SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

by

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DEDICATION

to

my wife Cornél and our children Lunél and Louis
Completing this study has been an exhilarating learning curve for me. I want to thank all who helped me to complete this endeavour.

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SOLI DEO GLORIA
DECLARATION of AUTHORSHIP

and

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I, Louwrens Stephanus Botha declare that this submission is my own work and that it has been written in my own words. All citations from published or unpublished works have been acknowledged in the text and referenced in full. I understand that all rights with regard to intellectual property in the work vest in the University of Pretoria which has the right to produce, distribute and/or publish the work in any manner deemed fit. This thesis has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution. My supervisor and I agree that, subject to the authorisation of the University as owner of all intellectual property rights in this work, the approved version may be placed in the UpeTD archive (http://upetd.up.ac.za/ETD-db/) with the following status:

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ABSTRACT

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by

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FACULTY: ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

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There is a dearth of literature on the effects of the implementation of the Skills Development Act (SDA) in South African governmental or Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Although the available body of scholarship draws attention to problems that HEIs encounter with the implementation of the SDA, it does not elaborate on the underlying reasons for these problems. The aim of this critical interpretive study was, therefore, to gain an understanding of the rationale for and meaning of HEIs’ employee staff development practices and that of the implementation of the SDA, as well as the match and mismatch between them. The intention of this study was to bring to the surface the underlying social dynamics that Skills Development Facilitators (SDFs) attach to the implementation of the SDA in HEIs. The epistemological intersection between interpretivism and critical theory was, therefore, chosen as the paradigmatic backdrop of this study. The use of Atlas.ti™ to analyse systematically the volume of unstructured data gathered from seven SDFs at HEIs not only facilitated the data analysis but also enhanced the validity of the study. Besides this, Professor Elsie (Liz) Greyling and Professor Nico Sauer intensively scrutinised and commented on my interpretation of the data, also contributing to the validity of this study. An analysis of the research data generated the following interrelated themes:

- HEIs experience a total lack of support and guidance from the ETDP SETA.
- The descriptions of terminology in the SDA and the explanations offered by government officials are often contradictory and confusing.
- Informal development, one of HEIs’ core employee learning methods, is difficult to capture.
- HEIs' Workplace Skills Plans (WSP) and Annual Training Reports (ATR) submitted to the ETDP SETA are not a fair and accurate reflection of HEIs' staff development practices.
The development of systems to capture HEIs' employee ETD practices on the ETDP SETA's templates for the WSP and ATR is costly.

Time frames for the development of WSPs in HEIs differ from the time frame of the ETDP SETA.

These were the main themes indicating why HEIs find it difficult to integrate the SDA in their staff development framework. The effect of these reasons why HEIs find it difficult to integrate the SDA in their staff development practices is that HEIs submit their WSPs and ATRs only to recoup in rebates (grants) the levies they pay. The government furthermore aims to take control of HEIs' employee ETD practices by enforcing the establishment of institutional structures to manage staff development mechanistically. Moreover, HEIs are compelled to prioritise investment in the education, training and development of designated employees, whereas the service delivery of quality education depends on the efficiency of all HEIs' staff members (by implication the development of all employees). In addition, HEIs are compelled to invest in the development of unemployed SA citizens, although the relationship between investment in ETD and economic prosperity is not proven.

HEIs are, furthermore, compelled to follow a statutory policy framework that focuses on the manual skills required in the labour market, not on the cognitive, intellectual and largely scholarly skills that HEIs require to maintain and enhance quality education in South Africa. The result of the latter, viewed from a institutional perspective (macro-financial), is that HEIs not only have less funds for ETD practices than they had before the implementation of the SDA, but also that the implementation of the SDA could create negative social relations in HEIs themselves.

These effects of the implementation of the SDA also seem to be perpetuated by the lack of interaction and debate between the ETDP SETA and HEIs. It is therefore argued in this study that the absence of officially structured dialogical activities between HEIs' representatives and ETDP SETA officials would perpetuate the dissonance between the reasons for and aims of the SDA and those of skills development in HEIs.
Daar is weinig literatuur oor die uitwerking van die implementering van die Wet op Vaardigheidsontwikkeling ("Skills Development Act", oftewel SDA) op Suid-Afrikaanse regerings- of Hoër Onderwysinstellings (HOI's). Die beskikbare publikasies wys wel op die probleme wat HOI's ervaar met die implementering van die SDA, maar dit lig nie die onderliggende redes vir hierdie probleme uit nie. Die doel met hierdie krities interpretivistiese studie was om 'n begrip vir die grondrede vir en betekenis van HOI's se personeelontwikkelingspraktyke en dié van die implementering van die SDA te vorm. Dienooreenkomstig, moes die goeie en swak passings tussen hulle grondredes en betekenis uitgewys word. Die bedoeling met hierdie studie was om die onderliggende sosiale dinamiek bloot te lé wat Vaardigheidsontwikkelingsfasiliteerders ("Skills Development Facilitators", oftewel SDF's) met die implementering van die SDA in HOI's assosieer. Die epistemologiese interseksie tussen die interpretivisme en kritiese teorie is gekies as die paradigmatisie agtergrond vir hierdie studie.

