform of these organisation to give developing countries a bigger say and that is in short what our Branch objectives are all about'.*

## **8. Number of missions in the Branch**

The majority of the Branches that the respondents were drawn from have more than 15 missions and only the Branches responsible for Multilateral work have less than that. Given the limited number of multilateral missions, South Africa has continued to increase the number of bilateral missions across the world in order to be in a better position to influence international matters for the realization of the country's foreign policy interests.

## 9. Progress in the implementation of foreign policy objectives by the branch

The majority of the respondents were positive about the impact their various branches have made in the implementation of South African foreign policy given the status that South Africa is enjoying in various countries and intergovernmental organizations since the first democratic elections in 1994. There was also optimism that, given the current state of affairs, the country will still achieve more as it continues to make inroads in international affairs, given the support it enjoys from important players in international affairs. A lack of human resources was singled out by the majority of the respondents as an element that has become a major constraint on making more progress in the implementation of South African foreign policy objectives.

### Sample Comments:

- *'To the extent, the Branch has made strides and is building on the current achievements to do much more in the future'.*
- *'Partly yes we are doing pretty well, our only major constraint now is relevant human resources to broaden the current achievements because the conditions are still good for us. Many of the countries that falls under our Branch are very supportive of our efforts because of our hard work '.*
- *'In many ways. In the DFA, the approach embraced in designing Mission Business Plans and KPA's find their genesis in Branch Business Plans, Branch Business Plans and KPA's are part of the DFA's strategic plan to implement South Africa foreign policy'.*
- *'Although the Branch has wherever possible endeavoured to progress in the implementation of South Africa foreign policy, it still suffers from a severe lack of capacity and human resources'.*

- *'Matters of foreign policy are very peculiar and not easy to measure. The Branch successfully ensured that EU supported our stand at the WSSD, AU, NEPAD initiatives, and at the G8 meeting for financial support. This and other many issues that cannot be listed here show that the mission and Branch are successful in executing their mandate'.*

## **10. Mission's activities**

The majority (72%) of respondents outlined the basic activities that all missions undertake to promote South Africa's national interests, such as hosting promotions for trade, peace making, investment and tourism. The majority of the respondents singled out South Africa's effort as a major peace-maker as unprecedented not only in Africa but on other continents and these efforts have earned the country's diplomats a lot of envy and respect among their peers.

### **Sample Comments:**

- *'The mission is primarily a support mechanism for our foreign policy. The missions also assume an advisory role when necessary and also execute instruction from head office in the country of assignment'.*
- *'Articulation of South African policies and priorities. Advancement of South Africa's interest. Cultivation of sound relations is one of the many functions that are undertaken by missions'.*
- *'The mission further assists and facilitates matters on behalf of visiting South African delegations to our jurisdiction ensuring that the necessary follow-up work is done to ensure the maximum benefit is derived from the mission's establishment and delegations' visit respectively'.*
- *'Our mission is sometime expected to undertake mediation activities in conflict resolution were the warring parties see us as an independent interlocutor and we have always prevailed in such situations given our high*

*moral ground and the ability of our leaders to build peace bridges where they never existed’.*

- *‘Furthermore the mission has organized and hosted a number of large events to highlight the opportunities and possibilities which South Africa had to offer’.*
- *‘The mission is currently promoting investments, trade and economic development, building bilateral relations on the political and social front, and peace and security in Africa. Peace and security and economic development had eluded the rest of Africa in the past century and we are on the mission to correct that through diplomacy and we dare not fail the people of Africa because that will also result with our own failure’.*
- *‘Overseeing multilateral engagements with the EU on issues that relate to South Africa’s interests. Lobbying and shaping policy trends towards Africa through forums of Africa, SACU and SADC Ambassadors’.*

## **11. Mission capacity to implement South Africa foreign policy**

The majority (84%) of respondents felt strongly that their missions do not have the capacity to fully implement their various business plans and thus contributing to the realization of South Africa’s foreign policy objectives. Most of them cited the lack of relevant skills required for diplomatic activities. Few cited financial constraints as a prohibiting factor for the DFA to fill all vacant posts at various critical missions. Another issue raised by most respondents was the lack of leadership skills by the head of mission (Ambassadors) to lead and manage the execution of the mission’s mandate under limited capacity. Most respondents indicated that it is time now that the appointment of Ambassadors also takes into consideration the requirements of the responsibilities that they are expected to undertake in promoting the national interests.



