

# **“LEARNERSHIPS – AN INFORMAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE”**

**An inquiry into the impact of informal learning on learnerships in the footwear industry.**

**By**

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## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Poovendren Kistasamy Naicker, hereby confirm that this dissertation, which was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Sylvia Kaye, is my original work and that all the sources that have been used or quoted, have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature of Student

Signed Naicker on this date 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2007

Signature of Supervisor

Signed Sylvia Kaye on this date 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2007.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The *Skills Development Act (97 of 1988)* introduced a new approach to the development of work-related skills in South Africa. This Act provided the legal underpinnings for learnerships, which include both structured work experience (i.e. a practical component) and instructional learning (i.e. a theory learning component). Learnerships are offered in an accredited workplace environment and culminate in a qualification that is registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Research studies support the view that informal learning accounts for over 75%-90% of the learning that takes place in organizations today. Although the majority of learning that occurs in the workplace is informal, little is, however, known about how such learning is best supported, encouraged and developed in a learnership programme. The impact of informal learning on learnerships must be seen as an essential ingredient for effective workplace skills programmes and the advancement of skills acquisition leading to qualifications and career planning resulting in a highly skilled workforce. This research study was prompted by the perception that the majority of workers in the footwear industry have a low formal educational level and are either non-skilled or semi-skilled, financial sustainability of the footwear industry and global competition. Learnerships are perceived to be a creative vehicle whereby workers are able to acquire basic production and manufacturing skills in the workplace through a Clothing, Textiles, Footwear and Leather (CTFL) learnership programme. This research study explores the factors in an education and training environment that enhance or inhibit informal learning opportunities and how these factors shape or impede informal learning, thus impacting on the performance of learners in a footwear learnership programme.

Although no single theoretical framework of informal learning exists, this research study was informed and underpinned by the theoretical models of various experts in the field of informal

learning. Using an interpretivist paradigm the researcher opted to study the implementation of learnerships at one accredited training provider in the footwear industry. Data collection instruments provided rich, detailed qualitative data using semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis within a case study approach. The findings of this study identified a number of overarching factors that enhanced or impeded informal learning in a footwear learnership programme that also impacted on the performance of learners.

### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>COSATU</b>	Congress of South African Trade Unions
<b>CTFL</b>	Clothing, Textiles, Footwear and Leather
<b>ETQA</b>	Education Training and Quality Assurance
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>NQF</b>	National Qualifications Framework
<b>NSDS</b>	National Skills Development Strategy
<b>PDP</b>	Personal Development Plan
<b>PoE</b>	Portfolio of Evidence
<b>QMS</b>	Quality Management System
<b>RPL</b>	Recognition of Prior Learning
<b>SAQA</b>	South African Qualifications Authority
<b>SDA</b>	Skills Development Act
<b>SETA</b>	Sector Education and Training Authority
<b>SGB</b>	Standards Generating Body



## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The workplace has always been considered an important setting in which adults learn. *The Skills Development Act (SDA) (97 of 1998)* introduced a new approach to the promotion and development of work-related skills in South Africa. The concept of learnerships is central to this integrated skills development system and is a major feature of the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS). Cherry (2003, p.4) references Mercorio (2001, pp124-125) who defines a learnership as:

*A planned combination of fundamental, core and elective unit standards, which lead to a qualification and, which is directly applicable to the world of work.*

With the introduction of the *Skills Development Act* and learnerships, an interest in workplace learning has intensified in recent years, because learnerships offer an alternative model of vocational education and training. The implementation of the *Skills Development Act* provides the legislative mandate for upgrading the skill of non-skilled and semi-skilled workers.

Learnerships are new paraprofessional, vocational education and training programmes. Learnerships include both structured work experience (i.e. a practical component) and instructional learning (i.e. a theory learning component), which culminate in a qualification that is registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Qualifications are based on registered unit standards. A person who successfully completes a learnership will have a qualification that signals occupational competence, recognized throughout the country. An organization or company can only offer learnerships if they are accredited by an Education and Training Quality Assurance Body (ETQA) as a workplace training provider. Learnerships are offered in a workplace environment and the majority of learning that occurs in the workplace is informal. However, little is known about how such learning is best supported, encouraged and developed in a learnership programme.

This research study explores the factors in an education and training environment of an accredited training provider in the footwear sector that enhance or inhibit informal learning opportunities and how these factors shape or impede informal learning, thus impacting on the performance of learners in a footwear learnership programme (See Chapter Two for a more detailed discussion on the factors that enhance or inhibit informal learning). Using an interpretivist paradigm, the researcher opted to study the implementation of learnerships at one accredited training provider in the footwear industry. Further, this study argues that informal learning factors such as the sharing of perspectives and experiences, giving encouragement, teamworking, self-directed learning, coaching, mentoring, learning through past experiences from routinized and non-routinized tasks, information exchanges in a workplace setting and personal and career development are some of the factors that could either shape or impede informal learning and impact on the performance of learners in a footwear learnership programme of an accredited training provider.

In setting the scene for understanding the study, this chapter sets the background to the study, the reasons why this particular study was undertaken, the purpose and key research questions of this study and finally the structure of this study.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

### **Genesis of Learnerships in South Africa**

According to the Department of Labour's guide titled *An Introduction to the Skills Development Strategy* (2001, p.1), the skills revolution in South Africa commenced in January 2001 with the adoption, by the Minister of Labour, of the National Skills Development Strategy, which was a response to the problems in the labour market inherited from the apartheid era. One major objective of the NSDS was to replace the inflexible learning structures that favoured inequalities with flexible, open learning structures designed to meet the challenges of social development and globalization. It was also aimed at transforming the labour force "from a low skills base to one that is committed to high quality, lifelong learning", to create a labour market that is more responsive and better equipped to cope with the negative impact poverty and disease have on the workforce, and, in partnership with employers, employees and communities, enhance the employability of South Africa's labour force.

Prior to the new democratic dispensation in South Africa, traditional vocational training for skilled workers happened mainly through apprenticeships. Apprenticeships regulated the training of artisans during the early 1980s. A concept paper by the Department of Labour titled *Improving Apprenticeships in the context of Skills Development in South Africa* (2006, p.5) provides clarity about the relationship between learnerships and apprenticeships. Whilst learnership development, in the main, has focused on addressing the needs of workers previously denied training, for example, production (process) workers across manufacturing-related industries, the apprenticeship system had focused on artisan trades used to support production systems and largely maintenance work. For an apprentice to acquire sufficient technical or trade knowledge, skill and application, he/she would be indentured under an apprenticeship contract to complete a number of N1, N2 and N3 technical and trade courses at a technical college before he/she underwent a trade test in order to become a qualified artisan.

The apprenticeship system had many flaws such as insufficient numbers of apprentices being trained, a lack of work experience opportunities in companies and the abolishment of a tax incentive scheme for employers taking on apprentices. Thus, apprenticeships did not succeed in addressing the needs of the South African labour market. The Department of Labour's guide titled *An Introduction to the Skills Development Strategy* (2001, p.1) maintains that not enough skilled workers were trained to meet the needs of a growing economy. It was obvious that a new system had to be designed to transform the old apprenticeship system. This paved the way for the introduction of learnerships, which build and improved on apprenticeships.

### **An Overview and Legislative Framework of Learnerships**

The *Skills Development Act (97 of 1998)*, which provides the legal underpinnings for learnerships, made many changes and created new forms of professional and vocational education and training. The Act created new structures for training, created new funding incentives to encourage more training, created new forms of learning programmes and proposed new ways of assisting all people get skills and jobs.

Learnerships in the South African context are implemented in a highly regulated environment. Davies and Farquharson (2004, p.185) references Vorwerk (2002b, p.14), who maintains that this is evident in the three core criteria for quality training and learning practices in the workplace, as defined by the National Skills Board Regulations (NSB) of March 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998) and to which all learnership programmes are required to adhere:

[i] *Applied competence*: The ability to put into practice in the relevant context the learning outcomes acquired in obtaining a qualification.

[ii] *Integrated Assessment*: Assessment that permits the learner to demonstrate applied competence, which uses a range of formative (interim) and summative (overall) assessment methods.

[iii] *A qualification*: A planned combination of learning outcomes that as a defined purpose or purposes, which is intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning.

Cherry (2003, p.4) references Mercurio (2001, pp124-125) who maintains that the SDA introduced a new system of learning and learnerships, to replace the old apprenticeship system. The SDA is assisted by twenty- three Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), each representing a different sector of the economy. These SETAs are responsible for establishing and promoting learnerships that will meet the demands of their own sector.

During a learnership, learners spend some time working under the guidance of a skilled worker and some time learning theory. Learnerships apply to all parts of the economy, give a learner a nationally recognized qualification registered by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and is based on an agreement between the learner, an employer, and a training provider. The old way of vocational training was changed by the introduction of learnerships and skills programmes. Both learnerships and skills programmes are meant for people who are already employed as well as people who want to enter the workplace and it promised many benefits.

According to the SDA, there must be a written learnership agreement between a learner, an employer (or group of employers) and a training provider or providers. The learnership agreement places obligations on all three parties: **The employer** must employ the learner for the period defined in the agreement, provide practical work experience and allow the learner to attend off-the-

job education and education sessions. **The learner** must work for the employer and attend any education and training programmes that are specified. **The provider** must offer the education and training that is specified and supports the learner as may be specified. The Act is also explicit about how disputes about a learnership should be resolved.

The *South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act (1995)* created a new framework for education and training in South Africa. This Act set up ways of ensuring the quality of education and training in South Africa. It also set up the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Learnerships are designed to provide theoretical and practical skills development over all sectors for the widest possible population with the objective of formal recognition of skills development within a national qualifications framework. Learnerships lead to a full nationally recognized qualification, which is registered on the NQF. This framework is made up of eight levels of learning and pathways for learning specializations. The level of a qualification is based on the exit level – on what a person will know and can do when he/she finishes their qualification.

Learnerships have several advantages - under the SDA the learnerships provide more than technical skills. The learnerships teach learners both general and specific skills. General skills are fundamental skills, such as language and mathematics, which are needed as the basis for further, lifelong learning. The second are the critical cross-field outcomes e.g. solving problems and teamworking, which must be built into all programmes. Specific skills are the skills, which are needed for a particular job or sector. Learnerships are based on the needs of the economy and its generation is, therefore, "demand-led" – what skills are demanded or needed by the economy.

### **Profile of Footwear and Leather Companies in the Republic of South Africa (RSA)**

This study focuses on learnerships in the footwear sector. From an analysis of the CTFL SETA database (2005), the profile of the sector reflects that there are 457 footwear and leather manufacturing companies in the Republic of South Africa, with an employee strength of 32 774 workers. Footwear and leather companies are mainly concentrated in KwaZulu-Natal (166 companies), Gauteng (101 companies) and Western Cape (109 companies). *The South African Footwear & Leather Industries Association Annual Report (SAFLIA, 2004, p.14)* reflect that the main footwear producing area, in volume terms, is KwaZulu Natal with 62,02%. The Western Cape

and Eastern Cape areas represent 32,83% with the Northern area (mainly Gauteng) producing 5,16% of the total footwear produced in the RSA. The footwear and leather sector accounts for about 15% of total formal employment within the clothing, textile, footwear and leather industry.

According to a Department of Labour booklet titled *The Role of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and the Department of Labour's Provincial Offices* (Budlender, 2001) about 40% of footwear companies employ less than 50 people. This is a sector that is severely affected by globalization and competition, discussed below. *The South African Footwear & Leather Industries Association Annual Report* (SAFLIA, 2004, p.22) indicates that footwear imports are extremely high, accounting for 83% of all footwear sold in the Republic of South Africa. The competitive nature of the domestic market has resulted in an increasing number of companies outsourcing manufacturing. When outsourced to local footwear companies, this resulted in job creation and contributed to growth. However, when companies outsource to foreign companies in China, India, Brazil and Indonesia, this has a catastrophic effect on the sector, which has already experienced severe job losses.

### **Basic Footwear Manufacturing Operations**

In a footwear manufacturing company, the Stores Department acquires the raw materials and shoe components. The personnel of the Stores Department control the stock and distribute it to all departments. The Bottom Stock Department prepares and produces bottom footwear components, e.g. soles and heels. The Clicking Department cuts the upper and lining components from a piece of leather and it is the responsibility of the Closing Department to assemble the cut components to form the closed uppers of the shoes.

The Assembly Department assembles and matches uppers, bottoms and lasts according to a work ticket. The Lasting and Making Section attaches upper and bottom components to form the shoe. The Finishing Section treats the bottom edges, whilst the Shoe Room prepares the aesthetics and dressings to ensure the desired quality. The Dispatch Department is responsible for packaging, delivering and preparing the relevant documentation.

### **Education and Training in the Footwear Sector**

The CTFL SETA's Sector Skills Plan 2005-2010 (CTFL SETA 2006, pp 31-32) shows that a significant portion of the workforce in the footwear sector is in the General Education and Training band. This presents an opportunity for footwear companies to upgrade the educational levels of the workforce in this band through NQF level 2 learnerships. A cause for concern and which also represents a negative image in the footwear sector is that the majority of the workforce is concentrated in the Further Education and Training band with the average formal educational level of the worker being grade 10 (standard 8). There should be a concerted effort to increase the education levels of the workforce in the next five years in order to improve the competitive footing of the sector. Although this represents the potential to move a significant number of employees into the Higher Education and Training band, the poor image of the footwear industry discourages prospective students from studying within the industry.

Most training in the sector takes place within companies, "on the job," and is thus very unstructured. According to the Sector Skills Plan 2005-2010 (CTFL SETA 2006, p. 34) of the CTFL SETA, no higher education institutions in South Africa offer technologist programmes for the footwear industry. National Certificate programmes in leather and footwear manufacturing are offered at a lower level by both public and private education and training institutions that operate within the Further Education and Training band. This places the sector at a severe disadvantage and it is bound to feel the negative impact of such repercussions. This impacts on the footwear industry, which finds it increasingly difficult to compete in global markets. The shortage of graduates in the footwear industry is bound to create a skills shortage in the industry, which will have ramifications for the survival of this industry in the future. Footwear programmes delivered at educational institutions faced with budget cutbacks have not kept pace with technology, thus, leading to inferior training.

According to the CTFL Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) Body statistics (CTFL SETA database 2006), from 2000 to October 2006 twelve footwear companies in the Republic of South Africa were accredited by the CTFL ETQA to offer learnerships for the NQF level 2 National Certificate in CTFL Manufacturing Processes qualification. The fact that these companies have the capacity to roll out learnerships has made Further Education and Training qualifications more

accessible to workers in the footwear sector. This accounts for the large concentration of the workforce in the FET band. Workers are now able to acquire basic production and manufacturing skills in the workplace through a CTFL learnership programme.

The CTFL SETA offers the following support to accredited training providers in the footwear sector: The development of learning materials, resources and assessment tools and instruments, funding in the form of learnership grants, bursaries to upgrade the skills of education and training personnel and monitoring audits and visits to support the various ETQA processes to ensure quality education and training provision.

The Sector Skills Plan 2005-2010 (CTFL SETA 2006, pp 38-40) has revealed that strong links need to be created with educational institutions, especially Further Education and Training Colleges, as well as external training consultants to assist in the delivery of learnerships. A strong technical training base is required to support the sector.

The NQF level 2 learnership programme in footwear manufacturing companies has equipped both employed and unemployed learners with the basic production and manufacturing skills in the footwear sector. This has resulted in a steady supply of FET graduates in the sector.

According to CTFL ETQA statistics (CTFL SETA database 2006,) the learnership graduate rates for the period 2003 to August 2006 for both the footwear and leather sector reflect that 227 employed learners (18.1) and 293 unemployed learners (18.2) graduated with a National Certificate in CTFL Manufacturing Processes. 18.1 learners refer to learners who are already employed by an organization (internal learners), and must be distinguished from 18.2 learners who are unemployed learners (external learners) recruited by a company for the duration of the learnership programme.

### **1.3 RATIONALE: BROAD PROBLEMS AND ISSUES TO BE STUDIED**

Education and Training programmes in the footwear sector includes both formal and informal learning activities to enhance the capacity and skills level of learners. Formal training and



development opportunities are sometimes ineffective and costly in organizational learning in the footwear industry. The very structure of formal learning programmes did not cater for the practical component of the learning, which took place on the factory floor under the guidance of a qualified trainer, coach or mentor. Thus, these programmes have not led to sustained change in the development of workers. Learnership programmes in the footwear industry have a strong experiential learning component that focuses on the relevance of knowledge and the applicability of skills in the workplace. Formal learning programmes in the form of short courses about footwear production and health and safety are sometimes pitched above the formal educational level of most workers in the footwear industry. Thus, these programmes are unlikely to appeal to them. According to an Integrated Training Strategy Document (2005) of Edu Shoes<sup>1</sup>, surveys conducted within the footwear industry, in most regions including KwaZulu-Natal, reflect that the majority of employees have an educational level lower than matric (grade12).

Conner (1997 – 2005, p.1) is of the view that most learning does not occur during formal training programmes. It happens through processes not structured or sponsored by an employer. Informal discussions with Human Resource (HR) Directors in the footwear industry support the argument that formal learning programmes have contributed little to facilitate the transformational shift of learners from being a novice to that of an expert in the footwear manufacturing industry.

The failure of formal education and training programmes to address the skills needs of the footwear sector is exacerbated by the fact that the footwear industry in South Africa is challenged in terms of financial sustainability and global competition owing to the huge impact of cheap Chinese imports, low investment in technology, the high cost of labour and capital. This is threatening the financial sustainability of accredited education and training providers within the footwear industry. China appears set to dominate the global footwear sector in the new dispensation. According to the Sector Skills Plan 2005-2010 (CTFL SETA, 2006, pp 10-11), footwear exports are relatively insignificant, whilst footwear imports account for 83% of all footwear sold in South Africa. Footwear imports doubled from R1 billion in 2000 to virtually R2 billion in 2003. The three leading importing countries were China, Vietnam and Brazil. Thus, it is paramount

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<sup>1</sup> A pseudonym, see case details in Chapter Three.

that the local footwear industry retains its competitive edge in the footwear global market through education and training.

The Sector Skills Plan 2005-2010 (CTFL SETA, 2006, pp 17-18) acknowledges that the impact of global competition is a major determining factor exerting considerable influence on the sector. The competitive nature of retail markets has placed heavy pressure on local manufacturers to improve productivity, price, quality and delivery of products. The future sustainability of the sector depends to a large extent on upskilling the workforce to function at internationally competitive levels. The application of new technologies, especially new modes of production, is having a profound impact on the sustainability of the industry with concomitant effects on human resource planning and skills development. Technological advancement requires a highly skilled workforce with high order skills. There is also a huge demand for operator-level training through the learnership programme. At operator level, the challenge is to multi-skill operators.

The sector is fashion-oriented. The consumer is fashion conscious and internationally mobile. Design capabilities and the linking of design to market requirements are of central importance to the overall success of the sector. It is chiefly on design that companies distinguish themselves from competitors. There are significant gaps to be bridged in the design process and the training process that produces designers through the learnership programme.

A major problem for the sector, as identified by the Sector Skills Plan 2005-2010 (CTFL SETA, 2006, p. 19), is the aging profile of senior management in technical portfolios and the associated failure of the sector to generate replacement skills to fill these emerging high-order technical gaps. The sector requires a large pool of skilled technical labour. Highly skilled and appropriately qualified people will be able to find jobs in the sector in the long term.

The poor image of the sector appears to have discouraged students from seeking an occupational qualification related to the sector. This trend appears to have undermined the advanced skills profile of the sector, emphasizing the importance of a more coordinated development programme in support of their future evaluation – one that covers the full spectrum of skills requirements within the sector.

Accredited training providers do not have the financial means to initiate extensive education and training programmes. This adds up to a deep-seated lack of competitiveness in an industry where success depends on technical knowledge, innovation, efficiency, and responsiveness. Unfortunately most of the workers from within the footwear manufacturing sector have limited skills confined to certain areas of the manufacturing process.

Given the current high employment rate in South Africa, footwear manufacturing companies are unlikely to invest huge sums of money in formal training programmes that focus primarily on the theoretical aspects of footwear production, especially if this means removing learners from the production line to attend such programmes. There is little doubt that skills development underpins any effort to improve the sustainability and growth of the sector. Hence, for this sector to make the “quantum leap” needed to become competitive, learnerships must form an integral component and is central to deliberations in transforming the sector’s workforce into a highly skilled sector with appropriately qualified people that possess high order skills.

Training providers within the footwear industry are not inclined to invest huge financial resources in the development of human capital by investing in educational, training and learning materials and resources in order to upgrade their training facilities so as to enhance informal learning opportunities. It is noted that the manufacturing processes involved in the production of shoes is highly labour intensive, which requires high skills and dexterity. Unemployed learners who are recruited by a footwear company lack the necessary experience, expertise and skills and thus embark on in-house learnership programmes in order to craft their skills and knowledge about footwear manufacturing processes whilst learning informally on the job. Thus, it is paramount that we look into the factors that influence this kind of learning in order to close this gap and thereby increase the performance levels of workers on a footwear learnership programme.

It has yet to be established if informal learning opportunities contribute as much to the success of learnerships as do formal learning opportunities. Learnerships are offered in a workplace environment and the majority of learning that occurs in the workplace is informal. Lohman & Woolf (1998) and Marsick & Watkins (1992), as cited by Lohman (2000, p.84), is of the comprehensive

view that informal learning refers to activities initiated by people in work settings that result in the development of their professional knowledge and skills. Unlike formal learning, informal learning can be either planned or unplanned and structured or unstructured. However, much is still to be discovered about how such learning is best supported, encouraged and developed in a learnership programme.

Informal learning, such as the sharing of perspectives and experiences, giving encouragement, learning through past experiences, sharing materials with other team members, searching the internet for instructional content, experimenting with new learning strategies and other forms of peer learning is one of the benefits of workplace learning and should therefore be the key training and learning strategy of accredited footwear training providers. Thus, the availability of such factors in a footwear learnership programme should be investigated.

The majority of accredited training providers in the footwear industry lack the financial clout to invest in computer technology in their training centres, thus denying employees learning opportunities through internet access. By focusing on e-learning during the learnership programme, employers in the footwear industry will be encouraged to invest in order for employees to develop skills to facilitate more effectively both their own learning and that of others, when they are experiencing a situation that demands such learning during projects and assignments.

#### **1.4 THE RESEARCHER'S INTEREST IN DOING THE STUDY**

There is currently a lack of research studies on how informal learning can be enhanced during a footwear learnership programme. If this gap is bridged then the transfer of skills, knowledge and expertise in footwear manufacturing processes will be facilitated. This research study must be viewed as an opportunity to add to the body of knowledge of informal learning and its relationship with learnerships.

Research studies in the past have failed to acknowledge the role of informal learning activities in the development of learners enrolled on a footwear learnership programme. Smith (1999, p.1) cites

Coffield (2000, p.8) who maintains that informal learning should no longer be regarded as an inferior form of learning whose main purpose is to act as the precursor of formal learning; it needs to be seen as fundamental, necessary and valuable in its own right, at times directly relevant to employment and at other times not relevant at all.

Conner (1997-2005, p.1) supports the views of Coffield (2000) and maintains that informal learning accounts for over 75% of the learning that takes place in organizations today. This finding concurs with the findings of Brinkerhoff & Gill (1994) and Lovin (1992), as referenced by Lohman (2000, p. 84), who argues that recent reports indicate that as much as 90% of new learning is acquired through informal learning activities in the workplace, rather than organizationally planned or sponsored activities away from the workplace. Often, the most valuable learning takes place serendipitously, by random chance. Most companies and organizations, however, focus only on formal learning programs, losing valuable opportunities and outcomes. According to a White paper on Informal Learning (2005, p.1) on an Epic internet site:

*Informal, casual, instant, spot, embedded or workflow learning is now recognized as perhaps the most important form of adult learning, quantifiably more important than formal learning interventions.*

A research study of this nature can inform accredited training providers to improve their own policies, practices and strategies in the training and development of learners doing a footwear learnership programme by enhancing informal learning opportunities in order to guarantee the success of learners.

The researcher's own interest in doing the research stems from the fact that he is the Education Training and Quality Assurance Manager of the Clothing, Textile, Footwear and Leather Sector Education and Training Authority (CTFL SETA) and he quality-assures learnership programmes in the footwear industry. The researcher is therefore interested in how learners can improve their performance levels whilst in a learnership programme. Being cognizant of the fact that the education level of the majority of workers in the footwear industry is low, he is interested in raising the performance levels of learners on a learnership programme by looking at ways in which informal learning can be enhanced, thus improving the performance of learners. In order to achieve this, he is of the view training would be less of a challenge if a more conducive environment for

learning was created within the training facility of accredited footwear training providers so as to encourage informal learning amongst learners in a footwear learnership programme.

## **1.5 THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY**

The study highlights how various factors influence informal learning amongst learners in a footwear learnership programme, thus enabling them to develop their theoretical and practical knowledge base about footwear manufacturing processes informally. The aim of this research study was to identify the factors that influence informal learning in the way learners go about acquiring an implicit or tacit knowledge of footwear manufacturing processes in an accredited education and training environment. Learners in a footwear learnership programme find it difficult to articulate factors that influences what they know and how they crafted such knowledge, therefore the study was developed to discover from the learners the way that informal learning takes place in a footwear learnership programme.

## **1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The following are the objectives of this study:

- 1: To determine how accredited footwear training providers create an education and training environment that encourages and support informal learning opportunities.
- 2: To ascertain the factors that inhibits informal learning opportunities in an education and training environment of accredited footwear training providers.
- 3: To evaluate how these factors impact on the performance levels of learners in a footwear learnership programme.

## **1.7 KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study seeks to answer the following key research questions:

1. What are the factors in an education and training workplace environment that enhance or inhibit informal learning during a footwear learnership programme?
2. How do these factors impact on the performance of learners in a footwear learnership programme?

## **1.8 REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Most of the local and international literature in books, journal articles, internet sites and electronic databases such as Sabinet, Eric, Nexus and EBSCO host focused on the broad definitions, impact, benefits and strategies that facilitate or inhibit informal learning in the workplace and not specifically in a learnership programme. Research supports introducing informal learning, not as a replacement for formal learning activities, but as a complement to them all. Cofer (undated, p.1) referencing Bell and Dale (1999) found that the two elements support one another.

An in-depth study of local literature of the concept of learnerships, the structure, implementation and benefits of a learnership programme was conducted. It must be recognized at the outset that learnerships is an emerging field and the body of applied knowledge is small. The various components of the footwear learnership programme was analysed at three points, i.e., before the commencement of the learnership, during the learnership programme and after the learnership programme, thus giving a clear understanding of how the various components lent itself to informal learning opportunities.

## **1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY**

The following limitations are acknowledged:

- 1: This study focused on a case study of one major footwear manufacturing company only. Limitations included the danger of distortion, since it was not easy to crosscheck information in all cases. A case study might be strongly influenced by the particular sources that are consulted, and might turn out differently with the use of other sources and

methods. A further limitation of case study research is its restricted applicability: case studies are not necessarily generalizable. While the findings from this case study are not intended to be generalizable, it is hoped that the findings from this study can offer practitioners and researchers some insight into the factors that shape or impede informal learning in a learnership programme. The findings of this case study are informed by the particular context and location of this case, which might not apply to other cases.

- 2: The subjectivity of the researcher was also an issue here. The particular bias and positionality of the researcher was likely to influence how the case is constructed and what it revealed. The researcher confirmed that he is an ETQA Manager for the CTFL SETA and that Edu Shoes is an accredited training provider of the CTFL SETA. The researcher had to be aware of how his position impacted on the research.

## **1.10 ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT**

This study is presented in five chapters, which are arranged in the following manner:

**CHAPTER ONE** provides a general background and orientation to this study. The objectives of this study, the key questions, as well as the limitations of this study are presented.

**CHAPTER TWO** comprises the literature review and the theoretical framework used in this study. This chapter commences with a discussion on the structure of learnerships, which is followed by a literature review on past studies and their findings on factors that enhances or inhibits informal learning in workplaces.

**CHAPTER THREE** outlines the research design and methodological paradigm (sampling procedures and methods of data collection). A description of the research instruments used as well as the data analysis techniques employed is presented. This chapter also deals with the reliability and validity of the research methods used and discusses the ethical issues considered during data gathering.