Die gebruik van Atlas.ti™ vir die stelselmatige ontleiding van die massa ongestrukureerde data wat by sewe SDFs aan HOI's versamel is, het nie alleen die data-ontleding vergemaklik nie, maar ook die geldigheid van die studie verhoog. Hierbenewens het Professor Elsie (Liz) Greyling and Professor Nico Sauer wat die dataverwerking en interpretasie intensief deurgegaan en daarop kommentaar gelewer het, bygedra tot die geldigheid van die studie. 'n Ontleding van die navorsingsgegewens het die volgende onderling verbonde temas opgelever:

- HOI's ervaar 'n algehele gebrek aan ondersteuning en leiding van die ETDP-SETA.
- Die terminologiebeskrywings in die SDA en die verduidelikings wat deur regeringsamptenare gebied word, is dikwels teenstrydig en verwarring.
- Die vaslegging (rekordering) van informele ontwikkeling, een van die HOI's se prominente personeelontwikkelingsmetodes is moeilik.
- HOI's se Werksplekvaardigheidsplanne ("Workplace Skills Plans" of WSP) en Jaarlikse Opleidingsverslae ("Annual Training Reports" of ATR) wat vir indiening by die Sektorale Onderwys- en Opleidingsowerheid vir Onderwys-, Opleiding- en Ontwikkelingspraktyke ("Education Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority" oftewel ETDP-SETA) ingedien word, is nie 'n billike en akkurate weerspieëling van HOI's se personeelontwikkelingspraktyke nie.
- Dit is duur om stelsels te ontwikkels vir die vaslegging van die onderwys-, opleidings- en ontwikkelingspraktyke van werknemers aan HOI's op die ETDP-SETA se WSP en ATR template.
Tydraamwerke vir die ontwikkeling van WSP's in HOI's verskil van die tydraam van die ETDP-SETA.

Bogemelde is die hoof temas waarmee HOI's probleme ervaar met die integrering van die SDA in hul personeelontwikkelingsraamwerk.

As gevolg van hierdie oorsake wat dit moeilik maak vir die HOI's om die SDA in hul personeelontwikkelingspraktyke te integreer, dien HOI's hul WSP's en ATR's in slegs om die heffings wat hulle betaal in die vorm van terugbetalings (toekennings) te verhaal. Die Regering het dit ten doel om beheer oor HOI's se onderwys-, opleidings- en ontwikkelingspraktyke vir werknemers oor te neem deur die vestiging van institutionelestrukture wat personeelontwikkeling meganisties sal bestuur, af te dwing. Daarbenewens word HOI's verplig om voorrang aan belegging in die onderwys, opleiding en ontwikkeling van aangewese werknemers te gee, terwyl dienste levering van gehalte-onderwys afhang van die doeltreffendheid van alle werknemers aan 'n HOI (dit impliseer die ontwikkeling van alle werknemers). Verder word HOI's verplig om in die ontwikkeling van werklose Suid-Afrikaanse burgers te belê, alhoewel daar steeds geen bewyse is van die verwantskap tussen belegging in onderwys, opleiding en ontwikkeling en ekonomiese welvaart nie.

HOI's word verder verplig om 'n statutêre beleidsraamwerk te volg wat toegespits is op handvaardighede wat vir die arbeidsmark vereis word en nie op die kognitiewe, intellektuele en die hoofsaaklik geleerdheidsvaardighede wat HOI's benodig om gehalte onderwys in Suid-Afrika te handhaaf en verbeter nie. Beskou vanuit 'n institutionele makro-ekonomiese oogpunt is die gevolg van laasgenoemde dat HOI's nie alleen oor minder fondse vir onderwys-, opleidings- en ontwikkelingspraktyke as vóór die implementering van die SDA beskik nie, maar ook dat die implementering van die SDA negatiewe sosiale verhoudings binne die HOI's self kan meebreng.

Verder blyk dit asof hierdie gevolge van die implementering van die SDA voortgesit word deur die gebrek aan wisselwerking en debat tussen die ETDP-SETA en HOI's. Daar word dus in hierdie studie gestel dat die gebrek aan dialoogaktiwiteite tussen verteenwoordigers van HOI's en amptenare van die ETDP-SETA de dissonansie tussen die redes en doelstellings van die SDA en dié van vaardighheidsontwikkeling binne HOI's sal laat voortleef.
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