An experiential learning process for the advancement of previously disadvantaged employees in an industrial context

by

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Dedication

Socrates taught for forty years, Plato for fifty, Aristotle for forty, and Jesus for only three; yet those three years infinitely transcend in influence the combined teaching over one hundred and thirty years by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, the three greatest men of all antiquity.

Sceptics praise the clearness of His judgements, the depth of His ethics, the justness of His decisions, the weight of His words, the faultless beauty of His glorious life – its balance, its pure nobility and its serene power.

(Earle Albert Rowell)
Declaration

I declare that

An experiential learning process for the advancement of previously disadvantaged employees in an industrial context

is my own work and that the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference.

Willem Johannes Cilliers

29 October 1999
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• My mother – for believing in me.

• The Almighty and Heavenly Father, without whom I could not have done anything – for determination, courage, motivation and commitment – "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119: 105).
Abstract

Candidate: Willem Johannes Cilliers
Supervisor: Prof. Dr J.C. Cronjé
Department: Didactics
Degree: PhD in Education
Title: An experiential learning process for the advancement of previously disadvantaged employees in an industrial context

This thesis reports on the development of an experiential learning process for the advancement of employees in an industrial context. Strategic human resource development and learning interventions are the key to changing an organisation, external stakeholders and the people employed by it through planned learning so that they may acquire the knowledge and skills needed in the future organisation. However, practitioners are too often excluded from strategic decision-making and are left to make their own decisions as to the direction in which they want to move. It is implied that the practitioner's main responsibility is to manage a training and development function strategically rather than to lead efforts to formulate and implement a consolidated plan to guide the direction of learning in an organisation.

Departmental and sectional planning are important, but not as important as organisational planning for learning. Any training and development interventions that take place or are planned should in principle encourage planned learning that supports business objectives and outcomes. These business plans for organisational learning should be focused on the learner and the learning processes to support that lifelong learning culture, in line with national requirements and organisational alignment.

The training and development interventions and models currently in use do not comply with national, organisational, legal and environmental demands as
required by industry. This study explores various training and development approaches to focus on the following areas for development:

As the nucleus of this research, the learning interventions integrate the four focus areas mentioned by the researcher into the workplace by exposing the learner to generic, activity and performance learning processes. This section looks at possible ways to accommodate and align the transformation of existing learning interventions to match the drive for unit standards, outcomes-based training and accreditation in line with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

- The national and organisational alignment focuses on requirements at a national level to provide a culture of lifelong learning in an organisation. This section includes the transformation needed to comply with the legislative requirements at national, organisational and employee level.

- Learner development focuses on the learning interventions by exploring the different learning pathways accommodating the different skills and competency levels required.

- In practitioner development the researcher explores the requirements and development needs for practitioners to integrate
the processes, available learning pathways and the skills development required to guide the learners through the learning interventions and transformation.

- The *learning process and systems* briefly explores the influence of transformation on the delivery of learning interventions, transformation necessary to adapt to the imperative management and information systems essential to accommodate the changes, and the project support required for implementation in an organisation.

**Key words**

Advancement  
Alignment  
Assessment  
Competencies  
Experiential learning  
Learning environment  
Learning interventions  
Learning process  
Outcomes-based  
Transformation
Opsomming

Kandidaat: Willem Johannes Cilliers
Promotor: Prof dr J.C. Cronjé
Departement: Didaktiek
Graad: PhD in Opvoedkunde
Titel: 'n Ervaringsleerproses vir die bevordering van voorheen agtergeblewe werknemers in 'n nywerheidskonteks

Hierdie proefskrif doen verslag oor die ontwikkeling van 'n ervaringsleerproses vir die bevordering van werknemers in 'n nywerheidskonteks. Strategiese menslikehulpbronontwikkeling en leertussentredes is die sleutel tot die verandering van 'n organisasie. Eksterne belanghebbendes en die mense wat deur die organisasie in diens geneem is, moet deur beplande leer die kennis en vaardighede verwerf wat in die toekomstige organisasie nodig word. Praktisyns word egter te dikwels uitgesluit uit strategiese besluitneming en moet self besluit oor die rigting waarin hulle met die opleiding wil beweeg. Die implicasie is dat die praktisyn se belangrikste verantwoordelijkheid is om 'n opleidings- en ontwikkelingsfunksie te bestuur eerder as om leiding te gee aan pogings om 'n gekonsolideerde plan te formuleer en te implementeer om die rigting van leer in 'n organisasie aan te dui.

Departementele en seksiebeplanning is belangrik, maar nie so belangrik soos organisasiebeplanning vir leer nie. Enige opleidings- en ontwikkelings-tussentredes wat plaasvind of beplan word, moet in beginsel beplande leer ter ondersteuning van besigheidsdoelwitte en -resultate aanmoedig. Hierdie besigheidsplannings vir organisatoriese leer moet gerig wees op die leerder en die leerprosesse om steun te verleen aan daardie lewenslange leerkultuur, in ooreenstemming met nasionale vereistes en die gerigtheid van die organisasie.
Die opleidings- en ontwikkelingstussentredes en -modelle wat tans gebruik word, voldoen nie aan nasionale, organisasie-, regs- en omgewingseise wat deur die bedryf gestel word nie. Hierdie studie verken verskeie opleidings- en ontwikkelingsbenaderings vir 'n fokus op die volgende ontwikkelingsterreine:

As kern van hierdie navorsing integreer die *leertussentredes* die vier fokus terreine wat deur die navorser genoem is, in die werkplek deur die leerder bloot te stel aan generiese, aktiwiteits- en prestasieleerprosesse. Hierdie afdeling kyk na moontlike maniere om die transformasie van bestaande leertussentredes so te akkommodeer en te rig dat dit pas by die dryfkrag na eenheidstandaarde, resultaatgebaseerde opleiding en akkreditering in ooreenstemming met die Nasionale Kwalifikasieraamwerk (NKR) en Suid-Afrikaanse Kwalifikasieowerheid (SAKO).

