



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

by

LOUWRENS STEPHANUS BOTHA

Student Number: 21325597

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR in Organizational Behaviour

in the

FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Supervisor:
Prof. FJ Potgieter

PRETORIA

APRIL 2009



DEDICATION

to

my wife Cornél and our children Lunél and Louis



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completing this study has been an exhilarating learning curve for me. I want to thank all who helped me to complete this endeavour.

- Professor Ferdinand Potgieter, my supervisor and mentor. As an experienced, internationally recognised and well-travelled educational theorist and academic, he offered invaluable inspiration, creative energy and advice through his academic criticism and thought-provoking questions and comments, which have made an immeasurable contribution to this study.
- All the Skills Development Facilitators at public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), who offered me the opportunity to become actively involved in informal, semi-formal and formal interviews with them, regarding skills development in HEIs.
- Ms Patience Teffo and Ms Pramesh Mooloo, both from the Learning and Development Division at the University of Pretoria, who became close confidantes in this research.
- Several academically more experienced colleagues, in particular Doctors Claire Wagner and Rinelle Evans, both senior academics at the University of Pretoria, who were willing to act as critical discussants of my efforts.
- Professor Elsie (Liz) Greyling and Professor Nico Sauer. They acted as my reference group, with whom I discussed my data collection strategies and the critical interpretation of data for validation purposes.
- Mrs Gillian de Jager for her friendship and for the language editing of this study (see Addendum H).
- To my family and friends, principal among them my parents, Mr and Mrs Louwrens and Petra Botha, for their constant motivation and prayers.

SOLI DEO GLORIA



DECLARATION of AUTHORSHIP

and

COPYRIGHT WAIVER

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 All citations from published or unpublished works have been acknowledged in the text and referenced in full.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:

Release the entire work immediately for worldwide access.

I certify that this version of the work is the same as that which was approved by my examiners and that changes to the document as requested by them have been effected.

SIGNATURE

DATE

ABSTRACT

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

by

LOUWRENS STEPHANUS BOTHA

SUPERVISOR: PROF. FERDINAND POTGIETER
FACULTY: ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
DEGREE: PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR (Organizational Behaviour)

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*TM 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.

OPSOMMING

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 kritiese 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 passing tussen hulle grondredes en betekenis uitgewys word. Die bedoeling met hierdie studie was om die onderliggende sosiale dinamiek bloot te lê 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 paradigmatische agtergrond vir hierdie studie.

Die gebruik van *Atlas.ti*TM vir die stelselmatige ontleding van die massa ongestruktureerde data wat by sewe SDF's 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 opgelewer:

- 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 verwarrend.
- 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 ontwikkel 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 hoofemas 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 institusionele strukture 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 dienslewering 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 institusionele 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 meebring.

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 die dissonansie tussen die redes en doelstellings van die SDA en dié van vaardigheidsontwikkeling binne HOI's sal laat voortleef.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: PREVIEW OF THE STUDY	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Problem statement	1
1.3 Aims of the research	2
1.4 Rationale for the study	2
1.5 Contextualising the study	6
1.5.1 The skills revolution in SA since 1994	6
1.5.2 Staff development in Higher Education Institutions	8
1.6 Explanation of key terms	11
1.6.1 Higher Education Institution	11
1.6.2 Skills Development Act	11
1.6.3 Skills Development Levies Act	11
1.6.4 Staff development in HEIs	11
1.6.5 Skills Development Facilitator	12
1.7 Scope of the investigation	12
1.8 Research design and methodology	13
1.9 Anticipated research constraints	16
1.10 Outline and organisation of the study	17
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE BODY OF SCHOLARSHIP	19
2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 Review of the body of scholarship on the reasons for and means to achieve the goals of the Skills Development Act	22
2.2.1 Investment in education and training towards economic growth	23
2.2.2 Pursuit of equality in education and training	27
2.2.3 Provision of structures to pursue a return on investment in education and training, equality and quality	30
2.2.4 Critical interpretative summary of the reasons for the Skills Development Act and its consequences for staff development in Higher Education Institutions	33
2.3 Review of the body of scholarship on the underlying reasons for staff development in SA HEIs: more than meets the eye	37
2.4 Human Capital Theory	57
2.4.1 The development of Human Capital Theory	60
2.5.1 A brief history of Social Capital Theory	64
2.5.2 The value of Social Capital Theory	65
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	72
3.1 Introduction	72
3.2 Implication of Critical Theory for research: background to the research philosophy of this study	73
3.2.3 Methodology of Critical Theory: background to the design of this study	75
3.3 Research philosophy of this study	77
3.4 Research programme	82
3.4.1 Formal data collection strategies	85