**CHAPTER FOUR** presents an analysis of the data. In this chapter factors were identified which led to the categorization of data using the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of informal learning.

**CHAPTER FIVE** presents the main findings of the research, conclusions and the pertinent recommendations on the basis of the findings.

### **1.11 SUMMARY**

This chapter presented an overview of the research study. This study is located in the footwear learnership programme of the footwear industry in South Africa. A background to the concept, legal mandates and implementation of learnerships in South Africa was provided, together with a profile of the footwear industry in South Africa. The broad based problems in the industry was discussed, followed by the researcher's own interest in the investigation. The key research questions were highlighted followed by some limitations of this research study.

The next chapter reviews past research studies and the body of local literature on learnerships. This chapter also highlights the conceptual and theoretical framework that underpins informal learning as the framework within which this study is undertaken.

## Chapter Two

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the background and orientation to this study. This chapter discusses the literature reviewed with regard to this study as well as the theoretical and conceptual tools utilized.

#### 2.2 OVERVIEW OF LEARNERSHIPS

##### **The Concept, Structure and Benefits of Learnerships**

A learnership is described as a learning programme, which consists of a structured learning component; includes practical work experience of a specified nature and duration; and leads to a qualification registered by the South African Qualifications Authority and related to a qualification (Republic of South Africa 2006, p.5). Learnerships are based on an agreement between the learner, an employer and a training provider.

Learnership qualifications go beyond those traditionally offered through formal education or work-related training systems because they include a wide range of clusters of learning, which are intended to provide portability and potential employability and they are also available to a wider range of learners. The two components of learnerships – structured learning and structured work experience – should be integrally connected as well as contextualised within a work environment.

Structured workplace learning structure the skills, knowledge, appropriate general education, practical applications and values around a particular occupation. Mentors/Trainers with specialised skills are required because this kind of learning depends on a combination of instructional tools. In

the learnership programme the learner requires monitoring and assistance, which is intensive at first and gradually “fades” as he/she becomes more independent and responsible. The researcher is of the view that learnerships must be seen as an essential ingredient for effective workplace skills programmes and the advancement of skills acquisition leading to qualifications and career planning in order to create a highly skilled workforce.

The National Certificate in CTFL Manufacturing Processes is a footwear learnership qualification that is registered on the NQF of SAQA as a level two full qualification for the footwear industry. The structure of this qualification contains both a theoretical component (fundamentals and the core component), which is facilitated in a classroom-like facility and a practical or structured work experience component (the elective component), which is usually conducted on the factory floor.

The COSATU *Learning and Work Guide* (2000, pp.33-45) outlines the structure of a learnership qualification. Unit standards are the building blocks for a learnership qualification. They carry a number of credits, which reflects the number of “notional” hours it takes an average learner to achieve the outcomes of that unit standard. Each unit standard describes the skills, knowledge and values used by a competent person to perform well, not just once, but over a long period of time. The critical cross-field outcomes listed on a unit standard describes the general skills and knowledge that underpins all learning and reflect the abilities which people will acquire. A schedule outlining the proposed learning programme must indicate which standards will be provided through structured learning, and which through structured work experience, and which will still be provided through both. The duration of a learnership is determined by the minimum of 120 credits for the qualification and ideally should run for a minimum period of 12 months or 1200 notional hours (each credit point is equivalent to 10 notional hours of education and training).

The Standards Generating Body (SGB) is responsible for designing the curriculum. All NQF registered learnership qualifications constitute three components: fundamental component, core component and elective component. The **fundamental component**, consisting of languages and numeracy / mathematics, ensures that the learner achieves the competence needed to undertake the qualification as a whole, as well as providing the foundation for further learning.

The **core component** of the qualification contextualises the qualification giving it breadth and depth. The bulk of the general education (theory and practice) is located within the core, making it a launching pad to better equip learners with the best possible competencies about the occupation. The core component of the NQF level 2 footwear learnership comprises the following unit standards: Structure of the Industry, Quality, Productivity, Materials and Occupational Health and Safety. All unit standards in the fundamental component and the core component are compulsory.

The **elective component** comprises choices made from specific standards required for a specific occupation. The elective category covers the more specialised skills and knowledge needed to ensure proficiency in a trade, profession or learning area. Davies, T. and Farquharson, F. (2004, p.186) are of the comprehensive view that this aspect of a learnership concurs with Billet's view (1994) that high quality learning programmes should provide "authentic" learning experiences, with opportunities to learn in real workplace settings where the outcomes matter.

According to the rules of combination for qualifications, the elective component of the NQF level 2 footwear learnership constitutes a choice of any one of the following unit standards: Design, Making, Clicking Process, Closing Process, Finishing Process and Bottom Stock Process.

In terms of the structure of a learnership qualification, formal learning should play a significant role in the fundamental and core component of the learnership programme. The researcher found that in terms of the NQF level 2 footwear qualification, the fundamental requirements are not fit for purpose. It is of concern to the researcher that learners do not complete the entire qualification in the workplace. Learners achieve competence in the core and elective components of the qualification, but not the fundamentals. The researcher is of the view that training providers exploited the minimum selection and recruitment criteria by using the Senior Certificate or a standard 8 (grade 10) academic achievement as an access or selection tool. This granted the learners automatic exemption from the fundamentals, which minimized formal learning opportunities. The researcher maintains that the 36 credit requirement for the fundamentals placed a weighting burden on the qualification leaving little notional time for occupation specific learning and restricting informal learning opportunities. Another serious flaw is that too many credits are

dedicated for a single unit standard in the elective component, which negates multi-skilling opportunities.

The Department of Labour's guide titled *Learnerships, Transforming People Transforming South Africa* (2001), outlines the benefits of learnerships. Organisations benefit from learnerships by employing people with qualifications that are well-trained. Staff development within an organisation is enhanced because work standards and job satisfaction are improved as the learner has a greater self-image and self-esteem.

### **Accreditation of Training Providers to offer Learnerships**

The Clothing, Textile, Footwear and Leather Education and Training Quality Assurance Body (CTFL ETQA) accredit training providers to implement learnerships in order to augment the skills base of all employees in the footwear industry. Training providers are accredited if they can demonstrate that they have a fully equipped training facility, qualified training staff (trainers, assessors and moderators) and a Quality Management System for education and training to implement learnerships successfully. Learnerships are implemented in a highly regulated quality assurance environment, as espoused in the *Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies Regulations* (Gazette no. 19231, 08 September 1998). Training providers must comply by having policies and procedures for finance, learner administration and physical resources. This must be complemented by a comprehensive strategy for the management of assessment including feedback mechanisms to advise learners on the progress of assessments, a recognition of prior learning procedure and a policy and procedure for learner guidance and support. One of the valuable features of conducting this research study at an accredited training centre is the potential richness of resources (computers, electronic media, reference library of machine manuals etc) and support (training managers, work colleagues and mentors) available in the organization. The researcher is of the view that whilst regulations are both important and necessary, the imposition of an over-regulated quality assurance policy for learnership implementation is stifling and ineffective for both the training providers and learners.

### **Learning Materials, Resources and Assessments for Learnerships**

All footwear learning materials and assessment guides are compiled by footwear experts in the industry and cover both theoretical and practical learning activities. Learning materials and resources are aligned to the NQF and customized according to the needs of the individual and the organization, which are supported by educational resources such as charts, swatches, models, machinery and equipment. Learners are provided with all the necessary learning materials and assessment guide per unit standard of the qualification in order to guide and support their learning. They complete group and individual activities or tasks in the learning guides, which are evaluated by a self-assessment instrument in preparation for the actual assessment.

According to the COSATU *Learning and Work Guide* (2000, p.53), assessment refers to measuring and judging a learner's performance against NQF standards. The assessment guide clearly outlines the use of assessment instruments, integrated assessment of learners and the assessment process. Assessment criteria for each unit standard are described in detail. Formative assessments e.g. projects and assignments takes place in a self-study environment in the learner's own time and help to form, shape and reinforce the past learning experiences. Summative assessments takes place at the end of a learning process and is used to see how well everything has been understood and learnt. The core modules, which are theoretical, knowledge-based modules, are assessed via a summative oral or written test. They are conducted in a classroom environment during working hours. Integrated into the assessment instrument are observation-demonstration checklists, which measures practical competencies for the electives on the factory floor. Qualified assessors, who have the relevant technical expertise conduct final assessments, assess the responses of the learners according to a marking framework/memorandum and provide adequate feedback to the learner.

### **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Portfolio of Evidence (Records of Learning)**

The COSATU *Learning and Work Guide* (December, 2000, p. 56) indicates that learners can earn credits for a qualification without attending a course, if they can demonstrate that they already have the skills, knowledge and experience required in the unit standards and qualification. Although RPL is factored into the footwear learnership for the fundamentals, training providers lack the capacity to

implement a RPL procedure for the core and elective components of the qualification. The COSATU *Learning and Work Guide* (December, 2000, p.61) defines a portfolio of evidence (PoE) as a personal record of knowledge, skills and experience, which is a reflection of theoretical and practical experience/expertise of the learner over a period of time. Learners on a footwear learnership compile a PoE, which can be used and re-used in planning for personal and career development.

### **2.3 PAST RESEARCH STUDIES ON LEARNERSHIPS**

Learnerships are a recent innovation and the body of applied knowledge is small. Some of the past studies on learnerships that have implications for this research study are discussed below.

Cherry (2003) examines how mentoring in a Wholesale and Retail learnership can be managed effectively. Her rationale is based on the perception that companies failed to identify a mentor when the learnership was initiated and that when mentors were appointed, they lacked the time and direction to do justice to their mentoring functions. Cherry (2003) cites some of the key challenges to mentoring such as the lack of education about mentoring in a learnership, the disinterested attitude of most employers towards establishing a learning environment that would encourage and support learning and the lack of proper structures for the implementation and support of mentoring. She concluded that a participatory management approach to the management of mentoring in a learnership should be introduced and that mentoring actions should display team effort, support and commitment. The findings of this study are relevant in that the creation of a supportive learning environment is an important catalyst to any learning process. The researcher agrees with Cherry (2003), who supports a participatory management approach to the management of mentoring in a learnership programme, which reflects a learning-committed leadership management that reinforces and supports the development of others. This kind of approach facilitates coaching and mentoring both on a lateral plane (from peer to peer) and on a vertical plane (from manager, supervisor or facilitator to learner). Coaching and mentoring results in learning flowing up and down the organization.

Smith, Jennings and Solanki (2004) provide a critique of South Africa's attempt to transform apprenticeships. Their data suggests that learnerships provide important opportunities for those at work to learn new theoretical and practical capabilities and thus deepen the skills base of the South African economy. Using data from the 2004 baseline survey of the learnership programme in South Africa, this research set out to determine the extent to which learnerships have served the needs of beneficiaries operating within the different spheres of South Africa's dual economy. The aim of the survey was to assess the internal and external efficiency and effectiveness of learnerships. Information was collated from 12 SETAs, related to 5767 completed learners and 655 employers. The two central questions of this paper were: To what degree have learnerships served the needs of the economy; and to what degree have SETAs contributed to the success or otherwise of learnerships? An important finding was that eight out of ten learners (77%) selected the learnership that best suited their career path, 15% did so to gain qualifications and work experience and improve their prospects of future employment. A massive 94% of the respondents were satisfied with the availability of the information that they received at the beginning of the learnership on issues such as the curriculum, how the programme is to be delivered, and how learners are to be assessed. These findings are significant because it relates to motivation, which is critical in the learning process.

A positive finding, reflecting well on training providers and learners are the high ratings given for two important aspects of the theoretical training –the trainers and their materials. In terms of the trainers, the vast majority of learners (95%) felt that the trainers were knowledgeable. The same proportion (95%) of learners perceived the trainers as making themselves available when required. In terms of the language used by trainers one in ten (11%) learners felt that the language used by trainers were of a technical nature that was difficult to understand. On the whole, learners were equally enthusiastic about the materials used in the training. 92% agreed or strongly agreed that materials were well written, the materials were applicable to future workplace situations (93% of learners supported the statement), and that the materials related to real life situations (94% of learners were of this opinion). In addition, employers had assessed the role of training in the workplace and only a very small number of employers (4%) reported that learners were often frustrated by the training and it's relation to their actual work. The ratings of on-the-job training by learners ranged from 0 to 10, with an average of 7.96. The above findings are indicative of the



importance of the learning resources and context in creating a supportive learning structure that enhances informal learning. The customization of the learning resources according to the needs of the individual and the organization stimulates the learning process.

During the learnership, a learner is meant to have a supervisor appointed at work to support him/her and give advice during the learnership. Similarly, a mentor is supposed to be appointed from outside their place of work to also provide support and advice from a different perspective. One in 8 (13%) learners claimed that they did not have a supervisor appointed to assist them at work. Similarly, 7% of employers stated that they had not appointed a supervisor for their learners. In contrast to the situation surrounding the appointment of supervisors, three-fifths (59%) of learners did not have a mentor during the learnership programme. Mentoring is an important catalyst for the informal learning process, if learning is to flow through an organization.

On the question of whether the theoretical training gave learners the necessary skills to do their job during the on-the-job training, the vast majority (96%) of learners claimed that their training had given them the right skills. In general, the findings reflect that most learners felt their environment at work was supportive. On probing as to how completing the learnership had affected the level of confidence of respondents, more than 9 out of every 10 (95%) learners stated that the learnership had made them more confident while 4% said their level of confidence was still the same. Only 1% felt that the learnership had made them less confident. This finding is significant because there is a triangular relationship between support, challenge and confidence in the learning process.

The study also brought to light several features of vocational and educational training. The first is the high number of learners who recorded that prior learning had been recognized, thus facilitating the informal learning process. The recognition of past learning experiences is central to the informal learning process because it guides the self-reflection process, which is an important catalyst for self-directed learning.

Davies and Farquharson (2004) contributed to what is known about learnerships through examining a series of pilot projects implemented between 1997 and 2001 in KwaZulu-Natal. These projects were set up with the specific purpose of testing the effectiveness of the National

Learnership Programme. A key finding of this study was concerned with how learnerships are managed: the effective delivery of a learnership programme and its outcomes required the involvement of key stakeholders from the outset, to clarify stakeholder roles and accountabilities, to put in place an effective contract management system for Lead Service Providers and to monitor learners appropriately. A model for managing learnerships in a multi-stakeholder context was presented for further testing and review.

Some of the important recommendations that have implications for this research study include: A "stakeholder mapping exercise" should be carried out at the outset in order to identify who should be involved and what their roles should be, a communication mechanism must be established to ensure that relevant information flowed freely in a streamlined way amongst and between consortium members and learners, a "feedback loop" be put in place to ensure that the relevant parties are kept apprised of the progress and problems as they emerge.

Based on the above recommendations, Davies (2001b) proposed a model where a training provider served as the Lead Agency. They arranged with one or more agencies to use their workplaces to deliver the workplace components of a nationally recognized qualification. The training provider took full responsibility for training and assessment, but drew on the expertise of employees in those workplaces. The training provider also customized the qualification to meet the needs of the workplace, which is paramount in facilitating informal learning. These findings have important implications for the creation of a positive and stimulating learning environment.

## **2.4 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Although no single theoretical model of informal learning exists, the researcher attempted to arrive at a design of a credible structure by studying the research papers of a number of experts. In an effort to address the key questions, a combination of concepts, theories and models are employed. Findings of research studies on factors that influence informal learning that apply to other professions and organizational contexts are replicated in this research study to note if similar factors enhances or inhibits the way learners learn informally in a footwear learnership programme.

Some of the theories that inform and underpin the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study are discussed below.

### **Definitions of Informal Learning**

There is no single or common definition of informal learning on which to base a structured theoretical framework for this research study. Conlon (2004, p. 288) cites Coffield (1996) who agrees that the theoretical implications and challenges are to reach a common definition on what informal learning is and who it serves, in part because informal learning cannot be measured by readily accessible information on qualifications and participation rates. A conceptual understanding of informal learning is essential if one is to unravel the factors that impact on informal learning in any profession or context.

Marsick & Watkins (1990, 2001) developed an informal learning model, which is espoused in their definitions of informal learning that could be applied to a learnership context. Marsick & Watkins (2001, p. 25) maintain that informal learning is usually intentional but not highly structured. Examples include self-directed learning, networking, coaching, mentoring and performance planning that includes opportunities to review learning needs.

In another study on informal learning, Marsick & Watkins (1990, pp 6-7) state that informal learning refers to learning outside formally structured, institutionally sponsored, classroom-based activities. As a result, informal learning often takes place under non-routine conditions, that is, when the procedures and responses that people normally use fail. In such cases, people may become aware of many tacit, hidden, taken-for-granted assumptions. In the process of doing this, people often reframe the problem they are experiencing, that is, they realize that a particular situation can be defined and solved in many different ways.

Carnevale (1984) highlights the following factors in his definition of informal learning: supervision, observation of fellow workers, learning from one's mistakes, reading, self-study, and other unstructured ways of acquiring learning in the course of doing one's job.

The following definition of Marsick & Watkins (1990, pp 14-15) provides a possible backdrop to a theoretical model that best matches the structure of a footwear learnership programme and its relevance to informal learning. They note that some organizations provide structure and design to what otherwise would be considered informal learning. For example, an organization might initiate a mentor programme, designate certain recognized experts as coaches, or institute a career development system that includes planning for learning outside the classroom. These activities can be informal learning when they take place naturally in the course of human interaction, or even when the person sets out to work with someone with whom he or she periodically interacts. But a mentoring programme might include predesigned meeting times scheduled by the organization, not the learner, whether or not they are needed. Alternatively, a coach may be asked to follow a highly prescriptive process. It is difficult for trainers to structure or predesign informal learning, but it can be enhanced.

Marsick & Watkins (2001, p. 28) cite Marsick and Volpe (1999) who conclude that informal learning can be characterized as follows:

- [i] It is integrated with daily routines.
- [ii] It is triggered by an internal or external jolt.
- [iii] It is not highly conscious.
- [iv] It is haphazard and influenced by chance.
- [v] It is an inductive process of reflection and action.
- [vi] It is linked to learning of others.

The various concepts described by Marsick & Watkins on informal learning serve to highlight the complex nature of the concept while at the same time presents a broader understanding of the concept.

Conner (1997 – 2005, pp1-2) describes an alternative view of informal learning by stating that it is a lifelong process whereby individuals acquire attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment.

Smith (1999, p.3) cites Dale and Bell (1999) who define informal learning somewhat more narrowly as:

*Learning which takes place in the work context, relates to an individual's performance of their job and / or their employability, and which is not formally organized into a programme or curriculum by the employer. It may be recognized by the different parties involved, and may or may not be specifically encouraged.*

The most relevant definition applicable to this study is offered by Ellinger (undated, p.2), who acknowledges that informal learning may be planned or unplanned, structured or unstructured, but usually incorporates a degree of consciousness about the learning that is taking place.

Smith (1999, p.3) adds impetus to the above definition by citing Veronica McGivney, who uses the following definitions in her study:

[i] Learning that takes place outside a dedicated environment and which arises from the activities and interests of individuals and groups, but which may not be recognized as learning.

[ii] Non course-based learning activities (which might include discussion, talks or presentations, information, advice and guidance) provided or facilitated in response to expressed interests and needs by people from a range of sectors and organizations (health, housing, social services, employment services, education and training services, guidance services).

[iii] Planned and structured learning such as short courses organized in response to identified interests and needs but delivered in flexible and informal ways and in informal community settings.

The very structure of a footwear learnership programme contradicts the definition provided by Dale and Bell (1999), because the fundamental and core components of the footwear learnership programme takes place in a structured environment. However, since the elective component of the footwear learnership programme is conducted on the factory floor, this lends itself to a myriad of informal learning opportunities. Ellinger's (undated) definition contradicts the definition of Dale and Bell (1999), because certain components of the footwear learnership curriculum take place in a learning environment well-suited for informal learning, although it is planned and structured.

Cofer (undated) cite various authors, who support the views of the experts in the field of informal learning, namely, Marsick & Watkins. Cofer (undated, p.1) cite Rusaw (1995, p.218), who has referenced the work of Marsick & Watkins, suggests that informal learning

*...is a process of learning that takes place in everyday experience, often at subconscious levels.*

Marsick & Watkins (1997) add that not only is informal learning unique to the individual, but control of learning rests primarily in the hands of the learner. Informal learning, as defined by the Education Development Centre, is that

*...in which the learning process is neither determined nor designed by the organization, regardless of the formality [or] informality of the goals and objectives toward which the learning is directed. (Stamps 1998, p.32).*

All of the above definitions are deemed to be relevant in some way or another for the purposes of this research study. These definitions also illustrate that there are many factors associated with informal learning such as self-directed learning, networking, coaching, mentoring, performance planning, discussions, talks, presentations, information, advice and guidance, reading, self-study and career development. These are factors that are not only visible, but play an important role in a footwear learnership programme.

The main point of divergence seems to be the lack of agreement about the format and circumstances under which informal learning occurs. The fundamental point in all the definitions applicable to this research study is the fact that it relates to learning that is not highly structured, is an inductive process of reflection and action and is linked to learning of others.

This study acknowledges the difficulty of identifying a specific definition of informal learning, and therefore utilizes the broad definitions of Marsick & Watkins (1990) and Ellinger (undated) as appropriate to this study.

### **Learning from Experience**

A central feature of informal learning is learning from and through past experience. By learning from experience we mean the way in which people make sense of situations they encounter in their daily lives in learning from experience, however, much is left to chance. A considerable body of literature has dealt with various aspects of learning from past experiences

Marsick & Watkins (1990, pp 19-20) are of the view that perhaps the best-known perspective on learning from experience in the United States is that of Kolb (1984). Kolb suggests that people apprehend and transform their experience differently. Some apprehend through concrete experience (CE), and others through abstract conceptualization (AC). Some transform through reflective observation (RO), and others through active experimentation (AE). These two dimensions interact, resulting in both a typology of learning styles and an experiential learning cycle that moves from experiencing to observing to conceptualizing to experimenting and back to experiencing.

An alternative to Kolb's theory is that of Cell (1984), who identifies four levels of change in people, each of which can involve a different domain of experiential learning, and each of which builds on the previous domain: response learning focused on behaviour change, situation learning involving interpretation, trans-situation learning centred on autonomy, and transcendent learning leading to creativity. Cell brings to informal learning theory a greater reliance on the way in which learners ascribe meaning to their experience and highlights the multiple perspectives needed to interpret experience. His emphasis on autonomy and creativity for higher levels of change is relevant to the conditions that can enhance informal learning.

While differing in their orientation, Kolb and Cell emphasize several dimensions that are relevant to informal learning applicable to this research study. Perhaps the most appropriate theoretical model is that of Argyris and Schon (undated), who note that we learn from experience by drawing inferences from what people say and do. They introduce "the ladder of inference" to illustrate this process. The first rung of the ladder represents the directly observable data of what is said and done in a situation. As we move to successively higher rungs on this ladder of inference, we impose personal, social, cultural, and organizational meanings on the directly observable data. We make errors because we jump from the directly, observable data to higher-level inferences, which we assume are accurate and upon which we then act. Error can be reduced if we illustrate our inferences with directly observable data. Then we inquire from the other persons in the situation as to the accuracy of our assumptions. When we do this, we make explicit the reasoning implicit in our thinking and of others. This allows all parties to publicly test the accuracy of assumptions, including our reasoning and learning.

Since this study aims to explore the experiences of learners during a footwear learnership and learning opportunities elicited by such experiences, the researcher found Schultz's propositions to be informative, although it represents an earlier view on learning through past experiences. Eraut (2004, pp 251-252) cite Schultz (1967) points out that each of us is embedded in a continuous flow of experience throughout our lives. Discrete experiences are distinguished from this flow and become meaningful when they are accorded attention and reflected upon. The "act of attention" brings experiences, which would otherwise simply be lived through, into the area of conscious thought, where treatment may vary from actual comprehending to merely noting or hardly noticing. Such attention may be given on a number of occasions, each conferring a different meaning on the experience according to the meaning-context of the moment. Schultz (1967) suggest that there are many linkage possibilities for any one episode, each conferring upon it a different meaning and significance. Reflecting on these activities results in increased job performance.

Reflecting on past experiences is critical in the way an 18:1 learner (learner recruited from within the company) learns during the core and elective component of the footwear learnership programme. They would draw on their past experiences especially when reflecting on the different footwear manufacturing operations. Owing to the learner's exposure and experience within the footwear industry, he/she is most likely to learn informally through reflection and self-directed learning practices.

### **Reflection and learning**

Any discussion on learning through past experiences must of necessity begin with the concept of reflection. Many theorists have explored this concept of reflection, but the researcher found the views of John Dewey to be interesting. He said that education must address the notion of reflective thought. According to Dewey (1966, p.295), thought or reflection is the discernment of the relation between what we try to do and what happens in consequence. No meaningful experience is possible without some element of thought. Reflective thought begins with an ambiguous situation, which in some way presents a dilemma to an individual. From this "felt difficulty," the individual locates and defines the problem. The third step is a consideration of solutions with analysis of their many angles. This leads to observation and experimentation and, finally, to a decision to act or not



on these suggestions. Dewey's notion of reflective thought is clearly similar to the scientific method as it is applied to everyday experience and action. Dewey (1966, p.311) maintains that:

*The function of reflective thought is, therefore, to transform a situation in which there is experienced obscurity, doubt, conflict, disturbance of some sort, into a situation that is clear, coherent, settled, harmonious ...*

Argyris and Schon (undated) bring several important dimensions to our definition of informal learning and learning through past experiences. Firstly, they suggest that learning takes place under conditions of surprise, the non-routine circumstances that require heightened attention, experimentation, and determination of the nature of a problem. Secondly, they point out that critical reflection is called for in these circumstances, that is, digging below taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions so that one can reframe the situation. Marsick & Watkins (1990, p. 29) cite Mezirow (1985, p.25) who defines critical reflectivity as follows:

*... the bringing of one's assumptions, premises, criteria, and schemata into consciousness and vigorously critiquing them.*

Imel (1998, p. 1) cite Mezirow (1991, p.167) who expands on the above definition by maintaining that for learners to change their "meaning schemes (specific beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions), " they must engage in critical reflection on their experiences, which in turn leads to a perspective transformation.

According to Baumgartner (2001, p.17), Mezirow concentrates on the importance of rational thought and reflection in the transformative learning process. People engage in critical reflection and re-evaluate the assumptions they have made about themselves and their world. Reflections on their meaning perspectives, or their overarching "structure of assumptions", or their meaning schemes, which include their beliefs and values or "habitual, implicit rules for interpreting experience," can result in a perspective transformation or change in world view (Mezirow, 2000, p.2) Thirdly, people engage in "reflective discourse" (Mezirow, 2000, p.11).

Imel (1998, p. 2) adds impetus to this discussion on critical reflectivity by stating that Mezirow (1997) maintain that individuals change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their

assumptions and beliefs and consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds.

Critical reflectivity requires that learners in a footwear learnership programme check out their assumptions before blindly acting on them, pay attention to surprising results and inquire into their meaning, ask probing questions, and reframe their understanding of what a problem might be.

### **Non-Routine versus Routine Learning Experiences**

Embedded knowledge about footwear production coming from past and discrete experiences in the footwear manufacturing environment become meaningful when they are accorded attention and reflected upon by learners. Learners are involved in highly routinized behaviour when they engage in footwear manufacturing operations for a long period. Typically, it also involves recognition of situations by comparison with similar situations encountered previously, and responding to them with already learned procedures. During assessments, learners accord attention to these footwear manufacturing operations, which involves the conscious use of prior knowledge, sometimes in accustomed ways, sometimes in novel ways or in a more critical manner.

Footwear manufacturing operations are sometimes complex and may result in a learner experiencing many problems that he or she has not encountered previously. Using the theoretical frameworks of Marsick & Watkins, Argyris and Schon (undated) and Mezirow (1985) on critical reflectivity, the researcher attempted to interrogate the minds of learners to ascertain how they went about reframing problems encountered during footwear manufacturing operations during the learnership programme, in search of a solution and how this process could have led to self-directed learning. The above discussion provides a background to the routine and non-routine learning processes and how both learning processes leads to problem-solving.