### Sample Comments:

- *'More often we are forced to downscale our activities. Human resources seem inadequate and further compounded by the level of understanding of issues involved in executing our mandate'.*
- *'Definitely, No. The mission currently only has one line function official to cover all issues that related to diplomatic work that you can think about'.*
- *'Due to lack of a number of officials with relevant skills for posting, half-cooked officials are sent to missions, this has a negative impact on the level of operation of our mission'.*
- *'Yes, to a certain extent, not really enough. Need more people with expert knowledge in areas like health, education, arts and culture, media, etcetera.'*
- *'The times when Ambassadors were appointed to represent South Africa at cocktails and golf courses are over. Today an Ambassador is expected to act like a Chief Executive Officer of the mission who executes the mission strategy with very very limited capacity to achieve great things for their South Africa and outpace their sluggish counterparts'.*
- *'Maintaining a mission is a very expensive exercise for South Africa so every body counts from Ambassadors to attachés, everyone has to contribute to the productive work of the mission'.*

## 12. Rating of Mission performance between 1 and 5

Almost all (92%) the respondents gave their mission a three out of five when it came to performance. The majority of respondents indicated that given the excellent profile South Africa has in many host countries, their various missions have also been accorded respect by both the host government and missions of various countries and that enhanced their performance. The respondents also

indicated that this success has been made possible by the positive work of the former President Nelson Mandela and now President Thabo Mbeki on international relations matters. Given this, the majority of the respondents felt that in order to sustain the status accorded to the country in international affairs, South Africa must build the necessary capacity to continue playing a leadership and constructive role in bilateral and multilateral relations.

### **Sample Comments:**

- *'I will go for a three. Yet it would have been much better to adequately fund the mission for more profiling at other levels'.*
- *'Without doubt we are a great country outside here because of the stature accorded to our political leadership. It makes one feel very good, and the challenge is to maintain this position as long as we can through our positive contribution to world prosperity, peace and security. I give our self a three'.*
- *'However, in order to achieve the most from the mission to the greatest benefit of South Africa, the number of resources must be drastically increased. The rating for the mission would be 3'.*
- *'We have achieved well beyond our capabilities. I go for 4'.*
- *'A three will be a good reflection because I am convinced that we still have a lot of potential to do better than this '.*

### **13. If Mission performance is 3 or below between 1 and 5, what remedies are recommended to ensure that the Mission's improves?**

The majority (76%) of the respondents felt that in order for their missions to improve performance there is a need for vacant positions to be filled. Other institutional resources, such as material and financial resources, were also indicated as crucial to the ability of missions to operate efficiently. There was also

a feeling by a minority (24%) of respondents that a mission's organisational structure and capacity allocation needs to be flexible enough to ensure proper acquisition of the relevant capacities. Relevant FSI training and enough orientation once posted to a mission was also cited by the majority (84%) as impacting negatively on the performance of missions.

### **Sample Comments:**

- *'To maintain this level of competency and rate of delivery, we need more resources – human, material, financial and general support'.*
- *'The DFA would need to fill vacant posts to ensure that mission operate to the maximum'.*
- *'The reason for 3 is that so much additional work promotion could be done to market/present South Africa to the world's largest market'.*
- *'Lack of people and cultural management skills, old order mission structures seriously impacts on the performance of missions'.*
- *Owing to the lack of the relevant capacities for posting to various missions, officials are just rushed through training and half cooked they are then posted without any proper orientation through the desk. When they arrive at missions capacity constraints does not allow proper orientation and this result with years of underperformance'.*
- *'Our mission need a head of mission or deputy head of mission who really understands challenges encountered in securing trade and investment in the host country. Someone who will be more strategic to look at the market and identify opportunities and provide leadership for the execution of a strategy (mission business plan) and we will definitely do better than this.'*
- *'Mission structures which are not flexible enough to accommodate some of the capacity challenges that missions experience when executing their mandates, there is a need to move away from generic to robust structures that support the need of missions in the execution of their mandate'.*