3.4.2	Participants	85
3.4.3	Research sites	87
3.4.4	Support systems	87
3.4.5	Personal role in research process	88
3.4.6	Instrumentation for data generation	89
3.5	Data analysis.....	97
3.5.1	Preparing the text for analysis	98
3.5.2	Ensuring a critical interpretative perspective	99
3.5.3	Computer-aided data analysis	100
3.6	The reliability and validity of this study.....	104
3.7	Methodological constraints	106
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS		108
4.1	Introduction	108
4.2	An exposition of my meaning attached to the literature (non-empirical data).....	109
4.3	An exposition of meaning emanating from the analysis of empirical data.....	127
CHAPTER 5: SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY		271
5.1	Introduction	271
5.2	Synoptic overview of the study	271
5.3	Examining the data in the context of the theoretical framework	273
5.4	The implications for research, policy and practice.....	285
5.5	A contemplated appraisal of the SDA in relation to HEIs	287
5.6	A critical reflection on the research project: co-operation, limitations and contributions	289
5.7	Limitations of the research.....	290
5.8	Contributions of this study.....	290
5.9	Conclusion	291
REFERENCES		293

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE BODY OF SCHOLARSHIP

Figure 2.1	The relationship between individual and organisational goals and the Higher Education system	69
------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Figure 3.1	Typology of design to construct an understanding of the effects of the implementation of the SDA in HEIs	80
Figure 3.2	Graphic illustration of my research design to gain an understanding of the effects of the implementation of the SDA in HEIs	81
Figure 3.3	Graphic illustration of data collection and analysis process	84

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Figure 4.1	Network display depicting the aim of the literature review	109
Figure 4.2	Documented opinions about the rationale for and meaning of implementing the SDA in SA	111
Figure 4.3	Documented opinions about the rationale for and meaning of HEIs' employee ETD practices	113
Figure 4.4	Documented opinions regarding the challenges HEIs encounter with the implementation of the SDA	116
Figure 4.5	Personal opinion about the rationale for and meaning of implementing the SDA in SA	119
Figure 4.6	Personal opinion about the effects of implementing the SDA in HEIs	122
Figure 4.7	Personal opinion about the rationale for and meaning of HEIs' employee ETD practices	125
Figure 4.8	Investment in ETD leads to economic prosperity (individual, organisation and country at large)	128
Figure 4.9	HEIs' staff development practices include strategies to redress the past imbalances caused by ETD practices/legislation during apartheid	132
Figure 4.10	Structures are implemented in HEIs to enable employee education, training and development practices	141
Figure 4.11	Development in HEIs refer to the individual's responsibility for self-development	148
Figure 4.12	HEIs draw no distinction between the length of time to acquire skills and knowledge of teaching-related and support-related tasks	150
Figure 4.13	HEIs' ETD practices are traditionally available to all employees on an equal basis	156
Figure 4.14	HEIs' ETD practices concern the furthering of task-specific skills, knowledge and abilities	159