This research study is influenced by the theoretical framework of Marsick & Watkins (1990, pp 6-22), who argue that informal learning speaks of learning outside formally structured, institutionally sponsored, classroom-based activities. As a result, informal learning often takes place under non-routine conditions, that is, when the procedures and responses that people normally use fail. Learned responses and habitual ways of acting are least likely to work under these conditions. The

situation might be completely new and thus fully non-routine; or it might be potentially routine, but treated as non-routine for some reason. In such cases, people may become aware of many tacit, hidden, taken-for-granted assumptions. In the process of doing this, people often reframe the problem they are experiencing, that is, they realize that a particular situation can be defined and solved in many different ways. Problems are formulated so that creative solutions can be sought. People also have a much larger, more fluid repertoire of previous solutions to draw upon as needed. They contend that individuals also often learn from their successes. People draw on these models when they judge a new situation to be similar.

Marsick & Watkins characterize their model of informal learning as a problem solving approach that is not straightforward or prescriptive. They contend that the cycle is embedded with sub-surface beliefs, values, and assumptions that guide action at each stage. In this model, informal learning is influenced by how people frame a situation as a problem that is typically a non-routine problem. Informal learning takes place along a continuum of conscious awareness. As they frame it within their context based upon their beliefs and assumptions that are often unconscious, they consider strategies for solving that problem. Through this process, there is a presence of action and reflection and there are often intended and unintended consequences as a result of the learning process.

Lohman (2000, pp 84-85) cite Cseh et al (1999), who maintains that individuals respond to potential learning experiences by engaging in a series of steps that closely resemble the steps of the problem-solving process of Marsick & Watkins. In a re-conceptualized model of informal learning, Lohman (2000) describes these steps as: (a) framing the context, (b) responding to triggers to a potential learning experience, (c) interpreting the experience, (d) examining alternative solutions, (e) choosing learning strategies, (f) producing alternative solutions, (g) assessing intended and unintended consequences, and (h) evaluating lessons learned. She cites Cseh et al (1999) and Jarvis (1987a, 1987b), who maintain that as individuals successfully navigate through these problem-solving steps, reflective learning occurs.

The researcher is of the belief that facilitators in a learnership programme typically deal with non-routine situations. No matter how often they have given a course or how closely they are following

scripts in a packaged curriculum, facilitators always have to deal with many “unknowns” because of differences in the learners and the group’s dynamics. Creative skills and technological skills are critical to seeking solutions in a learnership programme.

Schon (1983) suggests that experts question routine situations. Marsick & Watkins (1990, p.23) are of the view that informal learning, by definition, is non-routine because it occurs in an indeterminate, unsystematic, uncontrolled context. The task of learning for a learning activity or footwear manufacturing operation during a learnership programme may be made more or less routine by the presence or lack of a systematic learning-how-to-learn process. Nevertheless, the nature of the process of inquiry remains “messy, multivariate, back-forth-many-stages-all-at-once” (McClellan, 1983). It is this persistently non-routine characteristic of informal learning which produces the need for skill in critical reflection among informal learners, and the need to make explicit the tacit knowledge they bring to the task.

In any given complex problem during a learnership programme, when a learner’s attention is being pulled to a specific task or manufacturing operation, he/she must decide what to include or exclude from their interpretation of a problem. Learners draw on their past experiences and, most importantly, they draw on frameworks for understanding that which they have already developed because they do not have time to build a new framework from scratch. It is only when they think that the framework does not match the experience that they will develop a new framework. In most problems encountered during the learnership programme, there are a lot of reasons for trying to use their existing mental frameworks since they are being pushed to carry out assigned tasks and reach assigned goals. However, many errors occur because they have put their attention in the wrong place or excluded important signals from the context that would lead them to different inferences.

Eraut (2004, pp 260-262) explores this argument further and agrees with the theoretical framework of Marsick & Watkins in this regard. Much of Eraut’s discussion offers some clarification on routinized behaviour, which at most is semi-conscious and is often characterized by rapid decision making within a period of continuous, semi-routinized action. He is of the view that it involves recognition of situations by comparison with similar situations encountered previously, then

responding to them with already learned procedures. It involves the conscious use of prior knowledge, sometimes in accustomed ways, sometimes in novel ways or in a more critical manner. Even when there is no emergency, experienced people typically prefer to do many things quickly and smoothly if they are confident in their own proficiency. Both the development of proficiency and learning to cope with pressures for rapid action involve routinization and further work. Routinization leads to knowledge becoming less explicit and less easily shared with others, i.e. more tacit. People are able to make such decisions because they recognize the situation quickly and “know what to do” as a result of their prior experience.

Erout (2004) cites Simon (1965), who contends that the concept of routine vs. non-routine work has enjoyed a long intellectual tradition. Given the large quantities of information we deal with, we place boundaries on the scope of data to which we will attend. We often use heuristics or rules of thumb, which experience tells us lead to acceptable solutions most of the time; hence they “satisfy.” But these heuristics may also limit our search for solutions.

A learner’s past experience about footwear production and the footwear industry itself would, to a large extent, determine the degree to which a learner will reflect when handling familiar or unfamiliar tasks during the learnership programme. An 18.1 learner, who is recruited from within the company or industry will use previous experience to reflect on familiar footwear operations and is most likely to use his/her experience when attempting to solve unfamiliar problems. The learner will use his/her implicit knowledge about particular footwear operations in an attempt to reframe the problem and this will eventually lead to self-directed learning. Learners will have to reflect on their thought processes when dealing with familiar (routine) or unfamiliar (non-routine) problems pertaining specifically to footwear manufacturing processes or learning tasks or activities about the footwear industry itself.

### **Coaching and Mentoring**

The management of coaching and mentoring in a learnership requires an organizational culture that will support and sustain the process. Footwear employers are expected to provide the necessary resources to ensure that active learning at the workplace takes place under supervision and guidance of a visionary coach or mentor. All employers have to be responsible for creating a

learning environment that is supportive and provides an active mentoring or coaching system at the workplace. Mentoring and coaching is central to the learning process and paramount for quality education and training provision.

Policies and procedures in the Quality Management System of accredited footwear training providers must reflect structures for learner guidance and support in the form of coaching and mentoring. This must be available to learners at three points of the learnership programme: before commencement of the learnership programme, during the learnership programme and on completion of the learnership programme. Management of assessment, including learner feedback mechanisms to advise learners on the progress of assessments, learner appeal and re-write procedures etc. are some of the structures that the accredited footwear training provider must have in place to guide the level of coaching and mentoring process that may be required by learners.

For the purposes of this research study a good understanding of coaching and mentoring is provided by Bryson (2001, p. 7), as cited by Cherry (2003, p. 18). He defines mentoring as:

*... a nurturing process in which a more skilled or experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development. Mentoring functions are carried out within the context of an ongoing, caring relationship between the mentor and mentee.*

Smith, Jennings and Solanki (2005, p.557) draw a distinction between coaching/supervision and mentoring. They argue that supervision deals with the training component of the learnership, whilst mentoring is seen as providing support to ensure social integration into the job, giving advice on career options, sharing ideas with regards to the skills and capacities necessary for the job, and ultimately helping the person become more effective in their current position. The key distinction between the two is that, whereas the coach/supervisor is defined in terms of an organisation's hierarchy, the mentor, on the other hand, is not bound by that hierarchy. In many instances, the mentor might not be linked to the business unit/factory floor etc., within which the participant is based. Rather, mentors are selected because of their interpersonal skills and ability to, for example, transfer tacit knowledge, be supportive and provide objective advice to those they are mentoring.

Many researchers are of the view that the coach or mentor should lead by example (role modeling) and motivate and encourage the learner (mentee) to improve his/her performance. Research on how learners learn on the job or learn in the workplace demonstrates that they often learn through cognitive apprenticeships. Kerka (1997, p. 2) concurs and makes reference to studies of practitioners in several professions (Farmer, Buckmaster, & LeGrand, 1992), which reveal that what helped them most in learning to deal with ill-defined, complex, or risky situations is having someone model how to understand and deal with the situations and guide their attempts to do so. Learners in a learnership programme look to coaches and mentors to fulfill this role for them.

In the case of this research study, the facilitator fulfilled the role of both coach and mentor. Macneil (2001, p.5) cites Rogers (1977), who defines a facilitator as someone who creates a learning environment, and is responsible for providing the resources, which will enable people to learn. The facilitator will encourage individuals to "break through", and to discover their potential.

### **Collaboration and Teamwork**

During a footwear learnership programme, there is mutual construction of new knowledge including the capacity for concerted collaborative action. Eraut (2004, p.247) argues that informal learning recognizes the social significance of learning from other people, but implies greater scope for individual agency than socialization. He draws attention to the learning that takes place in the spaces surrounding activities and events with a more overt formal purpose, and that takes place in a much wider variety of settings than formal education or training. The practical theory of a learner's personal construct is embedded through continuous communication and interaction either through daily experiences, being in dialogue with others or observing colleagues. Marsick & Watkins (1990, p. 29) share a similar view and argue further that new employees learn the ropes by observing others and following them.

Heron's (1999) definition of a work team, as cited by Macneil (2001, pp 2-3), is very appropriate for this research study. He defines a work team as a number of people with the relevant skills, who work together to achieve their task objectives. For teamwork to be successful, the group will need to have a defined range of roles, rules for the members' interaction, and an agreed system of

decision-making. Team learning is defined as a process where the team creates knowledge for both its own members and for others in the organization.

Teamworking is one of the critical cross-field outcomes of the NQF level 2 footwear learnership programme. Team experiences add greater value to personal development and tend to determine performance standards. Team members who do not meet these standards are normally motivated to seek and accept opportunities to enable them to achieve these standards. Learners engage in teamwork and make explicit their craft knowledge in pursuance of their growth and development. There is mutual construction of new knowledge including the capacity for concerted collaborative action. Marsick & Watkins (2001, p. 28) express the view that:

*... an organization can encourage peers to work and learn collaboratively"*

Imel (1995) also endorses a "collaborative approach" as a means of reinforcing critical thinking and teamwork required to transform workplaces into high performance, continuous improving organizations

Another way of perceiving teamwork is through the concept of community of practice. Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that wherever people engage for substantial periods of time, day-by-day, in doing things in which their ongoing activities are interdependent, learning is part of their changing participation in changing practices. This is referred to as participation in communities of practice.

In developing a learning community, Marsick & Watkins (1990, p. 210) cite Smith (1987, p.40), who is of the view that:

*...when organizational structure maximizes participation, human interaction, and flexibility in carrying out roles, the possibilities for learning through day-to-day activities are maximized.*

Another way of viewing this network or community of practice is through Bernstein's (1990) construct of framing. Bernstein developed the notion of classification and framing of knowledge. In his terms, framing of knowledge is strong when there is a sharp boundary between what may be transmitted and what may not be transmitted in a learning relationship. It is therefore possible to identify strong or loose framing with the learners, whilst operating in a group.



Mitchell & Sackney (2000, p.59) add value to this discussion by pointing out that the presence of a learning community in an organization will allow for the existence of a well functioning team of people who “work and learn together.” They are of the view that situated learning may be viewed as involving participation in communities of practice and found that learning is an aspect of changing participation in changing “communities of practice” everywhere. Boud and Middleton (2003, p. 195) cite Wenger (1988), who maintain that social participation within the community is the key to informal learning. It is embedded in the practices and relationships of the workplace and helps to create identity and meaning. It both complements and can substitute for formal learning mechanisms.

Applefield, Huber and Richard (2001) cites Brown (1994), and Brown and Campione (1994) who are of the comprehensive view that the concept of learning communities is the ideal learning culture for group instruction. These communities focus on helping group members learn, by supporting one another through respectful listening and encouragement. Applefield, Huber and Richard (2001) cite Kaufman (1996, p.44) who states:

*Learning does not occur in a vacuum and is best mediated through supportive social networks.*

This research study was influenced by the perceptions of Marsick & Watkins (1990) on collaboration and group learning. Marsick & Watkins (1990, pp 36-40) cite a report from the *Work in America Institute* (1985), which encourages an active, non-hierarchical form of interaction among work teams, managers, and trainers along with peer learning among co-workers. They posit that a study by Lippitt and Knowles points to learning at a collective level, not just at the individual level. They are of the belief that collective learning is the distinguishing feature of workplace learning, and that it plays a particularly strong role in informal learning because people learn through interaction in bounded social groups that are connected by common organizational goals. With regard to organizational learning, the learning of one person is inextricably intertwined with the learning of others in natural work groups. Citing Boot and Reynolds (1983, p.8) they point out, from one perspective, others are valuable because they provide feedback or shape another’s behaviour; and that they can also be seen as “negotiators in the construction of social reality.”

They make a convincing argument for collaboration and teamwork in the workplace by citing Luft's and Ingram (1961), who developed the Johari Window, which suggests that individuals grow by being open to others. Through feedback they learn how others see them. Through self-disclosure they open themselves to the potential of more intimate relationships and also subject more of their perceptions about themselves to public reflection. In this process, others may help shape and affirm their self-understanding.

Marsick and Watkins (1990, pp 41-46) suggest that in groups, we as individuals think and learn differently as a result of our interaction with others. Groups learn when they monitor the effectiveness of the process of group interaction while simultaneously attending to getting the task done. They note, however, that when organizations learn, individuals become agents who in some way influence the way others in the organization think, act, and learn. They suggest that all individuals are part of larger social groups, both within and outside organizations. At the minimum, people function within defined work groups and often network with other work groups across functions. It is clear that individuals seldom act solely on their own behalf in the workplace.

Lohman (2000, p.85) provides an alternative view to group learning that inhibits informal learning, which has implications for this research study. Based on the studies of Brown and Duguid (1991) of canonical and non-canonical practices in organizations, she suggests that different outcomes result from these two approaches: Canonical practices represent espoused and sanctioned practices of organizations, whereas non-canonical practices represent naturally occurring practices of emergent or existing communities of practice in organizations. These communities are seldom recognized by the organization. Lohman (2000, p.85), referencing Brown & Duguid (1991, p. 47) argue that it is through non-canonical practices that:

*...learners can in one way or another be seen to construct their understanding out of a wide range of materials that include ambient social and physical circumstances and the histories and social relations of the people involved."*

Attempts to reorganize the workplace into canonical groups can actually disrupt highly functioning non-canonical communities and thereby decrease individual and group learning. As such, a more

productive approach to foster informal learning is to create organizational environments that do not inhibit individuals and groups of individuals from learning on their own.

Collaboration and teamwork is central in the way learners develop their skills and knowledge during a footwear learnership programme. Opportunities for collaboration and teamwork is critical in the way an 18:2 learner (an unemployed learner with no previous experience in the footwear industry) crafts his/her knowledge informally through interaction with other more experienced workers. Learners craft their knowledge about footwear production processes by engaging in long periods in a specific department with fellow colleagues, departmental managers and coaches or mentors who gladly use sit-by-Nelly techniques or methods to demonstrate to the learner clicking, closing or finishing operations in the production of shoes.

### **Learning through Context**

Research on how people learn in the workplace demonstrates that the learning that takes place is constructivist, situated learning. Interaction between a learner and the learnership environment takes place continually and this forms the basis for the learning process.

Ellinger (undated, p.1) cites Knowles (1984) and Merriam & Caffarella (1999), who were of the view that an organization provides an environment for learning that either facilitates or inhibits learning. Contextual factors may be manifest within such an organization that espouses an orientation to learning. Therefore, the purposeful selection of the case study, a footwear manufacturing company located in Pietermaritzburg, represented a unique environment to situate this study.

In this research study, Bolman and Deal's (1997) organizational frames were integrated into Marsick & Watkins' (1990,1997) model of informal learning to better understand how aspects of the organization may shape informal learning and the facilitation of informal learning in a learnership programme. Bolman and Deal offer four perspectives, or frames, which they contend are different lenses through which to view the organization. Their four frames are: structural, political, symbolic, and human resources. Central concepts related to the four frames include: rules and policies, planning and control systems, lateral co-ordination, and attention to structure (structural frame); human needs, skills, training and education, and relationships (human resource frame); power, conflict, competition, and politics (political frame); culture, meaning, metaphor, ritual, and heroes

(symbolic frame). Bolaman and Deal's organizational frames were used as a guide to better understand the complexity of the organizational setting of the case study.

Marsick & Watkins (1990, pp 15-16) note that when people learn in the workplace, they are highly influenced by the context, that is, the particular situation in which something happens. They cite Zuboff (1988), who suggests that many types of workers – whether they act on machinery or act with other people – are context-dependent. This is as true for labourers, who want to tinker with machines when they break, as well as with managers, who rely on personal knowledge often gathered in face-to-face settings to make decisions. On the other hand, even when people learn in a highly technical environment, context plays a role since many decisions about data are dependent on the judgment of people and are taken through some kind of collaborative, social interaction.

Eraut (2004, p. 269) provides an interesting insight and suggests that the triangular relationship between challenge, support and confidence in workplace learning also focuses on broader contextual factors such as: (1) the difficulty or challenge of the work and the extent to which it was individual or collaborative, and (2) the opportunities for meeting, observing and working alongside people who had more or different expertise, and for forming relationships that might provide feedback, support or advice. For novice workers, in particular, a significant proportion of their work needs to be sufficiently new to challenge them without being so daunting so as to reduce their confidence; and their workload needs to be at a level that allows them to reflectively respond to new challenges, rather than develop coping mechanisms that might later prove to be ineffective.

### **Career and Personal Development**

Footwear employers plan for the career advancement of their employees. Personal development plans emphasize natural learning, outside of the classroom, along with more structured courses or activities. All learners in a footwear learnership programme compile a PoE (record of learning), which reflect all the qualifications and individual unit standards that a learner has achieved. This can be used and re-used in planning for personal and career development. The objective of a footwear learnership is to ensure that a learner develops on a novice to expert continuum through multi-skilling and by completing multiple electives whilst on a footwear learnership programme,

learners are given the opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge about footwear manufacturing processes from conception to completion.

Bell (1977), as referenced by Cofer (undated, pp.2-3), encourages taking advantage of the career development process to build in planned opportunities for informal learning on behalf of the employee. This may include serving as a tutor for a trainee, taking responsibility for a staff meeting, or designing training as a member of a training steering committee. Management should plan, organize, lead and control activities that will create visible exposure of learner to learning opportunities in the workplace.

Cofer (undated, pp 2-3) whilst referencing the work of Mumford, maintains that Marsick and Watkins (1997) encourage the use of personal development plans. The orientation programme prior to the commencement of a footwear learnership programme and counseling sessions generally focus on personal and career development of learners.

Mashile (2002, p.176) cites Kennie & Enemark (1998) who say that the concept of continuity of the development of skills and knowledge throughout the individual's working life signifies the need for what is called a Personal Development Plan (PDP). Embracing the notion of a PDP implies that individuals should take responsibility for their own learning and professional development (Sandelands 1998a, 1998b; Lester 1999).

Frontline-supervisors and managers encourage membership in related professional associations. Cofer (undated, pp.2-3) cites Rusaw (1995) who describes the opportunities for informal learning inherent in membership in professional associations. Professional associations serve as a place to identify a mentor; a mentoring relationship is often a great source of informal learning for both the protégé and mentor. Mashile (2002, p.179) supports the above view and maintain that professional bodies are in a unique position to respond to the professionals need for guidance and support. They can play an important role by providing access to information, counselors and mentors, as well as support to enable professionals to plan and reflect on their individual learning experiences (Friedman, Hurrán & Durkin 1999). Workplace committees provide guidance and support and

facilitate the personal and professional development of learners This offers the possibility of greater exposure for learners to enhanced learning and training opportunities.

Learners on a learnership programme belong to various workplace committees e.g. Health and Safety Committee. They make explicit this information when engaging with learning activities in the core component of the footwear learnership relating to the health and safety unit standard.

A PoE is reflective of a learner's development over a period of time, which is indicative of the learner's past experience in the footwear industry and the current level of skills and knowledge of the learner. It also contains all the assessments that the learner has undertaken during the learnership programme. A learner makes explicit this knowledge when encountering familiar footwear operations or uses this knowledge as a basis when reframing problems of a non-routine nature. This category includes strategic positioning of the learner to ensure a successful future career path.

### **Information Exchanges**

The structure and conditions surrounding information exchanges in workplace settings are limitless. They can exist as stand-alone sessions, designed solely for the purpose of exchanging information, or they can be adapted to team meetings or briefings and counseling sessions with training managers, facilitators, coaches and mentors. During a footwear learnership programme there are numerous opportunities for intense information exchanges between the facilitator and learners during the core component of the programme and between managers, supervisors and peers during facilitation of the elective component on the factory floor.

With the advancements in workplace technology, distance learning, and online communications, and other media may be equally if not more effective in developing learners on a footwear learnership programme. Computer-based education and e-learning are important elements in a successful learnership programme. This exchange of information includes, but are not limited to intranet websites, chat rooms and/or discussion boards, e-mail and/or mailing lists, and other vendor-supplied distance learning software and technology. This may involve becoming competent

in the use of computer-based systems or other packages necessary to undertake work-related tasks in a learnership programme.

Learners often come together for the purposes of exchanging information. Bell (1977), as referenced by Cofer (undated, pp.2-3), suggests reading and study groups as a means for facilitating informal learning in the workplace. During a footwear learnership, learners are given various tasks, learning activities, projects and assignments that lends itself to various information exchanges. These information exchanges may take the form of informal conversations with peers, supervisors and departmental managers about footwear manufacturing operations and the use of machinery and equipment in footwear production. Assignments and projects given to learners are enhanced through the use of computers for research purposes e.g. the internet.

Guidance and support mechanisms in a learnership programme have a number of information exchange opportunities such as records of counseling sessions (log book entries), briefings and meetings. During a learnership programme learners complete formative assessment tasks, which includes projects and assignments and are given feedback on these tasks by a qualified assessor. Accredited footwear training providers ensure that their training facility is equipped with computers for internet access, and a reference library that facilitates access for learners to conduct research for projects and assignments. Learners are interviewed during quality assurance exercises as to the availability, use and access to these vital informal learning resources.

### **Motivation, Confidence and Commitment**

Motivation is the *sine qua non* for learning in a workplace. This area is so vast that it could be explored as a separate field of research. With the help of a positive and stimulating training environment and training staff, this may serve as enough motivation during the learning process of a learnership programme. Brown (2001) cites Becker (1964), who is of the alternate view that the issue of motivation, is addressed by human capital theorists, mainly as a question of getting the "incentives" right in the workplace.

Learners are driven to perform during a footwear learnership because success translates into achieving a certificate that will offer them job security in the footwear industry, higher wages or

even a promotion. It is for these reasons that learners are inclined to learn a wide variety of footwear manufacturing operations informally during a footwear learnership programme.

Eraut's perception on the complementary impact of confidence and commitment to the learning process is interesting. Michael Eraut (2004, pp. 269-270) citing Eraut et al. (2000) suggest that there is a triangular relationship between challenge, support and confidence when analysing factors affecting learning in the workplace. He is of the firm belief that one of the factors that affect learning in the workplace is the overwhelming importance of confidence. Much learning at work occurs through doing things and being proactive in seeking learning opportunities, and this requires confidence. Confidence arose from successfully meeting challenges in one's work, while the confidence to take on such challenges depended on the extent to which learners felt supported in that endeavour. He further suggests that in some instances confidence related more to relationships than to the work itself. Did learners feel confident about the support of their working colleagues in a more senior, more junior or parallel jobs? This depended on whether they perceived their more significant working relationships as mutually supportive, generally critical, faction-ridden or even overtly hostile. For new footwear employees (18:2 learners), this latter aspect of confidence is important. Eraut (2004) added a further element to each apex of this triangle to reflect other factors, namely, feedback and commitment. Commitment to learning is recognized as a complimentary factor to confidence and he indicates that commitment to clients, colleagues, their work group and their organization were sometimes important factors that could not be taken for granted. Commitment is generated through social inclusion in teams and by appreciating the value of the work for clients and for the workers themselves.

## **2.5 SUMMARY**

This chapter outlined the key concepts and theoretical framework that underpinned this study. An in-depth study of the local literature on the concept, structure, implementation and benefits of learnerships was complemented by a reflection on past research studies applicable to this research study. The challenge in this chapter was to arrive at a single or common model of informal learning on which to base a structured theoretical framework for this research study. This chapter



endeavoured to explore the definitions and theoretical constructs of various experts in the field of informal learning with the intention of coming up with an applicable and an appropriate model of informal learning that can be applied to the footwear learnership programme.

The next chapter describes the research design and methodology.

## **Chapter Three**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter outlined the literature reviewed with regard to the key questions raised in Chapter One. The purpose of this chapter is to set out and justify the methodological design of the study in order to answer the key research questions adequately. It begins with a rationale for the choice of a particular methodology that is qualitative in nature. Thereafter, the chosen research instruments; the case study (primary method) and the semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observations will be elaborated on. Further insights are then offered on sampling preference, data collection and analysis, validation, ethical considerations and the dual role of the researcher.

#### **3.2 RATIONALE FOR USING THE QUALITATIVE APPROACH**

The proposed study falls into an interpretivist paradigm. An interpretive approach is often called a qualitative method of research. According to Neuman (2000, p. 74) for Interpretive Social Science, a theory is true if it makes sense to those being studied and if it allows others to understand deeply or enter the reality of those being studied. The theory or description is accurate if the researcher conveys a deep understanding of the way others reason, feel, and see things.

The choice of an interpretivist paradigm was informed by the recognition that Interpretive Social Science sees facts as fluid and embedded within a meaning system in the interpretive approach; they are not impartial, objective and neutral. Facts are context-specific actions that depend on the interpretations of particular people in a social setting.

Interpretive researchers rarely ask objective survey questions, aggregate the answers of many people, and claim to have something meaningful. Each person's interpretation of the survey

question and semi-structured interview must be placed in a context (e.g. the individual's previous experience or the survey interview situation), and the true meaning of a person's answer will vary according to the interview or questioning context. In the light of this, the researcher conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews and placed the explanations of the participants in context of the key research questions. This was also supported by the researcher's notes compiled during observation visits.

According to Neuman (2000, p. 75) the interpretive researcher argues that researchers should reflect on, re-examine, and analyze personal points of view and feelings as a part of the process of studying others.

The researcher adopted a qualitative methodology to explore how accredited training providers enhance or inhibit informal learning opportunities during a learnership programme and how these factors shape or impede the performance of learners during such a programme. In order to realize this objective, the design needed to have the capacity to capture the views and opinions of all participants, to note the views and opinions of the researcher during observation visits and to cater for a diagnostic analysis of education and training documentation of the accredited training provider. The researcher also used the methods and instruments that qualitative research allowed for.

Different researchers draw different meanings and interpretations from different social contexts. The choice of a qualitative approach was informed by the fact that it looks at the world as essentially different from the physical world. There is no one social reality, but varying interpretations held by individuals and groups. Mark (1996, p. 212) maintains that in qualitative research, the researcher moves freely back and forth between data collection and theoretical analysis. This back and forth process may continue for a long time, until the researcher is satisfied that they have examined enough data to determine that the theory is accurate. This argument is supported by Arkava & Lane (1983), who argue that qualitative research affords one the opportunity to understand the social and human behaviour from the insider's perspective, as it is experienced by the participant.

This study adopted a qualitative approach on the basis that an interpretive researcher wants to learn what is meaningful or relevant to the people being studied, or how individuals experience daily life. The researcher did this by getting to know a particular setting and seeing it from the point of view of those in it. The researcher shared the feelings and interpretations of the people he studied and saw things through their eyes.

### **3.3 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES**

#### **The Case Study**

A case study allows for rich, detailed study of educational phenomena and can lead to both descriptive and analytical accounts of such phenomena. Case studies use both qualitative and quantitative data and usually employ a variety of data collection methods and sources. Quantitative data relevant to a case may be gathered through statistical analysis or survey questionnaires.

Welman & Kruger (1999), suggest the term case study pertains to the fact that a limited number of units of analysis, (often only one), such as an individual, a group or an institution are studied intensively. Case study research involves in-depth, intensive enquiry reflecting a rich and lively reality of the case; case study researchers hold that to understand a case, to explain why things happen as they do, and to generalize or predict from a single example requires an in-depth investigation of the interdependencies of parts and the patterns that emerge. In case studies, the researcher is directed towards understanding the uniqueness and the idiosyncrasy of a particular case in all its complexity.