#### 14. The DFA human resources policies' impact to the realization of its mandate

The majority (76% of respondents indicated that the DFA has the appropriate policies relating to human resource management that will in the long-term build the relevant capacity to implement South Africa's foreign policy. Most respondents also indicated that the DFA policies were correct to build capacity and also to ensure that South African representatives abroad reflect the demographics of its population. A minority (40%) of respondents felt that despite the fact that the DFA have good HR policies, the main challenge was the capacity to implement these policies to achieve the desired objective.

##### Sample Comments:

- *'The thinking behind the policies, i.e. representativity, gender sensitivity, and so on, are sure to impact on the future pool of diplomats. It is a new orientation for a new breed of people'.*
- *'In the light of Globalisation process, the DFA is increasingly forced to seek out the best skills and expertise without compromising its own longer-term strategy of equity'.*
- *'Although I agree that a very careful and specific/detailed recruitment policy is required, in order to ensure that the correct person is chosen for the job, the process in my view is far too slow'.*
- *'They are somewhat flawed in the sense that the new recruits have been recruited to top positions, for example, Assistant Directors/Deputy Directors, without relevant experience and could not perform in the new task'.*
- *'Integration was a problem and current HR policies have failed to address the challenge. The old order is still in charge and this frustrates people with experience and qualifications. Nonetheless the DFA can be*

*applauded for making some efforts to address some of the problem. Leadership and capacity is lacking in the implementation of some of the current HR policies’.*

- *‘There is an urgent need to match appointments with job requirements and that is how the application of these HR policies is failing. Currently individuals who complete the training are just sent to countries with cultures that their personality or believes/religion are different from their own. This then hampers the ability of these individuals to effectively perform their function, they just become lame ducks for their four years of posting because of their inability to break the cultural barriers.’*

### **Part Three: Foreign Service Training**

#### **15. Attendance of the FSI training programme**

All the respondents indicated that they have attended the FSI training programme. What was evident was that the periods of attendance and the length of the training programme differed significantly. Some (28%) indicated that their training programme took three months, some (40%) six months, some (28%) nine months and (4%) ten months.

The difference in the length of training indicates that the FSI was offering training when there was a massive demand for officials to be posted as new missions were opened and at the same time the FSI was also undergoing re-orientation of the structure and organization of training and curriculum.

#### **16. Year of attendance of the FSI training**

The respondents indicated that they attended the FSI training programme in the following years and periods:

- 1995 for 3 months
- 1996 for 6 months
- 2000 for 9 months
- 2002 for 10 months

## 17. Difficulty of the training programme

All respondents indicated that the training was not difficult and felt strongly that it was very simple. The respondents expressed the view that since the training was work-related and despite the fact that they had no diplomatic experience, their academic background prepared them more for the diplomatic work than the FSI training. The conclusion was that the training was simple may be informed by the practical nature of the training and the environment.

### Sample Comments:

- *'80% of the modules was like a refresher course for most of us because some of the subjects presented we dealt with at tertiary level in detail'.*
- *'Not really. Albeit quite challenging'.*
- *'No, the training programme proved boring and of little use as I had been on the desk for three years prior to training and had at that time already dealt with all aspect of issues that cadet were exposed to at training'.*
- *'Simple but challenging because I had a lot of theoretical knowledge and little practical experience in the application of that theory so the training assisted in bridging this gap'.*
- *'Very necessary because despite my academic background in political science and international relations, diplomatic techniques were new to me and were really valuable in my new posting'.*

## 18. Role of educational background at training

All the respondents indicated that their educational background played a greater role in their evaluation of the training. The majority (84%) of the respondents felt that their educational background, rather than the training programme, gave them a better understanding of issues at stake in international relations and the capacity countries develop to effectively operate in the management of both bilateral and multilateral relations. The majority (64%) of respondents have done political science and international relations courses during their undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