Figure 4.15	HEIs' ETD practices extend beyond ETD programmes	165
Figure 4.16	HEIs' ETD practices are valued for their process of learning	170
Figure 4.17	HEIs' ETD terminology, programmes and methodologies are divergent	172
Figure 4.18	Informal development (impromptu co-operative learning interventions or focus group, mentoring or peer review interventions) considered the most appropriate method of learning in HEIs	179
Figure 4.19	The term "development" overshadows the term "training" in HEIs	181
Figure 4.20	Extensive cost and laborious process to provide registered ETD programmes	185
Figure 4.21	HEIs' ETD practices differ from national skills development imperatives	188
Figure 4.22	HEIs' ETD practices are not co-ordinated for presentation to the ETDP SETA	190
Figure 4.23	HEIs submit their workplace plan and report solely to receive grants	192
Figure 4.24	Integration of SDA in HEIs' ETD practices is difficult	196
Figure 4.25	Lack of support and guidance from the ETDP SETA	200
Figure 4.26	HEIs using performance systems enhance the management of national SDA imperatives	205
Figure 4.27	HEIs perceive the SDA as a form of tax	207
Figure 4.28	Although HEIs support the SDA in principle, no reference is made to excluding non-designated employees	210
Figure 4.29	HEIs perceive the descriptions of terminology in the SDA and the explanations given by government officials as confusing	213
Figure 4.30	HEIs do not consider education credentials as a substitute for employee ability	215
Figure 4.31	The relationship between investment in ETD and economic prosperity is not proven in HEIs	217
Figure 4.32	HEIs perceive the SA workplace ETD policy framework as focusing on the labour market, not on HEIs as social institutions of SA	220
Figure 4.33	HEIs perceive the SDA as discriminatory against non-designated employees	223
Figure 3.34	The SDA portrays a mechanistic system to manage human behaviour	225
Figure 4.35	Although informal development is considered the most appropriate method of learning, it is the least recorded	229
Figure 4.36	The trend of referencing ETD practices as Human Resources development practices indicates that employees are managed on the basis of the theory of Human Capital	233



Figure 4.37	The value HEIs attach to the process of learning, informally oriented and self-driven or motivated learning, seems to have close ties with Social Capital Theory	236
Figure 4.38	Development of systems to capture HE employee ETD practices is costly..	240
Figure 4.39	The government aims to take control of HEIs' employee ETD practices through enforcement of institutional structures, hence promoting the perception that the government mistrusts HEIs' employee ETD practices...	242
Figure 4.40	Government through the SDA compels HEIs to be co-responsible for investment in ETD for unemployed SA citizens	247
Figure 4.41	HEIs have less funds for ETD practices than before the implementation of the SDA	249
Figure 4.42	Limited public debate between the ETDP SETA and HEIs could lead to negative social relations between the ETDP SETA and HEIs	254
Figure 4.43	SDA ETD reporting time-frame differs from HEIs' actual ETD time-frame ...	257
Figure 4.44	SDA focus on designated employees could create negative social relations in HEIs	259
Figure 4.45	The implementation of SDA could be perceived as an invasion of institutional privacy	262
Figure 4.46	HEIs consider the SDA as not focusing on the process of learning, rather the value is attached to certification	264
Figure 4.47	Withholding levy grants would perpetuate government's financial power over industry	267
Figure 4.48	The SDA portrays a mechanistic system for managing human behaviour ...	268

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Table 2.1	Match and mismatch between the underlying reasons for and goals of the Skills Development Act and those of staff development in Higher Education Institutions	55
-----------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Table 3.1	The study objectives in relation to the semi-structured interview questions .	91
Table 3.2	Summary of raw data files with identity codes entered on <i>Atlas.ti</i> TM for data analysis according to instrument applied	101
Table 3.3	Summary of raw data files (according to instrumentation applied to data generation) entered on <i>Atlas.ti</i> TM for data analysis from each HEI	101



ADDENDA

Addendum A	Informed consent forms	318
Addendum B	Consent to record interviews	320
Addendum C	Particulars of reference group members	322
Addendum D	Personal value orientation	323
Addendum E	Ethical considerations: confirmation at face-to-face meeting with SDF	324
Addendum F	Sample letter: Request for consent for Mr Louw Botha to discuss Skills Development matters with your institution's Skills Development Facilitator for a PhD research project	325
Addendum G	Categorisation of codes: sample	326
Addendum H	Editorial proof	327