Gay (1992) concurs with Welman & Kruger's (1999) understanding of a case study by confirming that a case study is an in-depth investigation of an individual, group, or institution. The primary purpose of such a study is to determine the factors and the relationship among the factors that have resulted in the current behaviour or status of the subject of the study.

The reason for using a case study is that a case study can generate understanding of and insight into a particular instance by providing a thick, rich description of the case and illuminating its

relations to its broader contexts. Secondly, they can be used to explore a general problem or issue within a limited and focused setting. Thirdly, they can be used to generate theoretical insights, either in the form of grounded theory that arises from the case study itself or in developing and testing existing theory with reference to the case. Fourthly, case studies might also shed light on other, similar cases, thus providing a level of generalization. Fifthly, case studies can also be used for teaching purposes to illuminate broader theoretical and/or contextual points.

In-depth interviews, observations and document analysis are often used in case studies. In this case study, the researcher opted to use semi-structured interviews, observation and documentary analysis in order to provide the thick, rich description of the education and training context of the training provider in which learnerships are conducted. This provided the researcher with the necessary understanding of the education and training environment, which was vital in understanding how accredited training providers facilitated or inhibited informal learning during a footwear learnership programme

The researcher's rationale for choosing the case study approach is based solely on his conviction that it alone will yield the richness of data that he sought. Cresswell (1994), references Merriam (1988) and Yin (1989), who are of the view that a case study is when the researcher explores a single entity or phenomenon ("the case") bounded by time and activity (a programme, event, process, institution, or social group) and collects detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained period of time. The researcher felt that the views of Merriam (1988) and Yin (1989) were very apt to this study.

One accredited training provider in the footwear industry was selected in order for the researcher to engage in a case study. This entailed a rigorous investigation into the implementation of learnerships, commencing with the minimum requirements for accreditation in order to implement learnerships, the structure of the learnership programme, facilitation and assessment of learnerships and the guidance and support offered to learners during a learnership programme. An examination of the training facility was also conducted to determine how accredited training providers facilitated or inhibited informal learning opportunities.

Given that the implementation of learnerships is a complex endeavour that involves stringent accreditation criteria, the researcher undertook an intensive investigative study to uncover how learnerships are influenced by informal learning factors. This entailed collecting detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures viz. document analysis (quality management policies and procedures of the training provider, minutes of training committee meetings, learning materials and resources, assessment instruments and checklists and the learner's PoE). This provided the researcher with the broad understanding that he required initially. Thereafter, he utilized the semi-structured interviews in an attempt to get a deeper understanding of how learners learnt and the factors that influenced their learning during a learnership programme.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher studied a case rich in description and provided the researcher with a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. It is the researcher's contention that the implementation of the footwear learnership programme at Edu Shoes (pseudonym) had the necessary ingredients needed to fulfill the aims of this study. In order to ensure complete confidentiality of both the organization and the participants of this research study and to guarantee that the organization would not be prejudiced in any way from stakeholders within the footwear industry, the researcher elected to use a pseudonym. The researcher identified this organization as being a suitable context for conducting his research because Edu Shoes is a well-renowned footwear manufacturing company in the footwear industry. A number of observation visits undertaken to the site also provided the researcher with the rich description that was required for this case study.

The researcher had to be cognizant of two concerns of a case study approach that related to the impact of the intervention on participants and the danger of "fixing" a reality, which is constantly changing.

### **The Case: Edu Shoes and Background Information on the Training Provider**

Edu Shoes is a footwear manufacturing company located in the city of Pietermaritzburg, the midlands region of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. According to a company document, *The Chronicle of Achievement: 101 years of footwear manufacturing* (2002), Edu Shoes (PTY) Ltd was

originally started in 1904. In January 2002, Conshu decided to sell off Eddels Shoes because the risk factor associated with footwear manufacturing was extremely high, with many companies permanently ceasing operations. The turbulence experienced in the local marketplace resulted in many local manufacturers turning to importing footwear and reducing their local manufacturing operation. When Edu Shoes was sold off to a private partnership, this was the start of a new era for the company. The new company began with a labour complement of 400 employees producing 1800 pairs per day, as compared to their prime years when they employed up to 1700 employees, manufacturing up to 8 000 pairs of footwear per day. The new owners were quick in applying their minds to innovative and progressive ways of maximizing the efficiencies of all resources engaged. As efficiencies improved, the business quickly prospered and employees capitalized on good incentive earnings and gain shares on a regular basis. One of the outstanding and unique features of this company is the ability to produce high quality footwear from planning stage to dispatching within four to five days. This quick-response manufacturing has been nurtured to compete against the best of the footwear manufacturers globally. During 2006, production reached 4000 pairs per day with an increased labour complement of 560 employees.

Among the company's popular brand names that still enjoy tremendous support are the John Drake, QC and Ricardo ranges. Edu Shoes enjoys growing support from the major chain stores and is intent on keeping South African footwear manufacturing alive and well in the global trading era.

Edu Shoes executives express their passion for the sector by contributing to and being prominently representative within all aspects of the sector initiatives, including Trade and Industry fora, Footwear and Leather Collective Bargaining Council and SETA training and development. According to their policy document on *Study Leave and Allowances (2002)*, the company expresses that its purpose is to provide assistance to all workers with the intention to enable all employees to improve their educational levels and to develop their skills and knowledge through further studying directed towards accredited and recognized qualifications. It further states that assistance may be provided as long as all education, training and development is related to the beneficiary's occupation and/or future career prospects within the company and is mutually beneficial to both the company and the beneficiary.

### **Accreditation of Edu Shoes (PTY) Ltd as a Training Provider**

According to the Vision Statement of Edu Shoes (PTY) Ltd (2002), they believe that investment in their workers will contribute to enhancing their sustainability and future existence. Edu Shoes was honoured in June 2005 when it was awarded a certificate from the CTFL SETA in recognition of exceptional participation and contribution in respect of skills development within the CTFL Sector. In August 2001, Edu Shoes was the first footwear manufacturing company to achieve full accreditation status as a training provider with the CTFL SETA. It was accredited to offer the level 2 footwear learnership, the National Certificate in CTFL Manufacturing Processes.

The Integrated Training Strategy document (2005) of Edu Shoes notes that learning, training and development (improving knowledge and skills) empowers people and is critically important in enhancing the prospects of securing and maintaining of future employment and careers. Edu Shoes is of the view that developing and building the capacities of their employees is of critical importance to both the organization and employees. The management of Edu Shoes has pledged their commitment to the development of all their employees in alignment with their organizational strategy, operational requirements and individual developmental needs.

### **3.4 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS**

Different research instruments were employed for data collection. Merriam (1988, p.10) stresses that a case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis. Any and all methods of gathering data from testing to interviewing can be used although certain techniques are used more than others. The data for this qualitative study was collected by using observation techniques, conducting semi-structured interviews; and a document review. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the participant's natural environment so as to ensure that they are "comfortable". These are described below.



### **The Semi-structured Interview**

Primary data for this qualitative study was collected using semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview is a data collection technique used extensively by qualitative researchers and which allows for in-depth interviewing. An interview, described as an interaction involving the interviewer and interviewee and whose purpose is to obtain reliable and valid information, may range from casual conversation to more formal lengthy interactions. According to Gilham (2000, p.10) the positive feature of interviews is the richness and vividness of the data that it turns up. It enables one to “see” and to understand what is reflected rather than more abstractly in other kinds of data such as statistical summaries.

Van Dalen (1979, p.160) sees it as,

*...a dynamic, inter-personal experience that is carefully planned.*

In order to seek greater depth to the issues surrounding how learners learnt informally during a footwear learnership programme and how accredited training providers enhanced or inhibited informal learning opportunities during a footwear learnership programme, the researcher considered interviews to be the ideal data gathering tool, owing to the fact that questionnaire data tends to be “thin”, offering more breadth than depth. The semi-structured interviews were used to conduct interviews with the Human Resources Manager, the facilitator/assessor and 4 learners. Each interview was pre-scheduled and was held at the factory premises. Semi-structured interviews lasted for approximately two hours.

Whilst the researcher worked with a prepared interview schedule, the researcher was guided by their responses, which allowed the researcher to “probe”, seek clarification and elaboration from participants. The researcher was aware that participants would be wary and guarded in their responses. After attempting to win their confidence, they seemed to “open up to the researcher”. Interviewers have to strike a careful balance between establishing the kind of relationship with participants that will encourage them to be frank and truthful, and avoiding becoming too friendly so that respondents try hard to please. McNeil (1990, p. 39) maintains that the phrase often used to describe this attitude is “friendly but restrained.”

Interviews have several advantages: Firstly, it is a useful way to obtain large amounts of data quickly and where more than one person was interviewed, a wide variety of information can be gained. It also allows for immediate follow-up questions and, if required, clarification. The second advantage is that the researcher can seek follow-up interviews should it be desired. The fact that the researcher was able to interview many individuals separately afforded the researcher the opportunity to obtain the different perspectives as well as to triangulate responses and ensure the validity that was crucial in this research study.

Disadvantages of interviews include a lack of willingness on the part of the informant to share information, or worse, to indulge in falsehoods to portray oneself in a positive light. The interviewer, too, may lack the requisite expertise and skills (communication and inter-personal relations) and may therefore not pose appropriate questions, detect subtle nuances in responses or “probe” when the opportunity presents itself. Properly utilized, however, interviews can yield a richness of data that qualitative researchers can dream of.

### **The Interview Schedule**

The interview schedule according to Kerlinger (1992) can be used for several purposes:

It can be an exploration device to help identify variables and relations and to guide other phases of the research. In the case of this study, the researcher wanted to corroborate the learner’s responses with that of the Human Resource Manager’s and facilitator/assessor’s own knowledge about the learnership programme.

It can be the main instrument of the research. In this research study the interview questions were designed in such a way to include background information of the training provider, biographical information of the learners and the entire structure of the footwear learnership programme before entry into the footwear learnership programme, during the footwear learnership programme and after completion of the footwear learnership programme.

The interview can supplement the other methods. In this instance, the interview responses of the Human Resources Manager and the facilitator/assessor were used to validate the responses of the learners.

Questions were drawn up in an interview schedule (See Appendix III) that focused on the footwear learnership programme from three points: before the commencement of the learnership programme, during the learnership programme and after the learnership programme. The researcher expected these questions to interrogate the footwear learnership programme in great detail, so that factors enhancing or inhibiting informal learning opportunities would become explicit.

The interview schedule was designed in such a way that the first part pertained to background information of the training provider and biographical information of the learners.

Participants, more especially the facilitator and learners, had to be aware of what they felt and thought and had to be able to express and communicate the information. The questions for the facilitator and learners were given to the Human Resources Manager in advance, as he was familiar with the respondents and was able to advise the researcher on whether his level of questioning was within the comprehension level of the respondents and also to ensure that the questions did not breach the internal security of the organization. It was important to get different perspectives on the same issues from all respondents concerned. The researcher used a cross-referencing system in his line of questioning to gauge whether respondents shared or disputed each other's claims. This type of questioning was facilitated by virtue of the fact that different interview schedules with similar questions, sometimes worded differently, were compiled for the various stakeholders involved in the footwear learnership programme. At times, a participant was asked similar questions worded differently under a different section of the same interview schedule.

The researcher's initial fear that the learners might find it a challenge to answer some of the questions on the interview schedule in the light of their low academic qualifications were unfounded. Much to the contrary, the researcher was surprised at their level of comprehension and command of the English language, which was reflected in their responses. Cognizance had to be taken of the complexity of the research topic when interviewing all respondents. Questions were answered with ease, although at times the Human Resources Manager, the facilitator and learners had to be prompted in order to get into their thought processes, especially about footwear operations. Prompting was limited to the use of similar examples, hints and providing clarity to questions that were misunderstood by the use of probes.

The researcher realized that some questions in his interview schedule might result in the participants feeling uncomfortable and threatened when commenting on, more especially questions pertaining to the guidance and support given to learners by the Human Resources Manager, facilitator, coaches and mentors at the three points of the footwear learnership programme. This was addressed with the learners directly.

### **Observation**

Observations were used to supplement data collection. Moser et al cites Moser and Racton (1971, p. 249), who stress that with this method (participant's observation) the observer joins the daily life of the group or organization he is studying. He watches what happens to the members of the community and how they behave and he also engages in conversations with them to find out how their reactions to and interpretations of the events that have occurred. He studies the life of the community as a whole, the relationship between its members and its activities and institutions.

Observation visits were conducted to determine the availability and level of coaching and mentoring services during the facilitation and assessment of the core and elective components of the learnership programme. Further, observation visits became crucial in verifying data that was contained in the semi-structured interviews and education and training documents and records. Bell (1993, p.108) advocates observation, by stating that direct observation may be more reliable than what people say in many instances. It can be particularly useful to discover whether people do what they say they do, or behave in the way they claim to behave.

This method has its weaknesses and the researcher had to take this into account when reporting on such observations. People tend to change their behavioural patterns when they are aware that they are being watched or they may feel uncomfortable in the researcher's presence. According to Schutt (1996, p. 321), most field researchers adopt a role during participant observations that lies somewhere between the complete observer and the complete participant. During the research this meant informing learners and the facilitators of the researcher's research interests. All participants were made aware of the researcher's presence and were told the reasons why they had to be observed.

The researcher is an ETQA Manager of the CTFL SETA. His responsibility included not only the accreditation of footwear training providers, but also the conduction of annual monitoring audits of accredited providers, which formed the basis of his observation visits. For the purposes of monitoring, the training infrastructure, learnership curriculum and learning provision at Edu Shoes are audited in order to ensure quality education and training provision. Learners are interviewed about the quality of the learnership experience.

For the purpose of observing learners during facilitation of the learnership programme, four specific observation visits were conducted. The researcher developed an observation schedule, which guided his observation during site visits. Factors taken into account when compiling the observation schedule were the training provider's physical training facility, the learnership curriculum, availability of learning resources and observation of the core and elective components of the NQF Level 2 footwear learnership programme during facilitation. Prior to the researcher conducting his research all participants were informed of his research interests. All participants were made aware of the researcher's presence and were told of the reasons why they had to be observed. Informal discussions were conducted with departmental supervisors that were in-charge of the bottom stock and closing departments and a labour representative, who had gone through the learnership programme himself.

The fact that the researcher was the passive participant in the observation could have compromised the accuracy of the information that was observed and recorded. It should, however, be noted that informal observation began long before the researcher began with this research project.

### **Dual Role of the Researcher**

Lankshear and Knobel (2004, p.74) maintain that qualitative researchers pay overt attention to the role of the researcher. This is because the researcher is seen to have direct effects on the research design, findings and interpretations of a study. This stance contrasts with that of quantitative approaches to research that insist on research objectivity. They maintain that the researcher is regarded as a data collection instrument by many researchers using qualitative approaches to data collection. This is on account of the researcher's values, assumptions, beliefs and knowledge about

a topic directly informing what kinds of data are collected and how they are reported. They conclude that in a qualitative study, it is important to acknowledge that the study has been conducted from the particular orientation or stance of the researcher and therefore the study will always be partial and incomplete.

The researcher's role as the researcher in this study was hampered by the fact that he is the ETQA Manager. Although the researcher attempted to convince all participants that he was conducting this research in his private capacity as a student, he felt that the responses of the participants and information on observation of learners in the training premises during the learnership programme was prejudiced and guided by virtue of his position as ETQA Manager, who is responsible for the accreditation, monitoring and de-accreditation of footwear training providers, who implement learnerships.

### **Document Analysis**

Workplace knowledge is also shaped by written texts, such as documents, policies and forms of record keeping. The data is largely qualitative in nature. The researcher firstly reviewed and secondly critically analyzed the documents. In order to understand how learnerships are implemented in the workplace and how they relate to informal learning, the researcher engaged in a critical analysis of the following documents: Quality management policies and procedures of the training provider; minutes of training committee meetings and briefings; learning materials and resources; assessment instruments and checklists; learner's PoE and all correspondences between the accredited training provider and the CTFL ETQA Body pertaining to the implementation of learnerships.

### **3.5 SAMPLING AND SAMPLE CRITERIA**

Since it was not possible nor practical to survey the views of all footwear accredited training providers implementing a learnership programme in the footwear industry in South Africa, the researcher opted to do a case study of a prominent footwear manufacturing company that was convenient for the researcher.

It was also not possible nor practical to survey the views of the entire population of learners who have completed a footwear learnership programme at Edu Shoes, thus the researcher opted for selecting a representative sample of four learners who completed the NQF Level 2 National Certificate in CTFL Manufacturing Processes learnership in May 2006. In selecting the respondents for the semi-structured interviews, the purposive sampling technique was used. Two 18:1 learners (learners selected and recruited from within the company) and two 18:2 learners (learners previously unemployed with no experience in the footwear industry) were interviewed in order to give a balanced reflection of the footwear learnership programme.

According to Welman and Kruger (1999), purposive sampling is the most important kind of non-probability sampling. Researchers rely on their experience to deliberately obtain units of analysis in such a manner that the sample they obtain may be regarded as being representative of the relevant population. This is on par with Bertram's (2003, p.12) view that purposive sampling means that the researcher makes specific choices about which people to include in the sample. Therefore four learners employed at Edu Shoes, who completed the full qualification, the National Certificate in CTFL Manufacturing Processes: Footwear NQF level 2 learnership in May 2006, were interviewed.

Learners were selected for the semi-structured interviews using the number of years in the footwear industry as the predetermining principle. The number of learners selected per years of experience category is reflected in the table below.

<b>COMPLETED YEARS IN THE FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY</b>	<b>NUMBER OF LEARNERS SELECTED</b>
0-2 years	1
2-4 years	1
more than 4 years	2

In addition, the researcher interviewed the Human Resources Manager and the facilitator/assessor of Edu Shoes who represented the training provider's perspective. The semi-structured interviews conducted with the Human Resources Manager, facilitator/assessor and learners also provided the depth for this case study.

### **3.6 PROFILE OF THE TRAINING STAFF INTERVIEWED**

#### **Human Resources Manager: Jay Naidoo**

Jay is a qualified assessor and moderator. Jay has 30 years experience in the footwear industry and he has qualifications related to organizational behaviour, a Management Development Programme (MDP) in Human Resources relating to personnel management and a qualification pertaining to work study. He obtained a distinction in job analysis and he also has marketing and cost accounting courses to his credit.

#### **Facilitator/Assessor: Krish Pillay**

The facilitator/assessor Krish is a qualified instructor and assessor, who have the necessary technical expertise in all footwear operations. He has 40 years experience in the footwear industry of which 15 years was in training and development. He rose from the ranks of machine operator to production manager.

### **3.7 PROFILE OF THE LEARNERS INTERVIEWED**

#### **Learner 1: Joanna Pillay**

Joanna is a permanent employee of the company, employed in the capacity of Quality Manageress. She was recruited as an 18.1 learner in the learnership programme. Joanna has 23 years experience in the footwear industry. Her highest formal education qualification is standard 8 (current grade 10). She was one of the first learners to be recruited and selected to complete the footwear learnership programme. She was initially employed as a table hand, which according to her was a position that lacked a challenge.

#### **Learner 2: Adelle Chetty**

Adelle is a casual employee, who is employed in the making line as a table hand. She was previously unemployed and was therefore recruited as an 18.2 learner. This was her first experience in the footwear industry. Her highest formal qualification is a Senior Certificate.



**Learner 3: Zama Nkosi**

Zama is employed for the past two years in a casual capacity as a table hand and has no previous experience in the footwear industry. She is an 18.2 learner and her highest formal qualification is a Matric Senior Certificate.

**Learner 4: Althaaf Mohammed**

Althaaf, an 18.2 learner, is a trainee utility man employed for the past two years in the company. He has 10 years previous experience in the footwear industry and his highest formal qualification is standard 8 (current grade 10).

**3.8 DATA ANALYSIS****Semi-structured Interviews**

The six semi-structured interviews were audio-tape recorded. Since the interviews were semi-structured, it gave the researcher ample opportunity to probe for clarity especially where responses were ambiguous and unclear. Each interview was transcribed *verbatim*. Prepared transcripts were then presented to interviewees for verification. No changes were effected. Transcripts were then subjected to qualitative content analysis by identifying key substantive points in the transcript and these were then grouped into factors and categories generated from the theoretical concepts and models outlined in Chapter 2. It must be noted that interviews have their limitations as participants are not always honest.

**Document Analysis**

Before engaging in the interviews, all necessary documentation pertaining to quality management policies and procedures of the training provider for education and training provision were collected and reviewed against the minimum requirements or environmental conditions that accredited training providers are expected to comply with in order to implement learnerships.

In order to understand how learnerships are implemented in the workplace and how they impact on informal learning, the researcher analyzed sets of documents that had a direct bearing on this research study:

- Quality Management Policies and Procedures of the training provider,
- Integrated Training Strategy, May 13, 2005,
- Subject regarding: Learnerships and Employee Development,
- Records of guidance and support of learners such as coaching and mentoring,
- Learning materials and resources,
- Assessment strategy: instruments and checklists, feedback mechanisms,
- Learner's PoE.

The researcher reviewed and analyzed the contents of other documentation, which impacted on the learnership programme. These documents included:

- Document: Eddels Shoes (Pty) Ltd Chronicle of Achievement – 101 years of footwear manufacturing,
- Attendance registers/Log book,
- Minutes of training committee meetings
- Minutes of briefings,
- Financial records,
- All correspondences between the accredited training provider and the CTFL ETQA Body pertaining to the implementation of learnerships.

These documents have added rich detail to the researcher's study and he is of the view that they confirmed and validated some of his findings in Chapter 5. Data gleaned from these documents were his secondary source of information.

## **Observation**

All observation visits to Edu Shoes during the months of July to September 2006 were documented. During observation visits, the researcher used an observation schedule (See Appendix V) as a guide and took down comprehensive notes on the education and training environment and the facilitation of the education and training during the core and elective components of a single learning activity of the footwear learnership programme.

## **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Unlike the natural sciences, the object of study in the social and behavioural sciences is humans themselves. Huysamen (1994, p. 178) maintain that social and behavioural scientists do not have a free rein with respect to research procedures that may be performed. If valid conclusions are to be ensured, then procedures (even though not feasible) are required for ethical considerations.

Researchers are always urged to try and minimize risks to participants, colleagues and society while attempting to maximize the quality of information they produce. To this end, the researcher filled in an ethical clearance form in order to comply with the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Research Ethics Policy.

Further, permission was sought from the Management of the footwear company, Edu Shoes, to enable the researcher to approach the HR Manager, the facilitator/assessor and learners with the view to conducting the research. The researcher wrote a letter to the Chief Executive Officer (See Appendix I) of the footwear company requesting permission in this regard. Participants were thoroughly informed beforehand about the potential impact of the investigation and were informed that if they felt uncomfortable in any way, they were free to withdraw from the study (See Appendix II).

Simon and Burstein (1984, p.453) supports the notion that in order to ensure validity, "participation of subjects must be voluntary and based on informed consent." Coercion, whether subtle or blatant, is ethically unacceptable. Certainly bribing or the payment of honorariums count as persuasion and hence may affect the internal and external validity of the research project.

Ethical considerations come into play in the semi-structured interviews of the Human Resources Manager, training facilitator/assessor and the learners. When the participants were recruited, during the interviews and in the release of the results are the three points when ethics came into play. Firstly, the researcher made a full disclosure to participants of his intentions and the rationale behind the study. Secondly, the researcher pointed out the benefits as a whole to the footwear industry, the company and the participants of participating in this research project. Lastly, the researcher made an offer to make the results known to the footwear company and the participants once the study has been completed. The researcher will have to ensure that he undertakes this in an effort to express his gratitude for their participation.

The informed consent of prospective participants was sought prior to conducting the research. Participants were also offered the opportunity to ask questions, seek clarifications, etc. Prior to the commencement of the semi-structured interviews, participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and were assured that any information furnished by them would be used solely for the purposes of research and that their anonymity and confidentiality was guaranteed.

The fact that Edu Shoes performed a dual role of both employer and training provider could have complicated the research process. It was anticipated that some of participants might feel intimidated by virtue of the fact that the researcher is the ETQA Manager of the CTFL SETA and may fear that negative comments or sentiments made about the training provider or the implementation of the learnership programme might result in them losing their jobs or exclusion from future workplace learning programmes, interventions and funding. Further, the researcher was cognizant of the fact that participants may want to paint the training provider and the learnership programme in a very positive light in order not to jeopardize future funding or learnership grant opportunities from the CTFL SETA. All participants were therefore assured of confidentiality of their responses and that the researcher was not acting in his capacity as ETQA Manager and that this was a private study that was independent of the CTFL SETA.

Where the semi-structured interviews were concerned, the researcher allowed participants to view transcripts and to make any changes they might deem necessary. Not only did such a step instill

confidence in the participants, but in seeking verification, it ensured that the researcher was proceeding ethically. In the final analysis the ethical responsibility of the welfare of the participants was in the hands of the researcher.

### **3.10 VALIDITY**

Validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. More specifically validity applies to both the design and the methods of your research. Validity in data collection means that your findings truly represent the phenomenon you are claiming to measure. Valid claims are solid claims.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p.105) shed more light on validity and view it as an important key to effective research. If a piece of research is invalid then it is worthless. In qualitative data validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher. In qualitative data the subjectivity of respondents, their opinions, attitudes and perspectives together contribute to a degree of bias. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p.105) references Gronlund (1981), who supports the belief that validity should be seen as a matter of degree rather than as an absolute state. Hence researchers strive to minimize invalidity and maximize validity.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p.106) cites Hammersley and Atkinson (1983,) who argues that validity is attached to accounts, not to data or methods; it is the meaning that subjects give to data and inferences drawn from the data that are important. Data selected must be representative of the sample, the whole data set, the field, i.e. they must address content, construct and concurrent validity.

#### **Internal Validity**

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p.107) support the view that internal validity seeks to demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data, which a piece of research provides can actually be sustained by the data. In some degree this concerns accuracy,

which can be applied to quantitative and qualitative research. The findings must accurately describe the phenomena being researched. Internal validity is concerned with the question, whilst external validity asks the question.

The researcher employed a variety of research strategies to ensure internal validity of the research data pertaining to the key research questions, although it must be acknowledged that absolute internal validity cannot be guaranteed. Questions in the research tools utilized (Interview and Observation Schedules) were compiled in such a way that the responses of the participants could be verified. The researcher was also able to obtain a true reflection of the implementation of the learnership programme by ensuring that the various stakeholders of the footwear learnership programme, that is the HR Manager, the facilitator/assessor and the learners, answered certain common questions during the semi-structured interviews. During the semi-structured interviews the researcher used a cross-referencing system in his line of questioning to gauge whether respondents shared or disputed each other's claims. This type of questioning was facilitated by virtue of the fact that different interview schedules with similar questions, sometimes worded differently, were compiled for the various stakeholders involved in the footwear learnership programme. At times a participant was asked similar questions worded differently under a different section of the same interview schedule. The fact that the researcher employed the purposive sampling technique in the selection of learners for the semi-structured interviews gave the researcher an idea of the depth of knowledge that the learners gleaned from the footwear learnership programme based on their past experience in the footwear industry.

### **External Validity and Generalisability**

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p.109) external validity refers to the degree to which the results can be generalized to the wider population, cases or situations. If research lacks external validity, the findings cannot be applied to contexts other than the one in which the research was carried out.

The word "generalisability" is defined as the degree to which the findings can be generalized from the study sample to the entire population. Generalisability is an important issue in research. It asks

the question: to what extent can the findings or conclusions of a particular study be said to be representative of other settings, with other people, and at other times.

Generalisability allows for predictions to be made based on a recurring experience. If something occurs frequently, we expect that it will continue to do so in the future. Once researchers have collected sufficient data to support a hypothesis, a premise regarding the behaviour of that data can be formulated, making it generalisable to similar circumstances. Because of its foundation in probability, such a generalization cannot be regarded as conclusive or exhaustive.

The findings of this case study are informed by the particular context and location of this case, which might not apply to other cases in the footwear industry, thus the findings are not intended to be generalizable. Financial constraints, availability of computer and modernized manufacturing technology, physical training and learning facilities and resources, the availability of qualified trainers and assessors, and the education level of learners, which impacts on the implementation of the footwear learnership programme, differs from one training provider to another.