### Sample Comments:

- *'Yes it did and apart from that one's interest in international relations came handy'.*
- *'Yes (perhaps). It is my feeling that besides education it is important to consider a persons mind set and his/her ability to adapt to the conditions around them (e.g. think on their feet)'.*
- *'My academic studies were in political science and international relations so the workings of the global order are something that I am always following with interest. The class discussions at the FSI more or less enriched my experiences but there was nothing new.'*
- *'The good thing about the training its aspect of orientation. It is an excellent orientation for someone who is new in government and the government foreign relations activities to supplement their academic background'.*
- *'The training is excellent because it opens one's eyes about the reality and the small things that matters in diplomatic activities. My academic studies provided me with the basis that forms international relations and the'*

*training provided me with major issues that inform South African foreign policy and its implementation.*

## **19. Relevance of the training to the job**

All respondents indicated that the training was relevant in that it introduced them to the world of diplomacy and the art of diplomacy. The majority felt that this created more interest, for them, in the profession and they started to read more on matters related to diplomacy to enrich their knowledge and perfect their diplomatic skills in areas where training was not provided. A minority of respondents felt that the training did not provide them with the relevant skills they require to do their jobs efficiently and effectively. There is an indication by the minority of the respondents that there was not enough orientation to apply what was learned and to see what works or does not work in a given environment. The current generic approach to training is failing to create relevant specialized capacities that are essential to make progress at missions without support from other departments and various sectors.

### **Sample Comments:**

- *'Furthermore, reading interest in current events assisted in perfecting the art diplomacy'.*
- *'The basics still remain relevant, although the current challenges have meant that I had to improve my educational background. For this I subsequently did three non-degree purpose courses of International Politics I, II and III'.*
- *'No. THE DFA would have to select suitable candidates against the background of required skills and the necessary educational qualifications'.*
- *'The training was to a certain (small) degree relevant to my current responsibilities, although as previously mentioned most of my experience*



*was practical whilst working on the desk, prior to training’.*

- *‘Only a small percentage of it is relevant in my current job’.*
- *‘It adequately prepared me for the real politick world of diplomacy because the approach is to treat the world as an entity whilst in reality the world is very complex for diplomatic activities. The diplomatic approach that resolves issues in the western countries will not be applicable in Asian countries’.*
- *‘Our work is mainly to coordinate and facilitate the realization of our national interests in global environment and the skills training to address this capacity do not exist. Country desk are failing to work with other national and provincial departments let alone local government and all government effort coordinate its foreign interactions in many areas is just chaotic’.*

## **20. Relevant skills acquired to champion course for Africa’s economic development**

The majority (76%) of respondents disagreed that the training prepared them for advocating Africa’s economic development. The respondents perceived the training as mainly being focused on the art of diplomacy in promoting South Africa’s national interests in both bilateral and multilateral relations. They felt that the training did not prepare them to understand the political dynamics of each African country in relation to South Africa’s foreign policy objectives. All the respondents indicated that NEPAD was only initiated, developed and adopted after their training. In summary, respondents pointed out that emphasis on promoting a better and prosperous Africa in both bilateral and multilateral relations have been made clear by government since the first democratic

elections but the training has not been good enough to equip trainees with the relevant skills to mobilize African countries especially at bilateral levels to push for support of the African agenda. The respondents expressed a general feeling that the FSI training did not provide skills that they can use to build bridges with various African countries and their missions abroad given the current undeclared resentment that threatens the realization of South African policy objectives

### **Sample Comments:**

- *'No intensive training was per se administered in this regard. Understanding of NEPAD was privately acquired'.*
- *'Dealing with African embassies on developing common positions to engage the host country to get buy-in on NEPAD is just impossible because most of them see NEPAD as a programme that will disadvantage them in accessing financial and material support from donor countries directly'.*
- *'No, my training was 10 years back and during those days, South Africa was new in the field of international diplomacy and regional development so the emphasise was to equip us with basic diplomatic skills that will enable us to establish new missions and put the old ones into full operation given the impact of the country's isolation diplomatically for decades'.*
- *'There is this feeling of bad blood between the various African countries when they look at the work that our country is doing in supporting the course of the Continent, we should have been prepared for this hostile receptions'.*
- *'The facilitation of some modules by academics was not properly thought through. Many of these academics rather than training for diplomatic work were just there to question some of the government foreign relation policies that we were supposed to be trained to go and implement'.*