- **Die nasionale en organisasiegerigtheid** fokus op vereistes op nasionale vlak om 'n kultuur van lewenslange leer in 'n organisasie daar te stel. Hierdie afdeling behels ook dat die transformasie moet voldoen aan die regsvereistes op nasionale, organisasie- en werknemervlak.

- **By die ontwikkeling van die leerder** val die klem op die leertussentredes deur verkenning van die onderskeie leerroetes
waarin die verskillende vaardighede en bevoeghedsvlakke wat vereis word, voorkom.

- By die *ontwikkeling van die praktisyn* verken die navorser die vereistes wat aan die praktisyns gestel word en hulle ontwikkelingsbehoeftes om met die prosesse, beskikbare leerroetes en vereiste vaardigheidsontwikkeling te integreer om die leerders deur die leertussentrede en transformasie te lei.

- Die *leerproses en -stelsels* verken kortliks die uitwerking van transformasie van die lewering van leertussentrede; transformasie om aan te pas by die bestuurs- en inligtingstelsels wat noodsaaklik is om die veranderinge te akkommodeer; en die projekondersteuning wat nodig is vir implementering in ’n organisasie.

**Sleutel terme**

Bevordering
Gerigtheid
Skatting
Vaardighede
Ervaringsleerproses
Leeromgewing
Leerleertussentrede
Leerproses
Resultaatgebaseerde
Transformasie
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List of abbreviations

ABET  Adult basic education and training
BU    Business unit
EAITB Eskom and Allied Industries Training Board
ECSA  Engineering Council of South Africa
ETB   Education and Training Board
ETD   Education, training and development
ETQA  Education and Training Quality Assurer
HR    Human Resources
HRD   Human Resources Development
ILP   Integrated learning programme
KPI   Key performance indicators
MIS   Management information systems
NQF   National Qualifications Framework
NSA   National Skills Authority
NSB   National Skills Body
RPL   Recognition for prior learning
SAQA  South African Qualifications Authority
SETA  Sector Education and Training Authority
SETO  Sectoral Education and Training Organisation
SGB   Standard Generating Body
### Definition of terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A and B band employees</td>
<td>Based on the Patterson grading system, this is the lowest level worker employed by Eskom.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action research</td>
<td>An emergent enquiry process in which behavioural and social science knowledge is integrated with existing organisational knowledge to produce new usable knowledge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adult learner / learner</td>
<td>Individuals beyond adolescence engaged in learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>A method of evaluating employees by conducting job simulations to observe job-related behaviours.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career anchor</td>
<td>Distinctive pattern of self-perceived talents, motives and values that guides career decision-making throughout a person's life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career development</td>
<td>An ongoing effort on the part of both individuals and organisations to expand career opportunities and negotiated career goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career path</td>
<td>A sequence of job changes that an employee may pursue in order to attain a given target position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career planning</td>
<td>A combined effort between an organisation and an individual to meet organisational and individual goals by managing the flow of individuals through positions over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>The transfer of information from one person to another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>A pattern of basic assumptions proved valid over time and taught to new group members as correct reactions to certain problems and opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic diversity</td>
<td>Individual differences based on characteristics</td>
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<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>The ability to define goals and objectives and then to accomplish them. Efficiency, in contrast, pertains to the ratio of output to input.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>Electronic mail or e-mail is the postal system of the Internet and Intranet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eskom</td>
<td>South Africa's national electricity supplier, established in 1923 and owned by the Government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eskom Transmission Group</td>
<td>Eskom consists of 10 groups, with the Transmission Group classified as one of the three core business groups. Transmission operates as a process-driven organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential learning</td>
<td>Learning based on or from experience, such as interaction, involvement or process learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resources development (HRD)</td>
<td>The integrated use of training and development, organisational development, and career development to improve individual, group and organisational effectiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education</td>
<td>Any learning programme of a level higher than Grade 12 or its equivalent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology</td>
<td>Technologies dealing with computers, communications, user interfaces, storage, software, artificial intelligence, robotics and manufacturing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
<td>Human or people skills: the ability to lead, motivate and communicate effectively with others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Method or technique for achieving change, which is targeted at individual, group or organisational level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>The behaviour of an individual when he or she is directing the activities of a group towards a</td>
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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>The process whereby new skills, knowledge, abilities and attitudes are created through the transformation of experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>A formal or informal, one-to-one relationship that usually develops between an older and more experienced employee and a younger, less experienced one in order to advise, counsel or help the younger employee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>A term that includes the purpose and functional roles of the employees, the co-ordination of the interactions between the employees’ roles and the nature of the different types of work to be performed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome-based education</td>
<td>A comprehensive approach to organising and operating an education system that is focused on and defined by the successful demonstrations of learning sought from each learner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes-based education</td>
<td>Experts in the educational system refer to outcome-based education. However, legislative documents in South Africa refer to outcomes-based education. In this study the researcher will refer to outcomes-based education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Learning results that are clearly demonstrated at or after the end of an instructional experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practitioner / ETD practitioner</td>
<td>An employee who acts as a part-time or full-time lecturer, specialist or world-class leader in performing a combination of ETD/HRD roles as described by the researcher in Chapter 4 and produces outputs as a skills builder, skills contributor, knowledge contributor or workplace leader.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>