### **3.11 TRIANGULATION**

Triangulation may be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour. Triangulation is a technique of physical measurement. Triangulation is a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity. The term "triangulation" was coined by Denzin (1978) to describe the use of a multiplicity of data collection methods with a view to increasing the reliability of observation. Leedy (1995) cites Duffy, who mentions "methodological triangulation" as the use of two or more methods of data collection procedures within a single study.

The researcher used the semi-structured interviews (in the case study approach) as his primary research instrument. Validity of this instrument was ensured, by interviewing all of the different stakeholders involved in the learnership programme namely, the Human Resources Manager, the training facilitator/assessor and the learners.

### 3.12 RELIABILITY

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p.117) argue that reliability is a synonym for consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents. It is concerned with precision and accuracy. For research to be reliable it must demonstrate that if it were to be carried out on a similar group of respondents in a similar context, then similar results would be found. Reliability is a prerequisite for measurement validity.

Silverman (1993), as cited by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p.124), maintains that one way of controlling reliability, is to have a highly structured interview, with the same format and sequence of words and questions for each respondent. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p.125) proposes an alternative view and maintains that the issues of reliability do not reside solely in the preparations for and conduct of the interview; they extend to the ways in which interviews are analysed.

The consistency with which questionnaire items during interviews are answered can be determined through the test-retest method, whereby a respondent would be asked to answer the same question(s) at two different times. This attribute of the instrument is actually referred to as stability. If we are dealing with a stable measure, then the results should be similar. A high degree of stability indicates a high degree of reliability, since the results are repeatable.

Every effort was made by the researcher to ensure that the data gleaned from the research study were reliable. Research instruments were carefully designed to ensure that the findings would be consistent over time. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher himself and this was given back to the learners for verification purposes. In analyzing the data, the researcher employed an advanced coding and classification technique in identifying the emergent factors that either enhanced or inhibited informal learning during the footwear learnership programme.



### **3.13 SUMMARY**

This chapter highlighted how this research study was planned and executed. A detailed discussion with regard to the data gathering tools, sampling techniques and data analysis procedures were presented. Issues concerning ethics, validity, reliability, generalisability and triangulation and its impact on this research study were discussed.

The next chapter focuses on the presentation and analysis of the data.

## Chapter Four

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined how this research study was planned and executed. In this chapter, the researcher presents the information gathered from the semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observation. The data is analyzed using the theoretical and conceptual frameworks presented in Chapter Two on factors that facilitated or inhibited informal learning in the workplace. Emerging factors and themes are identified.

A brief overview of the case study using observation and document analysis is described and analyzed. The semi-structured interviews with the Human Resources Manager, the facilitator/assessor and the learners are analysed in order to identify emerging factors and themes of how accredited training providers in the footwear industry enhanced or inhibited informal learning opportunities during a footwear learnership programme.

An analysis of the semi-structured interviews with the four learners on a footwear learnership programme and the observation notes compiled during the facilitation of the core and elective component of the footwear learnership programme is presented in order to determine how the factors or themes identified in research question 2 impacted on the performance of learners during the footwear learnership programme.

#### 4.2 IDENTIFICATION OF THEMES AND FACTORS PERTAINING TO RESEARCH QUESTION 1

**What are the factors in an education and training workplace environment that enhances or inhibits informal learning during a footwear learnership programme?**

This section presents data relating to the above research question. An analysis of the semi-structured interviews with the HR Manager, the facilitator/assessor and the learners, together with the observation notes and document analysis revealed the following emerging themes and factors, which enhanced or inhibited informal learning during the footwear learnership programme.

#### 4.2.1 LEARNING PROVISION

##### Customization and Availability of Learning Materials and Resources

The customization and availability of learning materials, according to the footwear learnership curriculum, facilitated the learning process. A positive contextual factor that shaped informal learning was that the company had customized all learning materials, assessment instruments and resources according to the needs of the organization and the individual. Unit standards, assessment instruments and training manuals were available for both the core and elective components of the learnership programme. Accreditation was granted for a nationally recognized qualification of all five core unit standards and 6 elective footwear unit standards. The fact that learners were going to achieve a national qualification in the footwear industry would have encouraged and motivated the learners and in so doing enhanced the informal learning process.

The table below illustrates the qualifications framework of a nationally recognized qualification, which is registered by SAQA on the NQF at level two of the Further Education and Training Band. The table also provides a breakdown of the fundamental, core and elective components of the National Certificate in CTFL Manufacturing Processes and its associated unit standards. Credits depicted indicate the notional hours required to achieve the specific outcomes of a unit standard.

##### National Certificate in CTFL Manufacturing Processes NQF Level 2

Fundamental Component			
NLRD NUMBER	TITLE	NQF LEVEL	CREDITS
Language and Communication			
12462	Engage in a range of speaking and listening interactions for a variety of purposes	1	6
12469	Read and respond to a range of a text types	1	6
	Explore and use a variety of strategies to learn	1	5
12473	Identify and respond to selected literary texts	1	5
	Subtotal		22
Mathematical Literacy			
7451	Collect, analyse, use and communicate numerical data	1	2
7448	Work with patterns in various contexts	1	4
7450	Work with measurement in a variety of contexts	1	2
7463	Describe and represent objects and the environment in terms of shape, space, time and motion	1	2

7447	Working with numbers in various contexts	1	6
	Subtotal		16
	Total Fundamental Component		38
<b>Core Component</b>			
NLRD	Title	Level	Credits
	Demonstrate an understanding of the Structure of the CTFL Industries	2	6
	Demonstrate an understanding of the Regulatory Occupational Safety, Health and Environmental practices	2	12
	Demonstrate an understanding of productivity requirements	2	10
	Demonstrate an understanding of materials used and produced in CTFL manufacturing processes	2	10
	Demonstrate an understanding of Quality Procedures and Practices	2	10
	Subtotal		48
	Total Credits for Core Component		48
<b>Electives</b>			
* MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR ELECTIVES: CHOICE OF ANY ONE UNIT STANDARD WITHIN A PARTICULAR SECTOR			
NLRD	Title	Level	Credits
	FOOTWEAR		
	Produce Footwear Patterns	2	34
	Cut Component Parts	2	34
	Produce Bottomstock for Footwear	2	34
	Assemble and Join Component Parts	2	34
	Perform Making Operations	2	34
	Finish and Dress Footwear	2	34
	Total credits for Elective Component		170
	Minimum elective credits required for qualification		34
	Total for qualification		120

### **Time, Space and the Learning Environment**

Some of the overarching factors that shaped the informal learning process were the dedication of time for training during normal working hours, the training facility and the orientation programme, which shaped the learning context.

The duration of the footwear learnership programme entailed 1200 hours of notional time or a study period of between 12 to 18 months. A learning pathway for the learnership programme was documented as to the way the notional hours of learning was going to be achieved. This was important in assisting learners to plan or read ahead, thus enhancing future informal learning opportunities, such as learning through experience.

The training provider allocated time to facilitate learning during the learnership programme. According to the facilitator, the company allowed for two hours of training during normal factory working hours. Sometimes the facilitation of the learning for the electives took place on Friday's after one o'clock or on a Saturday when the facilitator spent 5 or 6 hours taking them through the various footwear processes. The facilitator also mentioned that learners were allowed to complete their assignments and projects during normal working time.

The internal culture committed to learning was manifested through the symbol of the training room, which is considered a site for formal learning that reinforced the importance of learning and the investment the organization had in learning.

Edu Shoes has a training centre with an education and training infrastructure that more than adequately satisfies the accreditation criteria for education and training provision in the footwear industry and has the capacity to deliver quality education and training. The researcher made 4 observation visits, which included one monitoring and auditing visit for the CTFL SETA in his capacity as ETQA Manager, since the beginning of the year, to evaluate the training facility. The company has a well established, fully structured and equipped training and development resource centre and encourages the development of all of its employees.

The training provider created a very conducive education and training environment, where two of the training rooms were set up like a classroom with desks, chairs, 1 data projector with white screen, 1 OHP, 3 white parrot boards, 1 TV and 1 VCR to support the learning for both the core and elective components of the learnership programme. The researcher observed a few lessons during the facilitation of one of the core unit standards pertaining to Structure of the Industry that was facilitated by Krish Pillay. This was very much like a classroom situation. There were 4 learners seated on chairs behind desks.

The researcher observed that the training facility had a third training room which was referred to as an "incubator". This facility was used for the training of learners for the various elective standards, more especially for the clicking and closing operations in footwear manufacture. In order to ensure effective education and training provision for the elective component the "incubator" was equipped

with the necessary equipment and machinery for the clicking and closing footwear manufacturing operations. It was set up in a simulated footwear production line, like the factory set-up, where machinery involved in footwear production was set up in a linear track, thus giving the learners a simulated factory experience. The training facility also had a little storeroom, where the projects of the learners were stored. Learners enjoyed access to this room and some even used these projects as a guide for their own projects. Other learners also had access to these projects and these projects were often used as samples.

A fully equipped computer room was available to facilitate basic computer literacy and to complement the learning process for the learnerships. Learners are granted access to the internet for research purposes for the learning activities for both the elective and the core unit standards. The training facility was adorned with charts that described and detailed the various shoe components; footwear manufacturing processes; occupational, health and safety information and legislation; injury reports; information on maintenance of equipment and machinery; legislation pertaining to labour and the structure of the industry; monitoring machine settings, footwear specifications and selection of materials for footwear etc., which contributed to an enriching and positive education and training environment. The researcher also observed that the facilitator would sometimes conduct a discussion in front of specific charts that related to the learning activity that was pinned in the training resource centre and he would show them where to obtain the additional information that they might require to answer the questions in the self-assessment learning activity. All information was customized for Edu Shoes according to the needs of the individual and the company.

The training provider also attached learners to specific departments, thus facilitating learning in context. The HR Manager related:

*Learners often working in the Quality Department use the information and experiences that they gained from their work experience and apply this information in their research assignments to attain the specific outcomes of the Quality unit standard.*

The facilitator asserted:

*When the learners are looking at a footwear process like toelasting, they need to know what toelasting is all about. The process is not about taking an upper and stretching it over a last, but you've got to look at the whole sequence of operations. For toelasting you have to understand the machine and how it operates. You have to know how to adjust the settings and what the function of every mechanism on the machine is. When you put the upper into the machine you must know what the purpose of the wiper blades are and what the purpose of the pinchers are. Learners need to be trained on all of this before they train them on the machine itself. As a facilitator I have to coach them on the sequence of operations.*

The learners also confirmed that they were given numerous opportunities to learn in context.

Althaaf related:

*If we need some information on the machine, we go to the operators so that we can also use the machines. I go and ask them what is the purpose of this, especially on the electives. When you are doing the elective part on the machine, you spend the whole day with the operator. When you are learning, they (management, facilitator) can force you and put you there and say you to work there.*

Joanna concurred with the views of the HR Manager, the facilitator and Althaaf:

*For example if you needed any information and you were not sure of how to go about getting it, you were allowed to go to the production managers or the supervisor, who made themselves available to go with you, help and guide you and take you out onto the floor to introduce you to whatever you needed to know about production.*

Adelle reiterated by stating:

*The HR Manager spoke to me and said, Adelle, you know for this moment you are put in a certain place, but you will be put in another place until you learn different things.*

In order to implement the footwear learnership programme and to ensure quality provision of education and training, training providers had to develop education and training policies for the implementation of the footwear learnership programme. Edu Shoes developed a comprehensive Quality Management System on file that included Recruitment and Selection procedures, Counseling and Support procedures, RPL, Training and Development procedures and Administration procedures encompassing an Integrated Training and Development Strategy. The QMS also contained the company's vision and mission and the following policies and procedures: Evacuation and Safety Plan, and a comprehensive learning pathway/schedule that facilitates

education and training during the learnership programme. The Company had developed a detailed learning plan per learnership, scheduling activities for the duration of the learnership.

Learner recruitment, support and guidance also shaped the learning process during the footwear learnership programme. Joanna was very complimentary of the level of guidance and support the learners received during the learnership programme:

*Everytime you needed someone the facilitator was always there. You were allowed a lot of support and a lot of guidance.*

A procedure and criteria for learner entry into a footwear learnership qualification is clearly outlined and well documented. New learners were selected by an interview and assessment procedure, which is outlined in the policy document. The training provider used a customized footwear selection programme, SATRA Selection Testing programme, during the selection and recruitment process. This gave the training provider an idea of the learner's potential, his/her dexterity and his/her past experience in footwear manufacture.

The majority of employees were multi-skilled and versatile resulting in optimum efficiencies being achieved. The company had successfully certified 209 learners since 2002. Employees and learners engaging on learnerships were allocated paid-time within company operating hours to participate in the footwear learnership programme. Education and skill level was critical in determining the learner's performance during the assessment of the core and elective component of the footwear learnership programme

According to the selection and recruitment policy of Edu Shoes, a learner with no previous experience in the footwear industry required a minimum education level of standard 8 or grade 10 for the production departments. Education level of learners was critical in determining the way learners reacted to familiar (routinized) or unfamiliar (non-routinized) tasks during the footwear learnership programme, especially in their problem-solving and reframing abilities.

The principles that were considered for learners/employees to be promoted within Edu Shoes, clearly reflect that it is the company's policy to promote from within wherever possible. This,



however, depended on the urgency and needs for specific skills. One of the criteria used to promote learners or employees within the company was the willingness and co-operation to learn as many jobs as was possible, therefore education level and developing versatility skills was an advantage. Career planning and personal development would have impacted on the learner's motivation to learn during the learnership programme.

Edu Shoes had a comprehensive assessment policy and procedure, which was documented. Assessments were conducted in terms of the specific outcomes and assessment criteria of the new revised unit standards for the NQF level 2 footwear learnership programme. An assessor and moderation policy described the way assessments and moderation was to take place in the workplace. The company had a RPL policy that recognized the previous experience and qualifications of learners. Learners were accredited by a recognized RPL procedure.

In terms of their assessment and moderation processes and systems as per the policy document of Edu Shoes, all learners were granted equal access to the resources provided by the company. Learners were allowed three assessment opportunities for achieving competence. If the first or second assessment indicated that the learner was not yet competent, the learner was provided with feedback indicating the areas in which to improve in order to attain competence. The learner made every attempt to access resources necessary to achieve competence. The company's skills development resource centre was easily accessible and visits could be arranged through the company's skills development facilitator. Once ready the learner then requested to be re-assessed.

Learning was initially triggered by jolts that were external to the learnership programme. According to the HR Manager, many learners who are selected onto the learnership programme and who had no previous experience were exposed to the basics of the various footwear manufacturing operations at least three months before the actual commencement of the programme. This gave learners the opportunity to understand the components they were cutting and the quality criteria that were established by the company. He stressed that all learners are taken on an "A to Z" of footwear manufacture that starts from the origins of the materials right through the clicking course for beginners. They are also taken through machine closing exercises. During the 12 week course the learners are expected to perform various stitching operations either stitching in straight lines or

curves on paper. When they got through these various exercises on paper they are able to stitch accurately to the markings.

The above discussion describes the learning context, which was influenced by the provision and customization of the learning resources and materials, the composition and duration of the footwear learnership curriculum, the learning environment and policies and procedures for the implementation of the footwear learnership programme. All these factors related to internal catalysts, which shaped the learning process during the footwear learnership programme. An important external catalyst, which could have enhanced the informal learning process during the footwear learnership programme was the orientation programme prior to the commencement of the learnership programme.

#### **4.2.2 RECOGNITION OF PAST LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

The deconstruction of past learning experiences was influenced by the way the training provider recognized the past learning of learners during the footwear learnership programme. The most important catalysts that shaped the informal learning process were the selection and recruitment policy of the training provider, the training provider's RPL policy and the assessment tasks.

The HR Manager related how the selection and recruitment procedure of the training provider facilitated the deconstruction of past experiences of the learners in the footwear industry.

He contended that learners recruited from within the company had an average of 15 years experience, thus past experiences played a significant role in the way learners learnt during the learnership programme. He maintained that learners are experts when they are doing their job.

The training provider had a RPL policy and procedure in place that facilitated the recognition of past experiences. The HR Manager expressed the view that:

*Recognition of prior learning during the learnership programme must be factored into the structure of the learnership programme because the learning is very much self-based learning and the learner can come to you at any time indicating that he/she is ready to be assessed, especially if you are talking about learners that have been exposed to the learning through practical on-the-floor experience for the*

*past 10 to 15 years. The learners are sometimes fully clued up and they would be able to tell you a few things about production. A learner decides at his own pace when he wants to be assessed.*

He further illustrated this point by citing the example of a person on a clicking learnership, who is responsible for cutting components to specifications. The HR Manager stressed that:

*When it comes down to the electives of the learnership, there is no way that one can say a clicker is not competent because of his/her 20 years past experience and therefore a learner is given credit through a RPL process that is based on past experiences. The RPL process would take past experience together with current competence into account.*

Another way in which the training provider enhanced informal learning opportunities through reflection on past experiences was through the self-assessment task at the end of a learning activity. According to the facilitator:

*The self-assessment task at the end of a learning activity gives learners an indication what they need to learn and provides them with feedback of what the assessor will require from them during an assessment. They may be asked to draw up a list or describe or define a process, which was discussed with them and which they have been through.*

The learners concurred with the view of the facilitator. Zama stated:

*I recalled from what I have done. I am always doing this. So if I get an opportunity to do something, then I look at what I did in our notes. You know what this is and what we had to do on the toelasting because we are obviously given information.*

The facilitator stressed that only when learners are able to complete the self-assessment tasks successfully then only does the learner move on and continue with the next activity. This is clearly an indication of the successful recollection of past experiences in footwear manufacturing processes.

#### **4.2.3 PROBLEM-SOLVING AND FRAMING DURING FAMILIAR (ROUTINIZED) TASKS AND UNFAMILIAR (NON-ROUTINIZED) TASKS**

Most of the manufacturing operations in the footwear industry are of a highly routinized nature, more especially the bottomstock, clicking, closing, toelasting, solutioning and finishing operations.

There were a number of ways the training provider facilitated the reflection of routinized tasks during the learnership programme. Unfamiliar (non-routinized) tasks included the opportunity for learners to perform non-operational tasks during the footwear learnership programme. The presence of familiar (routinized) and unfamiliar (non-routinized) tasks was an important catalyst for problem-solving, reframing, knowledge generation and improvement of skills.

When learners completed certain learning tasks, they had to complete a self-assessment checklist. By completing this assessment the learner was able to assess his/her current knowledge and skills base. Learners used their past experiences and through reflection he/she was able to judge his/her competence by satisfying what was on the checklist. The HR Manager shared the following view:

*A lot of stuff that involves reflection comes as a natural resource to an individual. A learner may be expected to list the components of the CTFL sector during an assessment task. Because all of these aspects would have been unpacked by virtue of group assignments and projects, by this stage this would come out quite naturally.*

Experienced learners drew on analogies from past situations to apply to the current situation.

A clicker who is doing a clicking activity is involved in a highly routinized operation and because leather is a natural resource, after it is finished in the tannery, the clicker is forced to use his/her discretion when cutting component parts. The learner is forced to reflect on quality criteria, taking into account that when the leather is finished in the tannery, one might have different grains on the leather because certain parts may be smooth. It is also possible that there may be variations in shades on the leather or parts of the leather may be damaged, because the animal may have scratched itself against barbed fencing or the branding mark may have caused damages to parts of the leather. Thus, the clickers thought processes would have to be activated when selecting the cutting area or when placing the knives to cut the different upper shoe components during the cutting process. He/she will have to decide whether to use a certain damaged area in order to cut a shoe component that is most probably concealed, so that the leather is not wasted. The clicker will have to be consistent in his/her selection to ensure pairs of shoe components match to the degree.

The HR Manager further acknowledged that when learners are assessed on the electives they are exposed to a skills matrix that outlines all the processes and operations of the skill. This is how

learners are progressively exposed to all of these operations. They are thus able to reach competence without much reflection.

Reflection on familiar manufacturing processes were encouraged by the training provider. The facilitator, Krish, related that when the learners are familiar with certain learning activities or tasks they “open-up”. In this way other learners learnt and this helped him because at times he got the assistance from the group to explain a process. He acknowledged that a learner with more experience assisted him to explain certain manufacturing processes in more detail.

During the researcher’s observation in the “incubator,” the researcher observed one of the learners performing a non-operational task, whilst returning from the storeroom with a bag of shoe buckles. The HR Manager indicated to the researcher that learners are sometimes used to fetch stock from the storeroom for machine operators so that they will get to know where the buckles come from, what they are used for and how to affix the buckle on the upper components of the shoe.

The elective component of the footwear learnership programme required performing familiar (routinized) and unfamiliar (non-routinized) tasks, which enhanced opportunities for problem-solving, reframing of problems, knowledge generation and improvement of skills. Although opportunities to learn through unfamiliar (non-routinized) tasks were limited, it did play a role in shaping the informal learning process.

#### **4.2.4 SUPERVISION AND CONTROL DURING FAMILIAR (ROUTINIZED) TASKS AND UNFAMILIAR (NON-ROUTINIZED) TASKS**

Supervision and control by the coach and facilitator during the performance of familiar (routinized) and unfamiliar (non-routinized) tasks impacted on the learning process. This proved to be an important delimiter for problem-solving, reframing, knowledge generation and improvement of skills.

Self-directed learning during the performance of routinized tasks was hampered by the eagerness and over-intervention of the facilitator to assist the learner in solving problems. In most instances, when learners experienced problems in a particular learning activity or process, they usually

referred the problem to him for a possible solution. They made very little effort to solve the problem themselves. Learning during familiar (routinized) tasks was stifled by the supervision and over-intervention of the coach and facilitator when problems cropped up. Guidance and direction provided to learners during routinized tasks left little room for self-directed learning, learning from mistakes or learning by trial-and-error.

The HR Manager indicated that when learners struggled, the facilitator was there to provide him or her with the information. If the task required the learner to identify the key acts of parliament that related to the footwear sector, then, Krish, the facilitator, would go through the group assignments. He would look at all of the acts and then would look at which acts related specifically to the footwear sector.

Observation of the following footwear routinized operations during the learnership programme revealed the following:

**Clicking Operation:** Whilst walking along the line, the facilitator took the researcher through the various operations, starting from the first operation, which was clicking. The clicker appeared to be involved in a highly routinized operation that entailed setting the knives (patterns of shoe components) on a big piece of leather and then clicking the machine to cut out specific shoe components to produce the upper of a shoe.

Initially, the researcher's thoughts were that this operation was of a routine nature that involved no thinking at all. However, the facilitator Krish Pillay explained to the researcher that the clicker had to be alert and dexterous because he had to ensure that when cutting the various shoe components he had look for variations of colour, grain and design in the leather. He would also have to look for rejects on the leather because sometimes the animal could have a branding mark, which is retained on the leather or the animal could have scratched and injured itself on the bushes or barbed wire, which left permanent marks on the leather and resulted in rejects and poor quality and finishing. Although this task required reflection and thinking, it was highly routinized and whenever the operator came across something that was unfamiliar he would not go about solving the problem himself/herself, but would simply refer the matter to the coach.

**Closing Operation:** The closing operation required the learner to stitch the various shoe components to form the upper of the shoe on an industrial safety over-lock sewing machine. Shoe component parts were stitched in pairs. Very little is left to the discretion of the learner. Left shoe component parts are clearly marked from right shoe components in order to prevent mistakes. The stitching line is marked for the machinist on the inside of the components.

**Solutioning:** Learners applied glue to the various shoe components. Lines marked on the inner components of the shoe clearly indicated where the glue/gel must be applied on the shoe component with a brush. When the learners experienced problems the matter was referred to the coach/ facilitator who walked down the line assisting learners.

Although the training provider supported learners, who encountered unfamiliar problems during the learnership programme by the intervention of the facilitator, the facilitator failed to assist learners to unravel or reframe the problem through their own thought processes in order to find possible solutions. Little was left to the imagination or discretion of the learner.

Both familiar (routinized) and unfamiliar (non-routinized) tasks shaped the learning process in a negative manner. Both tasks proved to be a huge delimiter for problem-solving, reframing, knowledge generation and improvement of skills.

#### **4.2.5 COLLABORATION AND TEAMWORK**

The training methodology of the training provider shaped opportunities for collaboration and teamwork in a number of ways during the footwear learnership programme. The learning materials were critical in facilitating collaboration and teamwork. According to the HR Manager, every module contained assignments or learning activities that were either group or individual related.

The HR Manager indicated that most learning activities or assignments are discussed in a group, although individuals may be requested to present individual assignments. He maintained that this gave learners group exposure.

The training methodology adopted by the training provider was the key element in enhancing collaboration and teamwork during the learnership programme.

The HR Manager expressed the following views on the training methodology of the company. He stated:

*On the job training of learners does not take place in an isolated way because when it came to your lasting and making area it had to take place on the track because of the way it was set up. It is very difficult to set-up a whole lasting and making track like a conveyor belt for training on the line. The linear track system is not good for training purposes, because when learners operate in a straight line and if a learner seated in position 4 or 5 wanted to seek clarity on an operation with the person at the end of track, this can result in disruption of the production process. The cellular system is very much an integrated system with learners seated closely to one another and it is far easier for them to interact with one another. The cellular system is less disruptive and there is very little movement as compared to the walking in the linear system. There is easy access to equipment and besides, whilst learners are working in the confines of a designated area they are exposed to the different footwear processes that are available. All the learners can observe the different processes at one go because learners can observe the different operations like lasting, making and finishing. Learners are able to reflect that the shoes come from the assembly line into the lasting track. The back part is moulded during the lasting operation and then the bottomstock is affixed and the upper is formed. Then the shoe goes through to a finishing process.*

He added further:

*With the cellular system machines are opposite one another and learners can talk to one another if they are experiencing quality problems. They become very focused and it enhances the possibility of them developing skills quicker than a linear system because they are situated so much closer to where the point of action is, so much so that when a person is experiencing a problem another experienced learner might intervene and say, "Let me help you!" This is done in a very informal way. All of a sudden learners start to develop more than one skill.*

It was also evident that the management and facilitator facilitated collaboration and teamwork. The HR Manager, the facilitator and learners noted that experienced machine operators on the factory floor do assist learners and that colleagues and peers are also available to assist the learners.

The learners, Zama and Adelle, illustrated this by citing examples. Zama related:

*We were doing the making and Krish gave us these uppers. We had to start the making line. Krish was assisting us. We had to follow on what he has done, but he was right there assisting.*



Adelle added:

*I remember there was a time when we had to go down to look for machine numbers to get to know what type of machine it is and how you would lubricate its settings and things like that. I walked down to the people that worked in the factory and they assisted me.*

The facilitator, Krish, mentioned that consent to work on a particular machine or a production process was obtained by himself, from the departmental manager, thus granting access for a colleague or peer to assist a learner.

Collaboration and teamwork was also enhanced during the facilitation of the core learning activities by virtue of the fact that experienced learners (18.1 learner) and inexperienced learners (18.2 learner) were taught simultaneously under classroom conditions. The HR Manager, training facilitator and learners confirmed that core learning activities are facilitated in groups of 4 or 5 and that when learners gave feedback, they learnt from one another. The HR Manager and training facilitator validated their argument by stating that when the more experienced learners (18.1 learner) are providing feedback, the inexperienced learners (18.2 learner) fed off this information and learnt at the same time.

During observation, after the activity was completed, the researcher questioned the facilitator on why some of the other learners had a better understanding of the industry. He pointed out that the 18.1 learners would have a better understanding and are more familiar with the footwear manufacturing operations and learning activities because they are recruited from within the company and thus have the necessary experience, skills and expertise as opposed to the 18.2 learners who were previously unemployed, most probably had no previous experience in footwear manufacturing and had to undergo a recruitment and selection process before joining the footwear learnership programme. Adelle, a learner, expanded on this point by illustrating an example:

*The majority of the time we usually sit together and if we have a problem we will help one another. When we are in a group and questions are raised and if there is a new girl there, she would not know what it really is, if she has not been in the footwear industry. If the one person does not know and if I know it, I will talk, but if the other learners did four or five learnerships, they are well clued-up. They are there to assist and they will.*

During facilitation observation of the core unit standard pertaining to *Structure of the Industry*, learners had their learning guides pertaining to the structure of the industry in front of them. A discussion on the learning activity took place. The researcher observed that some of the learners responded very well to some of the questions that were posed by the facilitator by offering excellent and concise explanations. They appeared to have a clear understanding of certain concepts that were unique to the footwear industry as compared to other learners. Learners were definitely learning from the experiences of one another while explanations were being offered. The researcher observed that the methodology used during the facilitation of the core learning is primarily group discussion. Questions at the end of the learning activities were discussed and learners were observed taking down notes in their learning activity guides. When learners did not understand a question or required an explanation they would pose questions to the facilitator who later indicated to the researcher that he would first ask the more experienced learners to answer the questions and then he would complement their answers by offering his own explanation. The researcher also observed the facilitator going around the classroom and offering individual assistance to learners.