- *The training need to also focus on providing skills that will enable our diplomats to analyse what our competitors are doing in relation to Africa's economic development and be able to advise and influence their decisions to support our positions'.*
- *'No. However, there is much room for improvement given that Africa's development is at the centre of our foreign policy'.*

## **21. Relevance of training to promotion of South-South and North-South**

All the respondents indicated that South Africa is a clear champion for South-South co-operation and North-South dialogue. The majority of respondents indicated that insightful knowledge on this was provided in the training programme but the respondents were not exposed to strategic skills that are essential in dealing with partners in the South or the North in their different environments. Failures to acknowledge and equip trainees with the relevant skills to operate in different cultures in different regions were seen as shortcomings.

### **Sample Comments:**

- *'To some degree, although limited. Some of the facilitation on these issues was compromised by the neo-liberal thinking of academics which was just opposed and critical to government policies. Cadets were made to be critical of government policies rather than the other way round'.*
- *'Yes, the course gave us some exposure in these areas but also fell short of providing us with the relevant tools to contribute to pushing this agenda in our area of assignment'.*
- *'Yes, the training covered themes on South-South and North-South relations in line with our foreign policy priorities'.*

- *'To a certain degree yes, there were a few international lecturers that were invited that gave their perspectives on either South-South or North-South Cooperation. However, once again, the information was general'.*
- *'It is my feeling that the information provided was enough to engage in a generic discussion, and that for those dealing directly with such issues great clarification would be provided/taught whilst on desk'.*

## **22. Relevance of training for national interests in the globalised environment**

Seventy-two percent (72%) of the respondents felt that the FSI curricula did not prepare them adequately to engage in economic development matters with confidence. Respondents further indicated that trainees were never really prepared to enter a competitive environment and market South Africa. Issues that were regarded as important in the course were more centred on the political aspect of the job such as peace and security. Twenty percent (20%) of the respondents felt that the structure or the composition of the models seems to be taking it for granted that trainees have basic background knowledge that has equipped them with the relevant skills to market South Africa as an investment destination. Eight percent (8%) of the respondents felt that the training was relevant because it served as an introduction to the world of diplomacy.

### **Sample Comments:**

- *'For those officials that experienced deskwork for a period prior to commencement of training, the issues were of little use as they were discussed in detail or debated to the class as though nothing was known/understood in relation to the subjects'.*
- *'Yes, the emphasis those days was on the Reconstruction and Development of South Africa, especially the development of rural areas'.*

- *'To a greater extent it did but the rest is ongoing-on-the-job learning because the world is evolving so fast and global dynamics are changing everyday. This demands a diplomat of today to be on their toes and explore the emerging dynamics and advice the country now and then on how to respond to these dynamics'.*
- *'The training failed to develop us to be able to present a compelling case and outmanoeuvre our competitors in the global environment for the attention of few potential investors or traders'.*

### **23. Relevance of training to trade and investment promotion**

The majority (80%) of respondents felt that the trade promotion module was inadequate in equipping them with the relevant skills required to do the job correctly. Most respondents indicated that operating at the missions has really exposed them to the difficulties of implementing mission objectives that are related to trade and investment due to lack of skills to develop and implement relevant strategies. In trying to deal with the shortcomings, most respondents indicated that their missions were forced to copy what other missions of other countries do in promoting the economies of their countries, with little success due to lack of human and financial resources. Most respondents also called for a need for specialized skills at missions rather than the outdated approach of diplomats doing both political and economic work at the same time. Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents also indicated that investment and trade intelligence information is critical to the development of South Africa investment and trade promotion strategies and they find themselves lacking skills to gather such information. The respondents recommended an urgent need for the training programme to include acquisition specialization skills for priority sectors as another stream of the FSI programme, rather than concentrating solely on generic diplomatic training.