Although the training provider provided several opportunities for learning through collaboration, which was essentially enhanced by the training methodology of the training provider, there was not much emphasis and opportunities for learning through teamwork. Teamwork is paramount in any learning process.

#### **4.2.6 COACHING AND MENTORING**

Coaching and mentoring is a critical factor in the informal learning process. This factor is primarily, influenced by the availability and experience of managers, supervisors, facilitators, coaches and working colleagues.

Informal learning was enhanced by the presence of an established, experienced, multi-skilled, and qualified training staff, managers and supervisors on the factory floor. The HR Manager confirmed that supervisors on the factory floor assisted with the facilitation of the training and assessment of the electives and that these supervisors had in excess of 20 years experience each.

They took the learners through the basics like understanding the equipment and machinery, so that learners understood how to operate the machine and what corrective action was to be taken if the thread finished. The researcher observed that learners were being coached and mentored by two coaches. According to the HR Manager they were retired ex-employees who had about 60 to 70 years experience between them in the footwear industry. They walked along the linear track guiding learners, inspecting their work and offering advice on what they were doing. They took the learners through the basics like understanding the equipment and machinery so that learners understood how to operate the machine and what corrective action was to be taken if the thread finished. The researcher also had a casual conversation with one of the coaches, who explained to him that some of the stitching operations involved in joining the upper components of the shoe are intricate and complex requiring great dexterity. Learners were taught these operations using “sit-by-Nelly” techniques. Learners were taught how to control a sewing machine, which required very good eye, hand and feet co-ordination. On one occasion, the HR Manager explained to the researcher that learners are requested to observe experienced machine operators in order to learn ergonomics. Ergonomics refers to the seating or standing position of operators and using one’s body and body action economically so has to increase productivity and prevent long-term bodily strain or injury.

The coaching and mentoring of learners is so intensive that according to the HR Manager:

*It is only when learners are good and up to speed with their stitching that they are ready to start assembling the various component parts of the leather to produce the upper of the shoe.*

The most significant positive factor that was dominant throughout the informal learning process was the influence of the facilitator, supervisors, managers and peers. The HR Manager also indicated that during the training for the electives on joining and assembling footwear component parts, the coach or facilitator on occasion called upon an experienced machinist to demonstrate certain operations. He proudly stated:

*This is one of the few companies who have structures to ensure that experienced people show others what to do when it comes to on-the-job training and this type of training does not take place in an isolated way.*

The learners were very complimentary about the level of coaching and mentoring that they received during the footwear learnership programme. Zama illustrated this by citing an example:

*Firstly we have Krish, as our tutor. He would explain all the questions to us on the board. He is there to guide you, he will explain and he will take it from there until you understand something. He will help you. He will facilitate on the whiteboard and the flipchart. He will also refer you to the charts in the resource centre. Then we have our resources and if we don't understand something, we refer to these notes.*

Zama confirmed the above statement by adding:

*Krish told us about the machine and the safety and what we must do according to the machine ... thereafter if you know what to do you must try and do it.*

The HR Manager was of the view that the level of coaching was enhanced by the fact that:

*If learners were dissatisfied with the quality of the facilitation or assessment during the footwear learnership programme, facilitators were happy to conduct further sessions in order to improve the performance of the learners.*

The facilitator, together with the managers of the various departments guided, supported and made space and time for learning. The facilitator stressed:

*When it came to the facilitation of the learning on the electives, I actually take them on to the factory floor before actually going through the process with them.*

He clarified this point by citing an example:

*Let's assume they have been previously in the closing process and they are now lasting and if they don't have an overview of what is going on, so I take them through the process, you know the sequence of operations.*

He added that because there are quite a number of operations, he drew up a matrix for the operations and he puts the learners through their paces on one of those processes. The facilitator stressed that if he had time after the core part of the learning, he discussed the elective processes with the learners. The HR Manager, facilitator and learners confirmed that sometimes learners

observed experienced operators performing footwear operations which definitely enhanced the learning opportunities given to learners.

The intervention of the facilitator, especially during the assessments and practical demonstrations of the learnership programme, enhanced the learning opportunities of learners. The HR Manager and training facilitator confirmed that when learners are assessed during the electives and are found to be not yet competent in a particular production process, they are corrected immediately. They confirmed that learners are not assessed immediately, but only after they have being through the process a number of times on a specific operation. It was only when the facilitator felt that the learners were competent enough, would he assess them. According to the facilitator:

*Most practical demonstrations are repeated by the learners after I have demonstrated how it was done. It is only after learners related to me how the process was done that they are allowed to perform the process and it is repeated a number of times until they achieve full competence.*

The learners also acknowledged that the facilitator attended to every individuals need. All of the learners mentioned that if one needed any information and if one was not sure how to go about getting the information from the production managers or supervisors then the facilitator made himself available to go with the learner in order to help and guide the learner. Joanna stated:

*He would take you to the production managers and supervisors and will take you onto the factory floor to introduce you to whatever you needed to know about the production process.*

All participants mentioned that during the facilitation of the practical component of the learning, Krish, the facilitator was always on hand to explain to the learners the different parts of the machine and what the job of the machine was. Adelle added:

*He will use the manual and physically show it to the learners and guide the learners through the machine manual. He will tell the learners about the safety regulations and everything that needs to be known about the machine.*

Zama, a fellow learner, also confirmed the assistance of the facilitator:

*We were working down with the other machines. I didn't understand what was going on in the machine. Krish told me nicely how it works and how you clean the machine.*

The HR Manager, facilitators and learners indicated that provision had to be made for training on the electives. When the learners were doing a making elective, then on such a day or such a time, they would make arrangements to have access to that machine. He added that at times training on the electives was conducted on Fridays at 13:00, when the company shut down normal production operations.

The footwear learnership programme was positively enhanced by the availability of an experienced facilitator, coaches, working colleagues and departmental managers. Adequate space, time and opportunity influenced the level of coaching and mentoring.

#### **4.2.7 VALUE AND RECOGNITION OF FUTURE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

Career and personal development during the learnership programme was critical in the way learners perceived various learning opportunities. This provided them with adequate motivation for wanting to learn a number of manufacturing operations, whilst the opportunity presented itself. The orientation/induction programme, promotion opportunities, increase in wages and the compilation of a personal development plan or PoE were the more obvious drivers of the training provider's career and personal interests for learners during the learnership programme.

The HR Manager acknowledged:

*Before the commencement of the learnership programme when learners are selected and recruited onto the footwear learnership programme, they are briefed during the orientation programme about how the learnership programme was going to benefit them by learning a variety of skills and footwear manufacturing operations.*

He also confirmed that during the orientation programme learners are briefed as to the importance of knowing all of the elective components that pertained to footwear manufacturing processes from start to finish and he cited the example of a learner, Joanna, who had acquired most of her skills through the footwear learnership programme and who was an obvious choice when it came to

succession planning. He maintained that she had an advantage because she completed all the learnerships and progressed to become Quality Manageress.

Joanna confirmed the above assertions of the HR Manager by stating:

*They discussed the learnership with us in a very educational way. I was one of the very excited candidates. They said that the benefits would be that you could become a different person. On successful completion of the learnership you would be able to go forward. As a table hand for 19 years, I was now allowed to move into other departments... you could become maybe the chargehand of that department or you can get into any position you chose.*

Zama shared a similar view with Joanna:

*We did not know anything about shoes. Now we are going to know how to make a shoe and everything about the shoe and after that if we are good we can carry on in the company. We could become something in this company. Maybe we are the future of the company and ...told us if you are doing well in the learnership, we can become a manager, because now we know how to make shoes.*

He did, however, concede that completing a learnership qualification did not automatically qualify a learner for promotion or salary increase for which the company had certain procedures in place. The HR Manager maintained that learners who had completed a learnership qualification and who wanted to become entrepreneurs and start a business, in for example the clicking operation, would easily qualify for finance by the Independent Development Corporation to start their own businesses. He felt that this was adequate motivation for learners to want to develop themselves and learn informally during the learnership programme.

The fact that the training provider gave adequate notice to learners about various learning opportunities, prepared learners in advance for this process. During observation of the facilitation of the core unit standard pertaining to Structure of the Industry, the facilitator initially explained the learning activity pertaining to the Structure of the Industry and how they are involved in the pipeline of the industry. The facilitator indicated to the researcher that the learners were requested to read the relevant learning activity, a week prior to the actual lesson.

The HR Manager stated:

*The facilitator, Krish, informs learners of the requirements of the various manufacturing processes, curriculum, duration, learning pathway and contact sessions during the induction and orientation programme, thus preparing them for the learnership programme.*

In terms of the personal development of a learner, the HR Manager cited the example of learners, who were multi-skilled and who went through the learnership programme. He stated:

*Phumalani, who is just as competent as Joanna, went through most of the learnerships and is capable of producing his own shoe.*

The HR Manager and training facilitator cited the example of Joanna, who during the learnership programme and through the exposure to the learnerships, has gained all of her knowledge on the various operations from closing to bottom stock. She was able to compile a quality checklist for the various operations, thus enabling her to refer faults to the correct department because during the learnership she had completed a project on it, which was either in the clicking or closing department.

A requirement of the learnership programme is that the training provider must assist the learner to compile a PoE. Learners who have completed a PoE, which is reflective of the skills of the learner, had the ability to put this into practical use in most production processes. According to the HR Manager and facilitator, the compilation of a PoE assisted the learners because it gave them an overview of the whole process and it reflected that they are multi-skilled and capable of being used in all departments in any operation.

The HR Manager and facilitator confirmed that after the completion of the learnership programme, learners who completed more than 3 to 4 electives obtained a broader understanding of the footwear manufacturing process. From an integration point of view, learners could relate what happened from one department to the next. It developed their "whole" understanding of the footwear production process. From a development point of view, they were exposed to the production process from clicking, right through to finishing.

Both the HR Manager and training facilitator confirmed that learners on a footwear learnership acquired skills that were marketable and that this kind of experience exposed learners to careers in



other fields like becoming a footwear buyer for major chain stores. The learnership programme built capacity and improved their marketability.

According to the HR Manager, there was “both vertical and horizontal integration.” He illustrated this point by citing an example:

*If the footwear department required a supervisor, who better to choose from than Phumalani, who completed a bottom stock learnership and who is able to tell you everything about bottomstock. They are able to make a valuable contribution in their field and add value to the production process.*

The orientation programme before the commencement of the learnership programme and opportunities for multi-skilling were the key factors that enhanced the recognition and value of future learning opportunities.

#### **4.2.8 COMMUNICATION**

Information exchanges in the form of electronic communication, reading, discussions, guidance and counseling sessions, briefings and meetings impacted on the level of communication and thus, the learning process during the learnership programme. Communication opportunities were broad factors that influenced and shaped the informal learning process in a number of ways.

Although opportunities for learning from information exchanges during the footwear learnership programme were immense, it must also be stressed that the presence or absence of some of these factors impeded informal learning opportunities. Information exchanges took the form of briefings, counseling sessions, discussions between learners and the facilitator, the use of computer technology like the internet, informal conversations between learners and fellow colleagues or peers and the facilitator, the use of reference material, books and charts in the Resource Centre, use of audio visual aids and the learner’s involvement in workplace committees etc.

The HR Manager and facilitator confirmed that learners are granted access to the respective departments to obtain information related to the footwear industry or for interviews with expert personnel on footwear. The HR Manager explained:

*If the learners are doing an assignment on materials or who the main suppliers are, they will be requested to go into the stores department as a group and they will access the information required from a buyer in the buying department or if the activity related to materials they will be requested to interview a storeman on what they have in stock and where did the materials come from, who the main suppliers are, the conditions for storage of materials being exported from suppliers, how the store distributes the material to the departments etc. This information can also be obtained from the facilitator himself, the departmental manager and supervisors. They are made aware of when the learners are coming through and are accepted in the various departments.*

The HR Manager briefly explained how the training provider facilitated interviews between the learners and departmental personnel. He stated:

*All interviews with the buyers or storeman are arranged through the facilitator, Krish, who will call and indicate that he is sending a group of learners to the respective department. He will forewarn the buyer or go to the design department, so that they know, when the learners go there with their questions they are prepared. Those guys are experts in the field and will be able to answer the questions without referring to anything.*

The HR Manager illustrated the above point by using an example. He mentioned that if one of the projects is related to Human Resources, the learners will most probably come to him as a group and:

*... I will explain to them about the functions of trade union structures, the SETA, the Bargaining Council.*

The training provider provided resources in the resource centre, which encouraged learners to read and obtain additional information on footwear manufacturing processes. Both The HR Manager and facilitator mentioned that as part of the resources that were available in the resource centre, large charts have been developed by the training staff, who extrapolated the information on who the main suppliers are and the kinds of materials that go into the storeroom. This information was made available to the learners. The facilitator added:

*All of the information that is contained in the charts is not available in the learning guides. In the resource centre these charts are the additional reading for the learners.*

Learners confirmed that reading played a vital role in their development. Zama indicated how the training provider facilitated the reading process:

*He gave us the manuals and says go home and read this or he'll tell us go to the machine and see how it works.*

Althaaf spoke about the importance of reading:

*I felt it was better system because I did not forget what I read. When you read you are reading not for the sake of reading. At the end you say to yourself, I know it, when you go back and read the whole thing because you are assessing yourself.*

The HR Manger described how the facilitator used these charts during a learning activity by pointing out a set of chairs to the researcher that was around a few charts. He explained:

*The facilitator seats the learners in front of the charts that relates to a particular learning activity and after he takes them through a chart that relates to a specific learning task they are expected to read the chart themselves and to make notes and to complete the self-assessment task. This is their additional reading. If they were doing a learning activity pertaining to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, then it is the responsibility of the training staff to expand on it and to extrapolate the information, which is not built into the learning guides.*

Information exchanges during the learnership programme also took the form of intense discussions. During the facilitation of the core learning activities, the HR Manager, facilitator and learners maintained that contact sessions are done in a group and that the facilitation method of learning activities were group discussions. The HR Manager illustrated this by using an example of how during a discussion that involved a group and an individual activity, learners were requested to discuss the inter-relationships of the CTFL Sector. He related the following account, which he referred to as "integrated learning".

*The CTFL Sector is representative of clothing, textiles, footwear and leather and that learners would sometimes enter into a debate about how these sectors are related to one another and of how the footwear sector is dependent on textiles because the company uses textile linings for the inner of the shoes. All learners will make their inputs and thus each of the learners will make a contribution in relation to the group activity.*

Information obtained during discussions was used to complete the self-assessment task. Sometimes the learner did not only imbibe the information learnt during a discussion but would have to relate the impact of such information on the sector or his/her job e.g. a learner may look at how the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act* regulates his/her wages. The HR Manager added:

*The learner may want to expand his/her research and this information is provided to the learner. If the learning activity pertains to the Occupational, Health and Safety Act then the learner may draw on information relating to the most recent injuries for the past twelve months by researching such information at the Human Resources Department and that statistics are also available from the Resource Centre.*

Exchanges of information were also enhanced by learners obtaining access to various kinds of resources. The HR Manager and training facilitator confirmed that learners enjoyed access at any time to the resource centre. They related that learning activities are facilitated from the learning guides and during such sessions feedback is obtained from the learners. The facilitator confirmed:

*I get feedback from the learners of what they do understand. I also must stress that most of the information that the learners need for the learnership is in the Resource Centre. Learners do not experience any difficulties in terms of going and sourcing the material either from the factory floor or on the boards.*

Learners also confirmed how the use of resources complemented the learning process. Adelle related:

*There are plenty of closing and clicking pictures in the resource centre. There is a machine there. If, for example, you are doing skiving, there is information on what you are doing. You can read manuals for the machines ...*

The training provider also ensured the availability of adequate time for learners to maximize learning opportunities during information exchanges. The HR Manager mentioned that when learners wanted to come in during the lunch breaks because they felt that they were backward with their notes, then, either Krish or himself unpacked the areas the learner did not understand. They would explain at length until the learner could do the task with some confidence. According to the facilitator, the learners did a lot of their own learning and would come up to the resource centre during their lunch hour. Whenever they needed learning materials, then this was made available to them.

The HR Manager also explained:

*The learners have regular contact sessions during company time and that if they needed to do research, for example on Quality, then they will go to the Quality Manageress and request the reject rate analysis etc.*

On the issue pertaining to the use of computers or the internet during the learnership programme the views of the training provider were contrary to the informal learning process, although the training provider had a fully equipped computer facility. Both the HR Manager and the facilitator were of the view that the learning activities in the NQF level 2 qualification required very little access to computers or the internet. The HR Manager maintained:

*Although learners are welcome to do their assignments on the computer, they are not encouraged to do research for their projects or assignments using the internet. The reason why we did not include learning activities that encourages learners to do research on the internet is because most companies did not have free access to computer technology. If we want to include the use of information technology in the qualification, then a new unit standard must be included in the qualification.*

Another factor that impeded research and an exchange of information was the absence of a dedicated library. The HR Manager and training facilitator confirmed that Edu Shoes did not have a fully equipped library because the resource centre provided the learners with all the information that they required and that machine manuals were accessible to learners if they required information on machine faults relating to sewing faults, oil leaks or oil levels because this information was not found in the learning guides.

Workplace committees have played a significant role in expanding a learner's workplace knowledge because learners are given the opportunity to collaborate with fellow colleagues and interact in a community of practice. According to the HR Manager and training facilitator, learners did belong to additional committees in the workplace, like health and safety committee, first aid committee, fire-fighting committee etc. The HR Manager supported the value of workplace committees by stating:

*When learners are representatives of these committees they are exposed to information and the different legislation that is relevant to these committees.*

When asked if this assisted the learners in achieving the specific outcomes of the respective unit standards, the HR Manager cited the example of a learner who is a member of the Health and Safety Committee and the Quality Committee. He stated:

*Most definitely, if she has to do a checklist for the health and safety unit standard and if during the inspection the wiring does not comply, then as an activity she will be able to document this and report it to the proper authorities. The fact that learners do a quality unit standard during the footwear learnership, they are able to identify quality defaults on the production line and they are able to relate this information to Joanna, the Quality Manager. Joanna does an analysis of the reject rate, which is made available to the learners. Learners, thus get to know what is a quality problem and what is not a quality problem and this is how learners become aware of all the quality problems in footwear production if they are members of the Quality Committee.*

The role of briefing sessions during the learnership programme cannot be underestimated as a catalyst of informal learning. The HR Manager contended that all briefing sessions were conducted by the facilitator, Krish. During these sessions he checked with learners if they were experiencing problems, for e.g., there was also the possibility that a manager did not want to release a learner who had missed out on a session. Krish, the facilitator, would then negotiate with the manager to secure additional time to make up the lost time.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that information exchanges had both a positive and negative impact on the level of communication during the learnership programme. Whilst certain factors such as group discussions and guidance and counseling sessions enhanced the communication level during the learnership programme, factors such as opportunities for the use of computer and electronic communication, briefings and meetings during the learnership programme negatively impacted on the level of communication.

#### **4.2.9 MOTIVATION, COMMITMENT AND CONFIDENCE**

The availability of incentives, rewards, and support from the management of the training provider were the key drivers to motivation, commitment and confidence. This was reflected in the company's policy to promote learners or employees provided they were willing to learn as many jobs as possible. The training provider facilitated multi-skilling by introducing a system of rewards. The HR Manager stressed:

*Multi-skilling allows them to move up the ranks within a department. By knowing the operation a person can move from a class 3 operator to a class 2 operator. It is also possible that learners will learn certain operations informally because when an individual comes in as a table hand and if there is a need for a*

*seatlaster which is a class two operation, a person can then move from a seatlaster to a class 1 operation, which is toelasting in the same department.*

The HR Manager also confirmed that learners are informed that whatever they gained out of the learnership in terms of a qualification and skills made them more marketable in the industry. The HR Manager further added:

*Learners, who have developed their skills in the footwear industry become more confident and they start to think more out of the box. These are some of the reasons why they have a low drop out rate when learners come on board a learnership programme.*

The training provider clearly viewed multi-skilling during the learnership programme as an indicator of personal development and possible promotion possibilities. The views of the HR Manager and the facilitator endorsed this perception. The facilitator, Krish, maintained:

*If a learner was to go through all 7 processes in the footwear industry like design, clicking and closing, it gives the learner a better overview of the manufacturing processes and what happens in each specific department. If there is a need in the clicking department and a learner has completed a clicking learnership then there is a possibility for that learner to be promoted in the clicking department.*

Rewards, incentives and support had a positive influence in the learning process and shaped motivation, commitment and confidence of the learners during the footwear learnership programme.

Zama, a learner, summed up the ultimate motivation and reward of the learnership programme by stating:

*I was proud of my certificate.*

#### **4.3 APPLICATION OF THEMES AND FACTORS PERTAINING TO RESEARCH QUESTION 2**

##### **How do these factors impact on the performance of learners in a footwear learnership programme?**

This section presents data relating to research question 2. The emerging themes and factors arrived at in research question 1 were used as a basis for the analysis of the semi-structured interviews with the learners and observation notes in order to ascertain if these factors enhanced or inhibited a learner's performance during the footwear learnership programme.

#### 4.3.1 PROBLEM-SOLVING AND FRAMING DURING FAMILIAR (ROUTINIZED) TASKS AND UNFAMILIAR (NON-ROUTINIZED) TASKS

Successful resolution and reframing of problems during the performance of familiar (routinized) tasks and unfamiliar (non-routinized) tasks during assessment of the theoretical and practical component of the footwear learnership programme resulted in the generation of new knowledge and improved the skills of the learners. Learners related instances, where they were compelled to reflect on footwear manufacturing operations when undertaking familiar or unfamiliar tasks on the job, which impacted on their performance.

Learners related instances during the learnership programme when they encountered unfamiliar problems and how they attempted to solve these problems. They described their thought processes, which could have resulted in finding new ways of solving a particular problem.

Joanna reflected:

*After I go through my learning guides, I complete the self-assessment tasks, which gives me an indication of how competent I am and if I felt that I was not sufficiently competent I would go back through it again and do the self-assessment task again. Sometimes if during the self-assessment task I found I did not understand something, I would go back to the facilitator and ask him to answer all over again.*

Joanna acknowledged that she was quite knowledgeable and for her the learnership programme was simple because she knew all the answers. She used the following example to illustrate her thought processes:

*Let's say the activity was about the assembly department. I would then say this is something I know. I would close my eyes and think back what happened before.*

Adelle recalled the time when she was performing and recounted the following:

*There was a colleague who was assisting and showing me and then I had to think back about how I was doing it on the making line and how I am now going to perform this upper. I recalled when I had to pre-form, I had to think about the pressure on the machine. You can feel the creases in the material that you have low pressure. If you press the upper you can see automatically that it creases and then you drop the pressure. I remembered what I had done then from that material. I looked at that material and I said, okay fine, this job requires low pressure. If it creases the material, it's harder for the toelaster, so*



*recalling from what I have done in the past, I dropped the pressure. It was okay, then I carried on from there.*

Althaaf, another learner, recalled an incident when he employed consequential thinking as part of the reflection process. He related:

*The glue was not sticking, I realized something went wrong down the line. If the sole opens, I know it is two things. Either the solution never dry properly or something went wrong during roughening. Preparation is very important. If the solution is not sticking, you'll see it on the line. You will have to go and check it and discuss it among ourselves. Sometimes the unit is not wiped properly, the solution comes off the unit. Sometimes it may be that the wrong chemical is used.*

He explained further:

*I'll pull out the sole and check it. If the sole does not catch, then you know it is a solution problem or wiper problem or it wasn't lasted properly. With leather if it wasn't lasted properly it will never work. I know it wasn't roughened properly because a flat sole is different. If you got a sole with a dip, you'll figure it out because you can test it with your hand.*

Joanna mentioned the following of how she reframed unfamiliar problems she encountered:

*I would think about how the past problems arose. From then I tried to look at what caused the problem. If I could solve the problem, then I will want to get to the root cause of the problem and on my own try and work it out. Then I'll ask myself why did it cause the problem and if I can answer why it did cause the problem, then I'll try to get down as to why that problem caused this problem. I will try to analyse the root of the problem. What would be the next step and what would happen if I allow it to continue?*

Joanna explained further:

*If I come across a problem that I have never experienced in the past, I know it is a new problem to me. Well, then I would know that I did not experience that problem before and I don't spend too much time thinking about the past. I would think about that specific problem and how I am going to handle it and stop it, so it does not upset me in the future.*

Learners on a footwear learnership programme go through a myriad of learning experiences that leads to possible solutions or answers through self-discovery. Respondents cited the following instances that resulted in self-directed learning. Adelle recalled:

*During the facilitation of the core learning, if we have to do something we will first try and see if we can do it on our own.*

She mentioned that there were instances where she did not know anything and she was forced to go and check it up. If that failed, she would ask the facilitator to explain it to her.

Joanna mentioned that during the seat lasting operation, although learners were taught everything about the machine, they also had to practically perform the operation by themselves. She stressed that at times she would get a colleague to assist her, but she would mostly try to learn as much as possible about an operation by herself.

Learners indicated that they undertook to learn new operations when they had finished their work because of the availability of time or because of the unavailability of assistance.

Adelle related:

*Once we had to do uppers and Krish was busy with the next person, so I went ahead and attempted the task on my own. I realized I can do it because I had to roughen the edges, and to roughen it, I had to send it through the machine at a certain angle. You have to roughen it, so I tried it on my own and when I did it, it was slightly off. When I showed it to Krish, he said, you know what the most important thing is, you tried it on your own.*

Adelle further recalled that when she was first doing closing in the closing room the following occurred:

*I was machining and there was no assistance at that time. I did the work by observing what the next operator is doing and I started machining it on my own and it came out fine. I had no problem.*

Problem solving and framing during the performance of familiar (routinized) and unfamiliar (non-routinized) tasks were the key drivers to improving the performance of learners during the footwear learnership programme. The facilitator played an insignificant role in instances, where learners were determined to solve the problems by themselves

#### **4.3.2 SUPERVISION AND CONTROL DURING FAMILIAR (ROUTINIZED) TASKS AND UNFAMILIAR (NON-ROUTINIZED) TASKS**

Learners related instances during the learnership programme when their problem-solving skills were sometimes enhanced or impeded during the performance of familiar or unfamiliar tasks. Supervision and control by the facilitator impacted on the learning process during the performance of these familiar or unfamiliar tasks. Learners described their thought processes during the performance of familiar or unfamiliar tasks, which were hampered by the eagerness and hasty intervention of the facilitator or coach.

Adelle maintained that there were not many opportunities to try and solve problems by themselves. This could be attributed to the over-eagerness of the facilitator to intervene when problems arose.

Supervision and control by the facilitator and coach was found to be a delimiter to the learning process, which impacted negatively on the performance of learners. Problem-solving and reframing was hindered by lack of patience on the part of the learners or the over-eagerness of the facilitator to assist in finding a solution to the problem.

#### **4.3.3 LEARNING PROVISION**

Performance of learners during the footwear learnership programme was influenced by the learning context. Learning provision, which included finding the appropriate time, space and environment, shaped the learning process and thus, impacted on the performance of learners.

The fact that learners were not attached to one specific department during the learnership programme enhanced their opportunity to learn different footwear operations whilst learning on the job.

Adelle related that during the orientation and induction programme they were told:

*... this is going to be a learnership programme and we won't be situated at one place because since we are learning we may be put into various places.*

Adelle added further:

*We were doing everything, we were not in one place. I don't like to be put in one place. If you are working on the machine, it doesn't mean I can't. If you show me, I will do it. Whatever it is?*

Althaaf, another learner, mentioned the following:

*I need to get some information. I was working on the line and I was working in the shoeroom. I need to work there. I needed to get some experience in shoeroom finishing. I told him I wanted to go that side and he made it like a full time job. We all go and work there to make the score.*

Learning was facilitated and enhanced by virtue of the fact that most of the learning took place during normal working hours. Joanna and Althaaf confirmed that they were allocated two hours during working hours to complete theoretical tasks. If they did not complete a task within those two hours, they were allowed to complete the task at home.