### Sample Comments:

- *'The trade promotion module at the FSI is inadequate. More field and practical training on trade promotion with possibilities of internship at either DTI or trade promotion consultancy firms need to be explored'.*
- *'To be honest we are not skilled to be critical in analyzing trade and investment trends except what we read from print or electronic media. Probing, observation, critical analysis of information and advice to headquarters is non-existent, we just reproduce articles and send. We need expertise in critical areas of our work'.*
- *'International relations is a generic term that includes under its ambit trade, law, economics, sociology, politics, and so on. In this regard, our international relations modules presented a broad framework of the areas of work our trade covers'.*
- *'No. Although it is my belief that no training can fully prepare you as an individual for this ... The training may provide insight, but environments/countries vary, thus your skills and method of approach would vary'.*
- *'Yes, as I said, it was all about trade and investments in general and fell short in providing us with the necessary skills that will put us above our peers. To be honest some countries that are more or less at the same level like us are doing even better than us because they have officials who specialize in these areas that are priority of their missions'.*
- *'Remember our country pursue different objectives in different countries and it is unfortunate that the current system of posting officials to missions and also the FSI training fails to recognise this fact. This one-size fits all approach need to be reviewed in order to ensure that officials are posted not as generalist but specialists in countries where such skills are needed for the realization of our national interests'.*

## 24. Relevance of training in facilitating the work of other departments in foreign relations

Eighty percent (80%) of the respondents indicated that the training was general enough to give them an understanding of how government works but fell short on clarifying how departments interface in their work. The majority of the respondents further felt strongly that this failure to outline coordination even through the existing government clusters have also negatively affected their ability to deliver on those objectives where expertise from other departments rather than the DFA are needed. Respondents also felt that with proper strategic skills through training, they could be in a position to engage other departments on issues of national interest for buy-in and contribution with their relevant expertise for the successful execution of mission's mandate.

### Sample Comments:

- *'Our training programme just a first phase in a number of processes and interventions that seeks to make our journey through this trade an inspiring experience... Suffice to say, as an official of government, one has to know the relationships between departments'.*
- *'The diplomatic training programme definitely requires more information and presentations by the various departments so as to enable cadets to gain better understanding of their specific objectives but unfortunately this opportunity is lost during training'.*
- *'Yes, the training did prepare me for the facilitation of the international work of government departments but there was no particular module on the explanation of cluster approach in government. Issues around working with sister Departments were merely introduced for the purposes of also providing some administrative support function to them'.*

- *‘Currently our provincial and local governments travel all over the world pursuing what they call international cooperation programmes in a manner that is not aligned to the national foreign policy approaches and we find ourselves at odds with these layers of government when we seek clarity on their engagements. This calls for a need for equipping through the FSI training the officials responsible for coordinating and facilitating provincial and local government international relations with relevant diplomatic skills’.*
- *‘Complex issues are now dealt with in international relations and in most cases South African positions is needed, forwarding enquiries to related desks is just a waste of time because most of the desk officers in Pretoria lacks basic skills to gather relevant responses timeously from other government departments and with proper training in this area this constrain could be overcome’.*

## **25. Relevance of training in negotiations and drafting of agreements**

Seventy-two percent (72%) of the respondents felt that the role-playing art of negotiation and bargaining was too narrow to equip cadets with good negotiation and writing skills. Many of the respondents felt that the two elements are very critical in diplomacy but unfortunately very limited training time was spent on them. Forty-eight percent (48%) respondents were of the view that training in negotiations must also attempt to break the world into different blocks based on the culture that goes with negotiations. The same respondents also argue that the strategy for lobbying for support for a certain South African position through negotiations with small or big and powerful countries need to be acknowledged in the content of the negotiation modules.

The majority of the respondents also felt that even if they were training in the art of writing diplomatic documents, it was just basic introduction because most of them are not in a position now to draft documents such as agreements



independently. All respondents felt that outcome of negotiations result in agreements that impact on national laws and policies so it is very important that in the drafting process they are fully skilled to suggest the phrasing of sentences that accommodate national interests.

### **Sample Comments:**

- *'Engaging in negotiations in India, Nigeria, US, China or Japan cannot be undertaken using the same approach. The module on negotiations fails to point out that in different environment, different negotiation skills must be used'.*
- *'Negotiations in multilateral setting and drafting of outcome documents is a very complex process that the training fails to acknowledge. There is an urgent need for more practical exposure by experienced practitioners on this area during training'.*
- *'No. Although practical exercises of this nature were used, once again it does not prepare you for the actual matter when it takes place. This in my opinion can only be learnt through practical application and knowledge gained on the desk and through watching and learning from your supervisors'.*
- *'Because we follow political, economic, trade, and so on. issues, we come across and discuss negotiations, be it in the WTO, IMF, Burundi peace talks, and so on. In short, the programme provided valuable insight but engaging in real negotiation is something that need time to learn through observation and practice'.*
- *'Yes, we were lectured on these issues especially South Africa's relations with other countries and different economic blocks and the process of negotiations are undertaken through multilateral and bilateral organisations'.*
- *'During negotiations you are sometime faced with a hostile environment*

*given misunderstandings that happens because of language and cultural differences and this evaluations are a reality that need to be accommodated and trainees need to be exposed to the relevant skills to overcome this’.*

## **26. Relevance of training programme to implementation of foreign policy**

Eighty-four percent (84%) of the respondents felt that the training was successful in introducing participants to the world of diplomacy but was not really focused on successful implementation of South Africa foreign policy. Many of the respondents still felt that in modifying the training, emphasis needs to be placed on practical factors or activities that need to be undertaken when implementing South African foreign policy. Thirty-two percent (32%) of the respondents felt that the training was more an introduction of diplomatic activities to participants and it was therefore imperative that participants undertake further studies independently to improve their practical skills in the art of diplomacy.

### **Sample Comments:**

- *‘The training created a jack-of-all-trades and a master-of-nothing, sometime one finds themselves rendered paper pushers because of the failure to fully comprehend and engage in depth on issues of national interests’.*
- *‘To some degree, although much could be done to improve it in order to energise most of our diplomats who once posted seems to be disorientated and sluggish in doing what is expected of them and realise what their hard work could do in resolving some of the economic challenges that our country is going through rather be obsessed with personal material benefits that the diplomatic profession offers’.*
- *‘It got me halfway through but the sense of motivation and focus on the job*

*at hand is just lacking, we need to all love and be passionate about our country and be seen to do whatever is needed to contribute to its development’.*

- *‘The training programme is not an event, but the beginning of a long process of learning through experiencing and experimenting... The training provides practitioners of diplomacy and international relations with basic tools of trade and the rest you imbibe as you move’.*
- *‘No... . The training does not even tackle the matter of culture shock’.*

## **27. Comment on training programme in regard to the reality in working environment**

All respondents indicated that diplomatic work is challenging because the incumbents have to operate in a strange environment with very limited support from headquarters and the training needs to highlight that and equip incumbents with the relevant management skills. The respondents further felt that the different working cultures and languages that incumbents have to adapt to in a very short time, and management of the locally recruited staff with a different working culture impact severely on the efficient functioning of the mission. Fifty-two percent (52%) of the respondents also felt that not knowing the working language in a country is a setback in their work because they cannot independently monitor political or economic developments, or seek more information on matters of interest independent of their local translators and interpreters.

### **Sample Comments:**

- *‘This is a very closed community and you really have to bend all the existing rules at home to make any progress’.*
- *‘Not knowing the local language impacts negatively on about 50% of our*

*work here, from correspondence to meetings, you have to rely on someone to put your point across and in the process you lose half’.*