Learning provision had a positive impact on the performance of the learners during the learnership programme. The learner's confidence and motivational level improved when they were given the opportunity to learn during the appropriate time and correct learning context.

#### **4.3.4 COLLABORATION AND TEAMWORK**

Learners recalled the many instances during the learnership programme, where collaboration and teamwork came into play. From an informal learning perspective it emerged that learners learned how to work with working colleagues and shared knowledge whenever they asked questions to working colleagues who were working on the machines on the factory floor. Discussions during the facilitation of the theoretical component were another driver that impacted on the performance of learners. Joanna stated:

*When it was a group activity, we will go to the relevant department and ask the relevant questions as a group. We will discuss the answers with each other as well as go around the different departments to put the information together.*

Adelle recalled the following incident when collaboration came into play during facilitation of the core component of the learnership programme. She stated:

*When learners sat together for the core learning and they had a problem, they should help one another.*

Collaboration was maximized during the facilitation of the core unit standards. Adelle related:

*During group discussions for the core unit standards, there were learners there who have completed 4 or 5 learnerships and are clued up and they are there to assist. And in a group, when a question is raised, and if there are new learners there, they would not know what is really happening if they had no past experience in the footwear industry. Usually people with experience will talk and assist other learners.*

Althaaf also shared an alternative view about collaboration and teamworking during the learnership programme. According to Althaaf:

*I did more assisting than the other people. I was more qualified than the others. I had more knowledge than them. The others were like first-timers. If I knew something I'll explain it to the group.*

Although collaboration was a key driver that had a positive influence on the performance of learners, the lack of teamwork opportunities had the opposite effect.

#### **4.3.5 COACHING AND MENTORING**

All the learners related incidents and instances where they were coached and mentored during the learnership programme. It was clear that coaching and mentoring moved vertically through the organization (from departmental manager, facilitator and supervisor to a learner) and on a lateral plane (from peer-to-peer). Learners spoke highly of the availability, commitment, dedication and enthusiasm of the HR Manager, the facilitator, departmental managers, supervisors, working colleagues and peers, who had a significant influence and impact in the way they learnt on the job and on their performance.

All the learners related that during the facilitation of the core learning, they were introduced to a learning activity. They described the facilitation of the learning by illustrating how the learning activity on productivity was facilitated in a classroom situation. Joanna mentioned:

*The facilitator would discuss the meaning of productivity and during discussions we were asked questions like what do we understand about productivity and whenever we did not understand something, Krish, the facilitator, would call us in on an individual basis and repeat what he discussed with us by breaking it down into very simple parts because each individual grasp concepts differently.*

Joanna went on further to describe the facilitation of the practical work. She recounted:

*You are afraid sometimes to handle the machinery and the operator together with the facilitator will tell you exactly how it is done and advise you on your correct body position and if you get it wrong, they will teach you until you get it right.*

She added to this by commenting on the intervention of the facilitator:

*At times I did not understand an operation, I would come up to the facilitator and he would actually open up his books and he would try and get me to understand. He would not only speak to me, but he would take me down to whichever operation it was that I was unsure about and he will explain it to me while it was being done.*

Coaching and mentoring was facilitated by the availability of checklists for the practical component of the learnership programme. Joanna related:

*In the case of the electives, learners would go through a checklist. When assessments are done, the facilitator guides them from the beginning and he will also explain to the learner the areas they were found not to be competent in and he will re-explain the entire process and even take the learner to the factory floor and explain it step-by-step until the learner becomes competent.*

According to the learners, the facilitator always encouraged them to work a step ahead and if there was anything they did not know, he was always on hand to guide the learners. Adelle also recalled an instance when she was doing the gel active. She related:

*I was doing the gel active. I remember I had to do what we have learnt and when I was doing the toelasting operation, I had to explain that this is the bar, you are going to put heat before taking it out. He looks at you. He's watching you and calms you down. He tells you, you know what toelasting is so you can toelast without depending on him.*

She also related an instance during the learnership programme when they was assisted by Krish during the making elective,

*We had to start the making line and during the backtacking process learners had to tape the upper and back tack in readiness for the toelatsing process and when the process was finally completed, it goes*

*down for solutioning. After he demonstrated to the learners what they had to do, they had to do it on their own. They had to follow on what he has done and he was right there assisting them.*

Another learner, Altaaf also related instances when the facilitator coached him. He recalled:

*Let's look at toelasting. We were there during the day watching the guys when we started the electives. We should do it after work. The coach will be there. But first we study the machine. When we did the electives we did toelasting in the learner guides that tells you this is a pincer and this is a wiper. Then you come to this machine and Krish will ask what you learnt about the machine. He will ask you to show him which is what. He guides you and tells you what to do.*

Zama recalled how once when she was examining shoes, the facilitator explained to her what she must look at and how to do it. She further explained that during observation of practical assessments, Krish emphasized the importance of safety and often stated:

*... you must put off the machine and you must not do this because this is what we have to do.*

On the issue of the availability of coaching and mentoring, Joanna maintained that the facilitator, HR Manager and peers were always available and stated:

*If sometimes you required an answer, you may have to do it during working time, but you were always given the answer to the questions and if you required a practical lesson a co-worker will be glad to assist.*

Adelle and Althaaf were very appreciative of the support provided by the facilitator during the learnership programme. Adelle stated:

*During the core learning Krish will ask a question and those of them that are first-time learners usually stay quite and he will always ask learners if they understand and he will check the work to see if they are right and if it is not right, he will explain to them again until they understand.*

Althaaf maintained:

*My coach was really fantastic. Whatever you want, even on the factory floor, he helped us in-depth. He'll make sure whatever we did the one day the rest of them will understand.*

Coaching during the learnership programme also took place at a lateral level, where peers and working colleagues assisted learners to improve their performance. Learners sometimes sought out a peer skilled in the task at hand and asked for their assistance.

Joanna related how her working colleagues assisted her at times. She stated:

*At times, if I wanted to learn a certain operation, like shoe warming, I would ask a lot of questions to every operator on that line during my spare time, tea breaks and lunch breaks. I questioned and took down notes from different people. I managed to learn whatever operation I wanted with their permission, guidance and supervision.*

Adelle recalled the time when she had to go down to the factory floor to obtain machine numbers, the type of machine it was, how it was lubricated and its settings. She indicated that she simply walked down to the people that worked in the factory and they assisted her. Adelle also recalled an incident that required the assistance from a senior colleague. She related:

*When I am down and I got no work, I say Uncle Raj, show me how this is done. I want to learn. He'll say, whilst standing right in front of the machine, put your upper in properly. Move your hand and hold them by your fingers on this side, pressing your pedal once, close the pincher...*

She went on to relate an incident when she once had a problem with pre-forming the work on a machine. According to Adelle:

*Uncle Raj would show it to me, he would set the pressure, set the timing, he would show me the different styles so that I would understand ... you just can't use high pressure on material because it creases the material. You have to reduce the pressure. He will show that to me.*

She also mentioned that if she is doing a certain style of shoe features then she picks it up from a toelaster, who is her colleague.

Zama related an instance when a fellow colleague came to her assistance whilst performing a footwear manufacturing operation. She stated:

*Like the one lady that I am working with now. She showed me how to repair the shoes. Like one day I was solutioning the sole. I tried to do it, but it wasn't right. I asked her to show me how to do it and then she held my hand with the brush and showed me everything. She showed me that you must glue like*



*this on the sole. You must not turn the sole like this. You must turn the sole like that. When it came to over-spraying I didn't know how to press the gun and how to turn the shoe. They showed me how to work with the spray gun because the gun was scary for me because it was the first time to hold the gun and I was scared and I didn't know what to do. They held my hand. I held the shoe and tried to spray the one half and then spray the other half.*

Another instance that involved coaching by a peer was recalled by Althaaf, which required the assistance of a peer. He related:

*When we go to the operators we can use the machines. I go and ask them what's the purpose of this, especially on the electives. Sometimes, I know how the machine operates but I don't know inside the machine. You ask them. They help you out. When you are doing the elective part on the machine you spend the whole day with the guy. When I was working with the toelaster, I spent a day with this guy and the day before I spent with the toelaster.*

The researcher observed that the facilitator and coaches used "sit-by-Nelly" techniques to demonstrate to learners how to perform certain operations such as clicking and closing. Demonstrations were repeated until learners were able to perform the operations with precision.

The movement of coaching and mentoring up and down the organization shaped the performance of learners in a positive manner. The intervention of the facilitator and working colleagues during the performance of certain tasks and manufacturing operations was critical in improving the confidence of learners in executing such operations in the future.

#### **4.3.6 COMMUNICATION**

Electronic communication, guidance and counseling sessions, discussions, briefings and meetings are some of the key drivers of the informal learning process. Information exchanges during the learnership programme was a broad factor that supported the informal learning endeavours of learners to a large extent.

Learners were encouraged, largely due to the way the training provider offered them support and confidence prior to the commencement of the learnership programme. Joanna mentioned that the training staff indicated to the learners that support was to be provided to them during the learnership programme. They would be given opportunities to go to the resource centre and that all

the necessary information would be provided to the learners by the facilitator. The learners were informed that whenever they needed support the facilitator would always be there to assist them and they were also allowed to contact the management and supervisors whenever they required such support.

It was also noted that the briefing sessions facilitated by the training provider kept the learners adequately informed of future learning activities, thus creating opportunities for learners to prepare and read in advance for these sessions. This led to increased performance. Joanna mentioned:

*We were always briefed about next week session's work. The facilitator will tell us to work ahead by telling us what we will be doing like clicking or closing, so the learners will prepare by reading about these processes. Sometimes the facilitator will go a bit further and he will request us not only to read, but we must go up to the respective departments and ask questions so that when we came back to the class for the next session we already have the knowledge about what the facilitator is going to teach us about.*

Reading enhanced the performance of learners during the learnership programme because learners were compelled to read the learning guides by themselves in order to obtain the necessary information when answering the self-assessment tasks in the learning activities.

Althaaf maintained that the self-assessment exercises were a better system because he did not forget what he had done. He said:

*When you read you are reading not for the sake of reading because at the end you are able to say, I know it.*

Adelle recalled that she was sometimes pro-active and went outside the company to acquire new knowledge. Adelle recalled the one time she had found something in a book on footwear, which she used in her assignment. She maintained that whenever she got the opportunity to read something on footwear in newspapers, she read it because it helped her in her assignments

Information exchanges in form of explanations and descriptions between the facilitator and learners during practical demonstrations of footwear manufacturing operations enhanced the learners understanding of what the learners were doing and why they were doing it.

Adelle added:

*Krish goes to great lengths when giving feedback on the summative and formative assessments. He will tell you what you missed out and indicate to you what you wrote did not make sense and he will tell you what you wrote wasn't right. He'd make you understand.*

A learner's understanding of certain unit standards was influenced by their involvement in certain workplace committees. Joanna acknowledged:

*Being a member of the Health and Safety committee assisted me during the learnership, more especially for the health and safety unit standard. I was able to understand the concept and importance of health and safety in the workplace.*

Most of the learners interviewed confirmed that manuals or reference materials in the training centre provided them with information that took them from conception to completion about footwear manufacturing processes. Adelle acknowledged:

*There was plenty of information on footwear manufacturing processes and machine manuals and a whole lot of clicking and closing pictures in the resource centre and whenever I got an opportunity to do something, then I would take down notes for what I had to do.*

Althaaf supported Adelle's view by stating:

*We make use of the information that is pinned on the board. All the information here has to do with the learnership. When you come here the facilitator will show you where it is.*

The use of computers or the internet was never encouraged during the learnership programme. All of the learners interviewed mentioned that there was no need for them to make use of the computers during the learnership programme.

Whilst communication exchanges such as discussions, explanations, use of textbooks/machine manuals; and guidance and counseling sessions maximized the performance of learners, electronic communication, briefings and meetings had little or no impact.

#### **4.3.7 VALUE AND RECOGNITION OF FUTURE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

The recognition of future learning opportunities and the value that a learner attached to such opportunities impacted in the way the learners perceived the footwear learnership programme. Multi-skilling and the prospect of incentives shaped the learner's performance and perception in terms of career and personal development.

Learners offered various reasons as to how this factor influenced their learning during the learnership programme. Joanna stated:

*I was informed that I was going to be exposed to the different manufacturing operations during the learnership programme and I therefore started to display a more positive attitude towards my work and my self-esteem increased.*

The offer of rewards appealed to most of the learners. Joanna related:

*It was explained to us that one of the benefits of joining the learnership programme was that if we were found to be competent, we would be able to move forward and get ahead. A learner can be employed in a position he/she chooses if they know that department well. We were informed that a learner would be allowed to move into other departments and areas and learn what that section was doing.*

Adelle noted that if a person looked at her portfolio of evidence they would realize that:

*...I have completed the finishing and closing learnership and that she would be an asset to the company. If the company required that kind of skill, they are going to take you.*

Learners also reflected on the advantages of multi-skilling during the learnership programme. By learning more than one operation during the learnership, Joanna indicated that she became more learned and that she was honoured by this new knowledge, which she didn't know before. She mentioned,

*It gave me a boost and it allowed me to be able to believe there was hope for a better future. It made me more multi-skilled and every time I became more skilled, I knew there were more opportunities out there. I wanted to know anything and everything I could get my hands on. It actually helped me to understand everything you need to know about footwear from conception to completion. I was thinking that it could help me in the future and it did from my personal experience. From my personal experience being a table hand for 19 years, you sit back on that grade salary and you ask yourself when will it change and then came along the learnerships. I became this whole new different person. When I successfully completed all the learnerships, I was given the position of quality problem solver and I got into quality problem solving and I was told that I made a difference in the company and that I had a future in the company and this was more reason for me wanting to learn more.*

Althaaf maintained that learning different operations reflected his personal development. He related:

*When you are doing an operation you know why you doing it and if it is not right you will know how to fix it. What I like about it is that you cope yourself. You know the function of this, the function of that. You know each part.*

He indicated that he now works at bottomstock and after the learnership he was able to teach fellow colleagues how to do their job.

Opportunities for multi-skilling and personal development during the learnership programme improved the learner's outlook and perception of the program. The prospect of incentives and rewards upon completion of the footwear learnership programme had a positive spin-off on the learner's performance.

#### **4.3.8 MOTIVATION, COMMITMENT AND CONFIDENCE**

Motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, commitment and confidence are the key drivers of any learning process. Adelle clearly drew her motivation for learning different operations from the achievements of other people in the factory and cited the example of Joanna. She stated:

*From where she started of and when I look at her as a women and see that she could achieve all that .... if she could do it so could I ... and Jay ... look at the certificates that he has acquired in the footwear industry.*

Positive feedback, support and recognition also enhanced informal learning opportunities. According to the learners, the facilitator, friends and colleagues offered a lot of moral support, whilst they learnt on the factory floor. Joanna recounted:

*Colleagues always complimented me about the good job I was doing and that motivated and inspired me all the time.*

Prospects of better career opportunities and, recognition and support from colleagues enhanced the performance level of learners.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY**

This chapter has presented and analysed the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews, observation and document study. The chapter outlined the emerging themes or overarching factors that positively enhanced or detracted from informal learning, which clearly had an impact in the way learners performed during the footwear learnership programme.

Guided by an interpretivist approach and a qualitative method of study, this chapter endeavoured to both describe and explain how Edu Shoes facilitated informal learning during the learnership programme. The experiences of a sample of participants on the footwear learnership programme was analysed with a view to elicit how informal learning experiences improved the performance level of learners. Consequently, the different themes or factors explored in this chapter demonstrated that there were a number of factors of the training provider or the footwear learnership programme that either enhanced or inhibited informal learning, which impacted on the learner's performance during the programme. The findings related mainly to internal catalysts that either enhanced or inhibited informal learning.

The next chapter will analyse, discuss and draw conclusions of the findings of this study in the light of the key research questions. Against this backdrop, the researcher will attempt to make a few suggestions or recommendations.

## **Chapter Five**

### **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this final chapter the main findings, conclusions and recommendations are presented. After careful consideration of the literature study and the research data, the researcher presents his findings and conclusions. Thereafter, pertinent recommendations in enhancing informal learning opportunities in a footwear learnership programme are presented. It must be acknowledged that the fact that the findings, conclusion and recommendations could have been prejudiced by the researcher's indirect involvement in the footwear learnership programme.

The purpose of this study was to improve the ways in which accredited footwear training providers create an education and training environment that encourages informal learning in order to improve the performance levels of learners doing a footwear learnership programme. In order to investigate the footwear learnership from an informal learning perspective, the researcher sought answers to the following key questions:

1. What are the factors in an education and training workplace environment that enhances or inhibits informal learning during a footwear learnership programme?
2. How do these factors impact on the performance of learners in a footwear learnership programme?

#### **5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE FACTORS OR THEMES**

All themes identified in Chapter Four are discussed and supported by research findings of other researchers. The discussion of the themes is guided by the key research questions. Factors and themes that enhanced or inhibited informal learning and their impact on the performance of learners during the footwear learnership programme are discussed below.

### **5.2.1 LEARNING PROVISION**

The internal catalysts, which provided the backdrop for informal learning during the learnership programme was clearly the customization and availability of learning materials and resources; and the time, space and the learning environment.

#### **Customization and Availability of Learning Materials and Resources**

This study confirmed that learning provision was enhanced by the fact that the training provider customized all learning materials and resources for all of the unit standards of the footwear learnership programme, which was made available to the learners at the commencement of the facilitation of each of the unit standards. Svensson, Ellstrom and Aberg (2004, p. 482) maintain that companies cannot afford to put aside time for activities that do not result in a direct, visible return for the enterprise. The education must therefore be customized so that the acquired knowledge will be directly applicable and useful.

On the issue of availability of the resources, Reardon (2004, pp 8-9) cites Marsick & Watkins (1994), who contend that organizations can be designed to facilitate learning, but the learning organization must supply the resources to facilitate the learning.

Enhancement of informal learning opportunities was also linked to the fact that all learners were granted equal access to the learning materials and resources provided by the company and learning materials contained tasks that lent itself to both group and teamwork-related activities. Ellinger (undated, p.87) cite Dale & Bell (1999), Ellstrom (2001), and Tikkanen (2002), who are of the view that work tools and resources for learning have also been identified as necessary conditions that support learning.

#### **Time, Space and the Learning Environment**

This study was also able to draw a relationship between having a well established, fully structured and equipped training centre and the creation of a positive and stimulating learning environment



that facilitated informal learning opportunities. Workplace resources were used to create a supporting structure. The learning centre functioned as a meeting place, where technology, support and administrative services were available.

Although the HR Manager, facilitator and learners acknowledged the existence of a fully equipped computer facility to which learners enjoyed adequate access, all of the participants contended that the requirements and complexity of assignment and project tasks and the learnership curriculum itself, inhibited learners from conducting research on the internet. A flaw of the programme was that learners were not encouraged by their facilitator to conduct research for their projects or assignments using the internet. This study concluded that it is imperative that the footwear learnership curriculum be reviewed to include unit standards that would enhance the computer skills of learners. It must be stressed that learning through the internet represents an important element in informal learning. This represented a potential inhibitor to informal learning. Ellinger (undated, p.87) cites Dennen & Wang (2002) and Marsick & Watkins (1997), who are of the fundamental position that computer-based technology is often used to aid in problem-solving and self-directed learning.

The findings demonstrated that all learners benefited from the company's skills development resource centre and the project storage room, to which they enjoyed easy access, due to the fact that visits could be arranged through the facilitator.

One observable factor that facilitated discussion and information exchanges during the facilitation of core learning activities was the fact that information extrapolated from footwear references that focused on key learning activities were enlarged onto charts. This complemented the information in the learning guides. These charts were used by the facilitator, as an additional resource during facilitation and assisted learners in successfully completing their self-assessment tasks and assignments.

The masterstroke of learning in context was the provision by the training provider of an "incubator", which gave the learners a factory-simulated experience. In order to enhance informal learning opportunities for the elective component of the footwear learnership programme, the training

provider had an “incubator” that was equipped with the necessary equipment and machinery for the clicking and closing footwear manufacturing operations.

The training provider did not only create the space for learning, but also the time. The learners were attracted by the opportunity to study during working hours and in a milieu in which they felt comfortable. Accessibility to the training facility and learning resources were enhanced by the fact that learners engaging on learnerships were allocated paid time within company operating hours to participate in the footwear learnership programme.

The training provider ensured that learning in context was enhanced by ensuring that the facilitation of the elective component of the programme took place after normal production hours, thus giving learners sufficient time and access to learn complex and intricate footwear manufacturing operations on the correct equipment and machinery within a production context.

Learners were attached to specific departments for block sessions, thus enabling them to gain the work experience and knowledge required to attain competence for assignments and projects during the elective component. Participants confirmed that they were given two hours during regular working hours to complete learning tasks, assignments and projects during working time. Learners also acknowledged that they enjoyed freedom of movement and were allowed to move around the factory floor to learn different footwear manufacturing operations. Access and consent for learners from their supervisors or departmental managers to work on machinery on the factory floor was obtained by the facilitator.

Ellinger (undated, p.87) acknowledges other research studies by Marsick and Volpe (1999), who noted that making time and space for learning enhances or improves informal learning and a study by Marsick & Watkins (1997), who have suggested that managers and leaders who want to facilitate informal learning can do so by planning for learning, creating mechanisms for learning in teams, and developing an environment conducive to learning.

Ellinger (undated, p.87) cite Marsick & Volpe (1999) and Marsick & Watkins (1997) who are of the view that scholars have acknowledged that informal learning often begins with an internal or

external jolt. In this research study this was evidenced by the numerous internal and external triggers or catalysts, that overlapped with other research studies. Ellinger, also references the study of teachers' informal learning by Lohman (2003), which revealed that three types of work situations triggered informal learning activities, one of which was the adherence to policies and procedures. In this study two of the predominant triggers for learning were the provision of learning resources and materials and the training facility.

Marsick & Watkins (1990, p.12) express a balanced view about the role of context in learning and are of the belief that although control of learning rests primarily in the hands of the learner, informal learning can be deliberately encouraged by an organization or it can take place despite an environment not highly conducive to learning.

This research study therefore, concluded that the interaction between the learners and the environment took place continually and this formed the basis for the learning process.

### **5.2.2 RECOGNITION OF PAST LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

This study was able to draw a relationship between the recruitment of learners from within the company and the learning that took place through the learner's past experiences, which is a critical factor for informal learning. At the commencement of the learnership programme 18.1 learners who were recruited from within the company had an average of approximately 15 years experience in the footwear industry and to the credit of the training provider an RPL policy and mechanism was factored in that recognized the learner's ability to reflect on past learning experiences relating to footwear manufacturing operations. Learners also acknowledged that the reflection on past experiences was also encouraged when they engaged with the self-assessment tasks at the end of a learning activity. It must also be noted that during the recruitment process the learner's matriculation certificate or standard 8/grade 10 academic report was used as an access tool, which accredited them for their language and numeracy proficiencies. Thus, learners were granted recognition for the fundamentals of the learnership qualification. Their prior knowledge sometimes led to new knowledge. Feedback and guidance given to learners during discussions on the self-assessment tasks by the facilitator guided their thought processes during the actual assessments and was important to the learner's personal development.

### **5.2.3 PROBLEM-SOLVING AND FRAMING DURING FAMILIAR (ROUTINIZED) AND UNFAMILIAR (NON-ROUTINIZED) TASKS**

This study confirmed that most of the footwear manufacturing operations in the elective component of the footwear programme was of a highly routinized nature that left little to the discretion of the learners and thus, very few opportunities for problem-solving and framing. Although these operations were highly mechanized, reflection required the utilization of skill and dexterity in identifying possible solutions for problems that threatened the quality of the end product. Although learners were pro-active and attempted unfamiliar tasks/problems, their thought processes were hampered by the over-intervention of the facilitator.

Whenever learners encountered unfamiliar situations they sometimes became over-dependent on the facilitator. They failed to employ higher level thought processes to reframe the problem or to look at possible solutions, which could have resulted in double-loop learning, where learners question the reasons for the occurrence of existing problems, and thus find solutions to prevent the recurrence of such problems in the future.

Marsick and Watkins (1990, pp. 6-26) also found that a delimiter to informal learning is framing: how individuals selected the problems to which they attended and related them to the context as they explored interpretations. They found that a further delimiter of informal learning is intellectual capability.

Learners acknowledged the value of the self-assessment tasks, which guided their comprehension and learning. One of the learners mentioned that whenever they encountered problems with certain learning tasks and activities, they would reflect on their past experiences as a basis to getting to the root cause of the problem and finding a solution to the problem. The self-assessment checklist or skills matrix exposed learners to all of the skills required for a particular footwear operation and guided the self-reflection process of the learners. This restricted their reflection possibilities and left very little room for learning through trial-and-error and learning through mistakes. The findings demonstrated that learners on occasions employed advanced thought processes of consequential

thinking by reflecting on what could have caused certain problems on the production line and how this would impact on the next operation.

#### **5.2.4 SUPERVISION AND CONTROL DURING FAMILIAR (ROUTINIZED) TASKS AND UNFAMILIAR (NON-ROUTINIZED) TASKS**

The findings of this study demonstrated that learners enjoyed numerous opportunities when they had to follow through on certain learning tasks that could have led them to self-discovery; new knowledge and improvement of skills, but these attempts were stifled by the over-dependence on the facilitator for a quick-fix solution. Although learners were pro-active and attempted unfamiliar tasks/problems, their thought processes were hampered by the over-intervention and eagerness of the facilitator to assist them in finding a solution. Whenever learners encountered unfamiliar situations they sometimes became over-dependent on the facilitator. Although some of the learners took the initiative and the responsibility of learning certain footwear operations by themselves, these instances were few and far between. Macneil (2001, p.5) stresses that in informal learning situations the responsibility for learning belongs to the self-directed learner. Marsick and Watkins (1990, pp. 7-8) suggest that informal learning is enhanced by proactivity, critical reflectivity, and creativity, which influences the quality of learning.

#### **5.2.5 COACHING AND MENTORING**

The findings revealed that through coaching and mentoring learning flowed up and down the organization. The most dominant catalyst for informal learning was the level of coaching and mentoring during the learnership programme. Ellinger (undated, p.87) cites Watkins and Marsick (1992) who have acknowledged that strategies for informal learning include self-directed learning, networking, coaching and mentoring.

Positive feedback and recognition by the coaches and mentors also enhanced informal learning opportunities. An important finding of the current study is that informal learning was enhanced by a learning-committed leadership/management and this was manifested in several ways: managers and leaders who created informal learning opportunities, managers/leaders served as facilitators, coaches and mentors, managers/facilitators supported and visibly made space for learning,

managers and facilitators who gave positive feedback and recognition and managers and facilitators who served as role models.

The most predominant factors, learning-committed leadership/management and an internal culture committed to learning, were manifested in two ways: managers and facilitators who role-modelled learning and managers and facilitators who encouraged, supported and reinforced the importance of developing others.

This study found that a key element to informal learning by learners was the presence of an established, experienced, multi-skilled and qualified training staff. Working colleagues, managers, the facilitator and supervisors sacrificed their lunch breaks and worked after normal production hours to guide and supervise learners. This factor proved to be the vital link for a highly effective and efficient coaching and mentoring system of the training provider. An effective coaching and mentoring structure resulted in adequate feedback given to learners after formative and summative assessments and access to resources necessary to achieve full competence.

This research study identified that learners had explicit contacts for learning, some of which were determined by structural relationships in the workplace, whilst others were created informally. An effective coaching and mentoring structure of the training provider facilitated coaching and mentoring both on a lateral plane (from peer to peer) and on a vertical plane (from manager, supervisor, facilitator to learner). Coaching and mentoring was both up and down during the learnership programme.

The experience, expertise, dedication and availability of the departmental managers, supervisors, facilitators and the two retired coaches vastly improved the quality of guidance and advice that learners received during the learnership programme. This proved to be generative of considerable informal learning. They were the key to the networks of learning and provided expert guidance to learners during the theoretical learning and the performance of complex manufacturing operations. Ellinger (undated, p.87) cites Skule's (2004) recent research in which he identified management support for learning as a predominant condition at work that promotes informal learning.