- *‘The part that I feel is somehow undermined is the one on language acquisition. This area is left to the cadet to elect to do or otherwise’.*
- *‘Once again, it is my opinion that it is dependant on a person’s ability to adapt and learn under pressure...rather than attending a course where everything is provided in a theoretical context rather than in practical form’.*
- *‘I will say the FSI training programme needs to be overhauled to ensure that it offers training within the policy framework of the government of the day because this element is just missing. More emphasis must be put on essential elements that will ensure successful implementation of South African foreign policy’.*
- *‘Experts who better understand the transformational agenda of our government together with experienced diplomats should play a more active role in our FSI’.*
- *‘It was relevant at the time and don’t know now. It taught me a lot of things. I learned to deliver a speech without doubting myself, I learned to face TV interviews, deliver impromptu speeches, learned to write reports/speeches, and so on. In short it gave me confidence’.*

## **28. Proposals for inclusion in the training programme**

All candidates felt that the critical aspects of their work, rather than political, must include also trade and investment promotion, and that it was important that these modules are given the attention they deserve. Another important element that the minority of respondents highlighted was the need for FSI training programme to include a module on African political and economic situation. Such a module the respondents felt that it must focus on the economic and political dynamics in at least a number of important countries that impact on the political economy of all the regions of Africa. Thirty-two percent (32%) of the respondents felt that

interface between and amongst departments in the implementation of the foreign policy need to be accommodated in a separate module because it is critical to the successful implementation of South African foreign policy. Such a module must include the aspects of facilitation and coordination of the work of other departments in foreign relations by diplomats.

### **Sample Comments:**

- *'Our foreign policy is mainly centred on the development of Africa, so the training has to be biased in preparing us to build bridges of economic development and peace and security for Africa in Africa and for Africa in the rest of the world'.*
- *'Yes. I think in light of the current challenges South Africa faces as an emerging country, our diplomats would have to be trained in issues such as negotiations, lobbying and research skills'.*
- *'More practical training, sharing of experience by seasoned and practicing Ambassadors and diplomats'.*
- *'Yes. Although most senior diplomats rise within the ranks of the service to occupy positions of senior management in Missions, there is nothing that prepares them for this eventuality. As such, we need management training sessions'.*
- *'The other aspect relates to finance and project management. Cadets have to be orientated into these important sciences, because their jobs will inevitably involve knowledge of both worlds'.*
- *'More specialized training. The DFA officials, unlike other countries do not specialize in a particular region or country but may be posted to Egypt for four years, then work on the Eastern Europe desk for two years and then be posted to Japan'.*
- *'It is my belief that in order to maximize the limited human resources that the Department has, officials should specialize. By doing so an official*

*could learn the language, the culture, the way a country does business, their strengths and weaknesses ... whilst building a strong and long standing relationship with the officials and department of country/region they specialize in'.*

- *'Therefore, officials should be identified to specialize in a region/ country, thereby making the best use of their talents and knowledge'.*
- *'More than anything else, the training should constantly be in line with the ever changing strategic objectives of government dictated of course by the fluidity of the global system'.*

#### **5.4 SUMMARY**

The methodology used allowed the researcher to create a dialogical relationship with the respondents through communicative symmetry, open-mindedness and open-heartedness, responsivity, mutual trust and respect in order to get honest response rather than as a separate entity (McCotter, 2001 and Smaling, 2002:3). Views expressed by the respondents were summarised and sample of their comments are also presented verbatim. It is clear from the responses that there was enthusiasm by participants to take part in the research. The brief extracts taken from the responses are used to provide what the respondents actually said, in their own words. This is one of the advantages provided by the chosen research methodology.

The responses received from the interviews give an indication that most of the respondents understand the importance of skills in their ability to function effectively in their various areas of responsibility to realise the objective of South African foreign policy. What emerges in the findings and which is discussed in Chapter Six is the overall consensus that all missions are performing above average but still could be achieved through proper resourcing of missions with officials possessing the relevant diplomatic skills. The issue of coordination

between various departments, government agencies and also the efficiency of various country focused desks at the DFA results with a number of constraints to the efficiency of missions. Proper FSI training programme is identified as a necessary intervention for officials who are responsible for coordinating and facilitating international relations. The majority of the respondents have also expressed an urgent need for the development of a specialization stream in the FSI training programme to provide critical training in those sectors which are the main priority areas of South African foreign policy. Chapter Six provides a summary of the study draws conclusions and offers recommendations.