This was evidenced when participants mentioned that there were numerous instances when the facilitators conducted more than the required number of practical and theoretical sessions outside normal working hours.

The facilitator was often not only the key resource, but also the contact of first resort for the learner in assisting them to deal with problems. It was rather unfortunate that the dedication, enthusiasm and commitment displayed on the part of the facilitator demonstrated that the learners were "shepherded" in their thought processes throughout the learnership programme, which led to an over-dependence of the learners on the facilitator. This impeded learners wanting to learn through self-directed learning processes.

This research found that in most instances learners consulted with an expert in the area in question. The person that had the expertise in a similar area to that person was a peer, someone physically close to hand. Almost all of the learners related incidents and instances when colleagues not only assisted them with learning tasks and certain manufacturing operations, but also gave them moral support and encouragement. Learners thrived by learning from the more experienced learners and working colleagues and went on to describe how they learnt some of the complex footwear manufacturing operations, whilst learning on the factory floor. Thus, learning flowed readily from peer-to-peer.

Informal interactions with peers are predominant ways of learning. Engenstrom (2003, p.200) draws attention to what he calls horizontal or sideways learning and development in which problem solving occurs essentially through interactions among peers without resort to a conventional knowledge hierarchy and therefore there is no set procedure or process and learning is required to address a problem or contradiction in ways which lead to an acceptable outcome.

The learning strategies selected by employees that emerged in this study also mirror those activities through which informal workplace learning has been deemed to occur.

Other research studies have also acknowledged the above findings. Ellinger (undated, p.87) cites Marsick & Watkins (1992), who have acknowledged that strategies for informal learning include networking, coaching, and mentoring.

### **5.2.6 COLLABORATION AND TEAMWORK**

The training methodology utilized by the training provider maximized collaboration and teamworking opportunities, although this did not necessarily happen in reality.

The fact that 18.1 learners were mixed with 18.2 learners during the facilitation of the learnership programme enhanced collaboration and teamwork opportunities by making it possible for novice learners to learn from the past experiences of the more experienced learners in the footwear industry. This training methodology also facilitated group discussion and group exposure resulting in 18:2 learners capitalizing on the knowledge capital about footwear manufacturing operations of the more experienced 18.1 learners. The learners benefited from group activities because it encouraged discussion.

This workgroup could be perceived as a community of practice that created identity and meaning (in Lave and Wenger's terms). One perceived problem was the failure of both the facilitator and learners to foster teamwork and collaboration during assignments and projects. Informal learning was impeded because the management and facilitator failed to create a conducive environment for learners to share ideas and knowledge.

Boud and Middleton (2003, p. 200) maintain that the learners inclination as a group to draw on their pre-existing networks as much as their peers is an indicator of looser coupling. Stability may be conducive to the emergence of a community of practice and the temporary nature contemporary work practices may be an inhibitor to their growth.

Another way of viewing this network or community of practice is through Bernstein's (1990) construct of framing. Bernstein developed the notions of classification and framing of knowledge. In his terms, framing of knowledge is strong when there is a sharp boundary between what may be



transmitted and what may not be transmitted in a learning relationship. We can therefore identify weak framing with the learners in the footwear learnership programme, whilst operating in a group.

The training provider compensated for this by using a cellular training methodology as opposed to a linear track system, which improved the possibilities of collaboration and teamwork. Learners did not only enjoy easy access to equipment, but also had access to peers. This methodology exposed learners to a variety of footwear manufacturing operations as they were situated much closer to the point of action and assisted learners to become more focused. They were thus able to develop skills much quicker. Rhodes & Scheeres (2004, p.178) maintain that training models of the employer must adopt a post-modern discourse and that this discourse seeks to transform organizations into non-hierarchical and non-patriarchal forms, such as circles, webs and networks. Ashton (2004), Dennen & Wang (2002) and Tikkanen (2002), as cited by Ellinger (undated, p.87), maintain that collegial support, knowledge-sharing, and communities of practice have been found to support informal learning and similarly, in this study, the cellular training methodology was an important factor that advanced informal learning opportunities.

Bischoff (1998) argues that the first major study on how informal learning occurs in the workplace by the Centre for Workforce Development at an Education Development Centre, in Newton, Massachusetts found that informal learning occurs in more than a dozen ways, including teaming, which plays a significant role in how individuals learn to do their jobs.

In examining conscious learning processes from their joint consultation, Eraut (2004, pp 266 – 267) references Eraut (2000), who found that working alongside others allows people to observe and listen to others at work and to participate in activities, and hence to learn some new practices and new perspectives, to become aware of different kinds of knowledge and expertise, and to gain some sense of other people's tacit knowledge. These work activities regularly gave rise to learning.

### **5.2.7 VALUE AND RECOGNITION OF FUTURE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

Career planning and personal development was enhanced by the training providers induction/orientation programme prior to the commencement of the footwear learnership programme, a reward system associated with promotion or wage increases, multi-skilling and the compilation of a personal development plan which was reflected in the learner's PoE files. The orientation programme of the training provider, prior to the commencement of the learnership programme, set the foundation for informal learning opportunities during the learnership programme. 18.2 Learners, who had no previous experience in the footwear industry, were exposed to the basics of the various footwear manufacturing operations for at least three months before the actual commencement of the learnership programme. From a career planning and personal development perspective learners were informed in advance of the curriculum, learning pathway and duration of the footwear learnership programme.

The HR Manager, facilitator and learners reflected on the importance of multi-skilling, whilst on the learnership programme. Respondents acknowledged that the footwear learnership gave learners adequate exposure and an overview of the different footwear operations of the various departments, which facilitated informal learning. Informal learning during the footwear learnership programme developed a learner's whole understanding of footwear manufacturing from conception to completion. Learners were inclined to learn as much as possible about footwear manufacturing during the learnership programme by virtue of the fact that the training provider's promotion and recruitment policy emphasized the learner's willingness and co-operation to learn as many jobs as possible, education level and developing versatility skills as an advantage. Learners were compelled to capitalize and learn as much as possible about footwear manufacturing during the learnership programme. This also increased the opportunities for unemployed learners to be employed in a more permanent capacity. Many of the learners who completed multiple learnerships saw the need to multi-skill themselves as a means of improving their longevity, financial position and promotion opportunities in the footwear industry.

The compilation of a PoE during the learnership programme gave learners a fair reflection of their personal development and skills in terms of multi-skilling themselves. It gave learners and

management staff a clear indication of the learner's current competence and the skills they would need to acquire during the learnership programme. Learners were able to acquire skills that made them more marketable because it gave them an experience that exposed them to careers in other fields and industries.

### **5.2.8 COMMUNICATION**

Interviews with key personnel in certain departments, who were experts in their field, discussions and feedback from the facilitator, involvement in workplace committees, briefings and meetings during the learnership programme and access to resources and reference materials were the key drivers to informal learning during the learnership programme. A key factor, which impeded the learner's search for additional information was their negativity towards using the computer or conduct research using e-learning or the internet.

Informal learning is dependent on advance preparation and adequate prior reading about future learning activities and manufacturing operations. The findings revealed that reading, including casual reading, assisted learners to prepare in advance. This was complimented by learners making enquiries from colleagues about footwear manufacturing processes in order to upgrade their own skills and knowledge.

A physical barrier that impeded informal learning was the fact that Edu Shoes did not have a fully equipped library that housed reference books, audio-visual aids, charts etc. that was dedicated to footwear in general or the manufacture of footwear. Although this militated against informal learning, the training provider compensated for this by having a well resourced training centre that had a sufficient number of machine manuals that provided information on machine parts, faults, repairs and lubrication etc.

The study revealed that workplace committees shaped informal learning opportunities of learners. The HR Manager and facilitator acknowledged that learners were also given exposure to additional information during the footwear learnership programme by being members of various workplace committees e.g., First Aid Committee, Fire Fighting Committee etc.

Although briefing sessions were occasional, this did assist the facilitator to either catch-up or gain access to learners who were absent and who missed out on certain learning activities.

Lloyd (2000, p. 1) cites a preliminary research study by Capital Works LLC, a human capital management service in Williamstown, Massachusetts, who found that approximately 75 percent of the skills employees use on the job were learned informally through discussions with co-workers, asynchronous self-study (such as e-mail based coursework), together with mentoring by managers and supervisors and similar methods.

### **5.2.9 MOTIVATION, COMMITMENT AND CONFIDENCE**

Motivation increased the self-esteem and confidence of learners. This resulted in them adopting a more positive attitude. Some learners drew their motivation for learning different operations during the learnership programme from the successes of their role models, who had excelled in the company. Motivation was also driven by the availability of incentives and rewards in the form of grade progression or promotion opportunities.

Eraut (2004, pp.266 – 269) referencing Eraut (2000) found that tackling challenging tasks requires on-the job learning and, if well supported and successful, leads to increased motivation and confidence. He maintains that there is a triangular relationship between challenge, support and confidence when analysing factors affecting learning in the workplace.

Prior to the commencement of the learnership programme learners expressed their excitement at having been recruited and selected to join the programme. Conlon (2004, p.286) notes that informal learning is also shaped by employee emotions, which may result in employees reacting differently to individual circumstances and cites Knowles et al. (1998) who are of the view that emotions are integral to learning because the whole person is involved in the learning process, including one's own feelings.

In terms of factors that serve to enhance informal learning or detract from it, some of the emergent findings of this research study correspond to research previously conducted by Svensson, Ellstrom and Aberg (2004), Reardon (2004), the internet site, TheManageMentor (2006), Eraut (2000), Lloyd (2000) and Lohman (2000).

### **5.3 CONCLUSIONS**

After careful consideration of the findings of this study, certain clear conclusions within the context of the key research questions emerged.

It can be concluded that there were approximately eight overarching factors that not only positively enhanced informal learning, but also impacted on the performance of learners during the footwear learnership programme. Some of these factors were manifested in different ways. Factors such as adequate learning provision, recognition of past learning experiences, problem-solving and reframing during familiar (routinized) tasks and unfamiliar (non-routinized) tasks, collaboration and teamwork, coaching and mentoring, value and recognition of future learning opportunities and communication were enhanced by various initiatives and interventions of the training provider. These were also the drivers that were responsible for an upward shift in the learner's performance during the footwear learnership programme.

There were about three overarching factors that impeded informal learning in the learnership programme. It can also be concluded that these factors had a negative impact on the performance of the learner's during the footwear learnership programme. The three most distinctive factors were supervision and control during familiar (routinized) tasks and unfamiliar (non-routinized) tasks, teamwork and use of electronic communication were the key factors that inhibited informal learning during the footwear learnership programme. These factors were also an important delimiter to the performance of the learners during the footwear learnership programme.

One overlapping factor or theme, which both enhanced and inhibited informal learning during the footwear learnership programme, was communication. Whilst discussions; feedback, and guidance and counseling sessions facilitated learning opportunities, the lack of or minimum opportunities for electronic communication, briefings and meetings had an inverse impact. Communication also had a similar impact on learner's performances during the footwear learnership programme.

All factors identified were mainly internal catalysts that either shaped or detracted from informal learning and influencing the performance of learners.

With regard to the factors that serve to enhance informal learning or detract from it, some of the emergent findings of this research study correspond to research in informal learning, previously conducted by Svensson, Ellstrom and Aberg (2004), Reardon (2004), the internet site, TheManageMentor (2006), Eraut (2000), Lloyd (2000) and Lohman (2000).

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations have implications for:

- Accredited footwear training providers
- CTFL ETQA Body
- Education and Training Practitioners in the footwear industry
- Learners

### **RECOMMENDATION ONE: COMPUTER SKILLS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

Learning activities in the learning guides for projects and assignments should include criteria and requirements that make specific reference to the use of the computer, the internet etc. for research purposes. This may involve teaching learners computer skills or the use of computer-based systems. This is a genuine deficiency in the curriculum of the footwear learnership qualification, which needs to include unit standards in the core component that would encourage the use of information technology. It is important that this qualification builds on the computer skills that the

learner would have acquired, if he or she completed a NQF level 1 or General Education Training Certificate qualification. E-learning represents an important element in informal learning.

### **RECOMMENDATION TWO: LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

Many of the learning activities in the learner's guides for both the core and elective component related to straight forward and highly routinized operations that did not extend the learner so that he/she can acquire higher order thinking or cognitive skills. It is clear that these learning activities contributed very little to the cognitive development of the learners because learners lacked the confidence to engage with the problem, thus contemplating various alternatives, which might lead to self-directed learning. Learners should be taught to reflect critically on their learning needs in a learnership programme so as to enhance problem solving and framing skills. They should be encouraged to proactively acquire the knowledge that they need.

### **RECOMMENDATION THREE: TEAMWORK**

Collaboration and teamwork is one of the critical cross-field outcomes of the NQF level two qualification and from the responses of the HR Manager, facilitator and learners it was evident that neither the facilitator nor the learners exploited this vital learning methodology, which could have enhanced their learning experiences during the footwear learnership programme. It is important that the methodology utilized by the facilitator encourages collaboration and teamwork during learning activities, assignments and projects, which provides teamworking and collaboration skills that will enrich the informal learning experiences of learners. Collaboration and co-operation among peers should be encouraged to stimulate informal learning. The training provider must establish a knowledge-sharing environment (teamworking), where learners are encouraged to create and apply their explicit and tacit knowledge in problem-solving situations. One would have liked to have seen a more permanent grouping of learners during the execution of project and assignment tasks, which would have given the 18:2 learners more confidence during the learning process.

#### **RECOMMENDATION FOUR: SUPERVISION AND CONTROL DURING FAMILIAR (ROUTINIZED) TASKS AND UNFAMILIAR (NON-ROUTINIZED) TASKS**

Whenever learners encountered problems when attempting learning activities, both in the core and elective component of the footwear learnership programme, they very quickly resorted to the assistance of the facilitator, which limited their learning opportunities. They always looked for a quick-fix solution and failed to engage their thought processes, which could have led to self-directed learning, learning by trial-and-error or learning through self-discovery. In order not to limit the learning opportunities of learners, facilitators should encourage learners to explore options and solutions whenever they encounter problems. This would result in increased problem-solving and framing opportunities and decreased supervision and control during the learnership programme. This would foster independent thinking. Macneil (2001, p.2) maintain that to be effective in an informal learning situation, workplace learners will need to gain highly developed skills in critical reflectivity, including the ability to question their own tacit assumptions and beliefs, and will need to possess the creativity to consider different solutions to problems.

#### **RECOMMENDATION FIVE: LIBRARY**

A well-resourced footwear library will not only complement the learning resources of the training provider, but would also create a positive and stimulating learning environment in the footwear learnership programme. A well-equipped library with reference books, periodicals, newspaper articles, videos etc. on the footwear industry and footwear manufacturing processes would also encourage the facilitator and learners to research learning activities, assignments and projects. Although it is more of a logistical issue, this facility would definitely enhance learning provision and the learning experiences of learners provided that learners are given sufficient opportunities to access the information contained in the resources housed in the library.

#### **RECOMMENDATION SIX: BRIEFING SESSIONS AND MEETINGS**

Good and effective communication channels are critical for the success of any learning programme. Briefing sessions and meetings should not only be regularly scheduled, but should also be structured in such a way that learners are given adequate information about what to focus on for future education and training sessions and guidance on learning activities, assessments, assignments and projects. Regular informal meetings should be held to deal with changing



requirements and matters that impact on the learnership programme. This would encourage motivated learners to prepare, read and research learning activities, assignments and projects about footwear manufacturing processes in advance.

Discussions in this chapter have demonstrated the link between the various factors that emerged from the findings and how these factors either enhanced or detracted from informal learning both from a training provider and learner perspective. It highlighted how various factors impacted on the learnership programme from an informal learning point of view.

This report makes the above recommendations, while acknowledging the fact that all of these recommendations may or may not be applicable to all footwear training providers in general. Any endeavour to enhance informal learning with the outcome to improve the performance levels of learners during a footwear learnership programme would need to take into account the findings and recommendations of this study.

Future research should continue to investigate how other learning theories impact on the footwear learnership programme or other learnership programmes in other industries.

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## APPENDICES

### **APPENDIX I**

41 Harinagar Drive  
Shallcross  
4093

11 August 2006

*Edu Shoes (PTY) Ltd*  
For Att.: Human Resources Manager: XXXX  
P. O. Box 55  
Pietermaritzburg  
3200

Dear Sir

### **PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

I am a student of the University of Kwazulu-Natal. Given the current volatile economic climate, it is unlikely that footwear manufacturing companies are going to invest huge sums of money in formal training programmes, especially if this means removing learners from production lines in order to attend such programmes. Training providers in the footwear industry are also less inclined to invest their financial resources in the development of human capital by investing heavily on educational materials and resources in order to upgrade their training centres so as to enhance informal learning opportunities.

Unemployed learners who are recruited by footwear manufacturing companies are incapacitated and lack the necessary expertise and skills and are therefore recruited into a learnership programme in order to craft their skills and knowledge about footwear production whilst learning informally on the job. Thus, it is paramount that we look into the factors that influences this kind of learning in order to close this gap. It will also be interesting to look at how training providers can enhance informal learning opportunities in order to increase performance levels of learners on a learnership programme.

Although much of the learner's development in a learnership programme can be attributed to informal learning activities and opportunities, this as yet to be formally acknowledged. It is my intention to research the impact of informal learning in a learnership programme. As part of my masters studies (M.Ed), I am undertaking a research study on the following topic:

An inquiry into the impact of informal learning on learnerships in the footwear industry.

It is my intention to interview the Human Resources Manager, the facilitators /assessors and at least 5 learners from your company. In order to obtain permission, I provide the following undertaking:

- All participation in the study would be on a voluntary basis.
- Normal activities of the company would not be disrupted.
- All information gleaned by me will be strictly confidential and used only for academic purposes. The ethical code of conduct governing research will be rigidly observed.

Please find enclosed:

- Proof of my registration from the University of Kwazulu-Natal.
- A copy of the interview schedule.

In addition, upon completion, a copy of my thesis will be forwarded to Eddels Shoes.

---

Mr. P.K. Naicker

(Researcher)

Telephone: (H) 031- 4096425 (W) 031 – 702 4482 (C) 0846777798

e-mail: [pknaicker@ctflseta.org.za](mailto:pknaicker@ctflseta.org.za)



## APPENDIX II

41 Harinagar Drive  
Shallcross  
4093

11 August 2006

Dear Interviewee

I am a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and am currently reading for my masters in adult education. The topic that I have chosen to research is titled:  
An inquiry into the impact of informal learning on learnerships in the footwear industry.

I am hopeful that my research will provide some invaluable insights into the impact of informal learning on learnerships and how informal learning enhances the skills level of learners in a learnership programme. It will also be interesting to look at how training providers enhances informal learning opportunities in order to increase performance levels of learners in a learnership programme.

Kindly note that permission has been obtained from the Management of Eddels Shoes (PTY) Ltd. I wish to assure you that all information disclosed will be treated in the strictest confidence and if you feel uncomfortable, you are free to withdraw from the study. In order to ensure your anonymity, you are not required to disclose your name. Please be informed that I am willing to share my findings with you should you desire it (my contact details are provided below). Your invaluable contribution and co-operation is appreciated.

I would also like to place on record my sincere thanks to the management of Eddels for granting me access to all interviewees and documentation. I am also indebted to all interviewees for participating in this research project.

Yours in education

PK

**Telephone:** (H) 031-4096425 (C) 0846777798

## ***APPENDIX III***

### ***INTERVIEW SCHEDULE***

#### ***SECTION A: HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER***

##### **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

1. Describe briefly the history, manufacturing operations and education and training background of the company. [CUES/PROMPTS: accreditation details/ criteria, assessors, facilitators, moderators, learning materials, assessment / date of first accreditation etc.]
2. What is the title of the qualification of this learnership programme?
3. Briefly outline the structure/curriculum of this learnership programme?
4. Comment on the recruitment and selection of learners for this particular learnership programme [CUES/PROMPTS: recognition of prior learning for the fundamentals etc].
5. What is the duration of the learnership programme?
6. Comment on teaching and learning services during the learnership programme [CUES/PROMPTS: Qualified facilitators, assessors, moderators, coaches and mentors].
7. Briefly describe the training facility where the core modules is facilitated and the factory floor where the elective learning is conducted? [ machinery & equipment, computers / educational resources, reading, reference library with machine manuals, audio-visual aids, textbooks etc.].
8. Do you consider the learnership programme to be an ideal vehicle to develop and capacitate novices into experts in the footwear industry? Elaborate.
9. How often does the training committee meet ?
10. What are some of the discussions that take place during training committee meetings?

##### **BEFORE THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME**

11. Briefly describe how learners are guided and supported before they enter into the learnership programme  
[CUES/PROMPTS: Orientation programme, identify learning and career pathways/opportunities, identification of training needs/ questionnaires curriculum, training schedules]

##### **DURING THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME**

12. Comment on learner guidance and support mechanisms during:
  - 12.1. the core component of the learning programme.
  - 12.2. the elective component of the learning.  
[CUES/PROMPTS: informal support from peers/colleagues, support from coaches and mentors, records of meetings/briefings/counseling sessions with learners, identification of training needs /questionnaires, training schedules]
  - 12.3. Do learners belong to special workplace committees? How does this assist them in their learning?

##### **AFTER THE COMPLETION OF THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME**

13. How does compiling a portfolio of evidence assist learners?

14. What was most rewarding about completing the learnership programme?

## ***SECTION B: FACILITATOR/ASSESSOR***

### **BEFORE THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME**

1. Briefly describe how learners are guided and supported before they enter into the learnership programme

[CUES/PROMPTS: Orientation programme, identify learning and career pathways/opportunities/planning, curriculum, training schedules]

### **DURING THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME**

**2. Comment on learner guidance and support mechanisms during:**

2.1. the core component of the learning programme.

2.2. the elective component of the learning.

[CUES/PROMPTS: informal support from peers/colleagues, support from coaches and mentors/role models, records of meetings/briefings/counseling sessions with learners identification of training needs /questionnaires, training schedules]

3. Briefly describe the facilitation of the learning during:

3.1. the core component of the learnership programme.

3.2. the elective component of the learnership programme

[CUES/PROMPTS: groupwork, use of technology and other resources etc.]

4. When and where does facilitation of the core component and elective component of the learnership programme takes place?

5. Briefly describe when and how learners complete:

5.1. group activities/tasks in the learning guides

5.2. individual activities and tasks in the learning guides

6. Comment on the complexity of learning activities for the core and elective components of the learnership programme.

7. How are the above tasks assessed? What are the advantages of using such an assessment instrument?

8. When and where do learners find time to complete the above tasks?

9. Briefly describe how learners are guided and supported during the assessment of the:

9.1 core component of the learnership programme.

9.2. elective component of the learnership programme.

10. What are some of the resources that learners use/read and how do they use these resources when completing projects and assignments during the formative assessment of the learnership programme?

11. Are there sufficient resources available to assist learners in completing learning activities/tasks, assignments and projects? Elaborate.

[CUES/PROMPTS: collaboration with peers/teamwork, use of information, library with machine manuals, audio-visual aids, textbooks etc. ]

12. When do learners find time to complete learning tasks, projects and assignments and explain how you go about completing tasks, projects and assignments?

13. Briefly outline assistance and support learners received and from whom when completing learning tasks, projects or assignments?

14. Describe the observation and demonstration sessions during the practical assessments? [CUES/PROMPTS: Role models]
15. How do qualified assessors prepare learners for the summative assessment tasks?
16. What kind of feedback is given to learners after an assessment?
17. Are peers, coaches, mentors, facilitators and assessors easily accessible to learners during the learnership programme? Elaborate
18. Do learners belong to special workplace committees? How does this assist them in their learning?

### **AFTER THE COMPLETION OF THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME**

18. How does compiling a portfolio of evidence assist learners in the way they learn on the job?
19. What is most rewarding for learners about completing the footwear learnership programme?

### ***SECTION C: LEARNERS***

#### **SECTION A – BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF LEARNERS**

- [1] What is your position in this company?
- [2] Are you employed in a permanent capacity in this company?
- [3] How long are you employed in this company?
- [4] For how long did you work in the footwear industry?
- [4] Did you have any previous experience in the footwear industry before being employed in this company? Kindly elaborate if your answer is yes?
- [5] What is your highest formal/academic qualification?
- [6] Did you have any previous qualifications and credits in the manufacture of footwear before entering this programme?
- [7] Were you employed in this company before entering the learnership programme? Elaborate if your answer is no?

#### **BEFORE THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME**

8.. Briefly describe how you were guided and supported before you entered into the learnership programme

[CUES/PROMPTS: Orientation programme, identify learning and career pathways/opportunities/planning, curriculum, training schedule]

#### **DURING THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME**

9. Comment on the guidance and support you received during:

9.1. the core component of the learning programme.

9.2. the elective component of the learning.

[CUES/PROMPTS: informal support from peers/colleagues, support from coaches and mentors, records of meetings/briefings/counseling sessions with learners identification of training needs /questionnaires, training schedule]

10. Briefly describe the facilitation of the learnership programme during:

10.1. the core component of the learnership programme.

10.2. the elective component of the learnership programme

[CUES/PROMPTS: groupwork, use of technology and other resources etc.]

11. Briefly describe when and how you completed:
  - 11.1. group activities/tasks in the learning guides
  - 11.2. individual activities and tasks in the learning guides
12. How are the above tasks assessed?
13. How did you improve by using such an assessment instrument?
14. Briefly describe how you were guided and supported during the assessment of the:
  - 14.1. core component of the learnership programme.
  - 14.2. elective component of the learnership programme.
15. What are some of the resources you used/read and how did you use these resources when completing projects and assignments ?
16. Were there sufficient resources available to assist you in completing learning activities/tasks, assignments and projects? Elaborate.  
[CUES/PROMPTS: collaboration with peers/teamwork, use of information, library with machine manuals, audio-visual aids, textbooks etc. ]
17. When did you find time to complete learning tasks, projects and assignments and explain how you go about completing tasks, projects and assignments?
18. Briefly outline assistance and support you received and from whom when completing learning tasks, projects or assignments?
19. Certain learning tasks during the elective component relate to tasks pertaining to footwear manufacturing that are routine to you. How did this assist you when similar tasks were set during the facilitation and assessment of the learnership programme?
20. When you experienced problems with more complex tasks pertaining to footwear manufacture during the facilitation and assessment of the learnership programme, explain what steps you took to solve the problem yourself? [CUES/PROMPTS: reflection on past experiences etc.]
21. Describe the observation and demonstration sessions during the practical assessments?  
[CUES/PROMPTS: modelling facilitator]
22. How do qualified assessors prepare you for assessment tasks?
23. What kind of feedback is given to you after an assessment?
24. Did you find that peers, coaches, mentors, facilitators and assessors were easily accessible to you during the learnership programme? Elaborate
25. Did you belong to a special workplace committee/s? How did this assist you in your learning?

#### **AFTER THE COMPLETION OF THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME**

26. How did compiling a portfolio of evidence assist you in the way you learn on the job?
27. What was most rewarding about completing the learnership programme?
28. Is your learning influenced by role models or people you look up to in the factory? If yes, kindly elaborate.

**APPENDIX IV**

**DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS OF THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS**

1. TRAINING COMMITTEE MINUTES
2. VISION AND MISSION OF COMPANY
3. LEARNING GUIDES/ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS
4. POLICIES & PROCEDURES
  - 4.1. LEARNER SUPPORT & GUIDANCE
  - 4.2. RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING
  - 4.3. ASSESSMENT POLICY
5. LEARNER'S PORTFOLIO OF EVIDENCE
6. CORRESPONDENCES BETWEEN THE ACCREDITED TRAINING PROVIDER & CTFL ETQA BODY PERTAINING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LEARNERSHIPS.

**APPENDIX V**

**OBSERVATION SCHEDULE**

DATE/S OF OBSERVATION VISITS: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ /2006

<b>CRITERIA/FACTORS</b>	<b>REMARKS</b>
<b>1. OBSERVATION OF TRAINING PROVIDERS TRAINING FACILITY</b>	
1.1. DESCRIPTION OF PHYSICAL TRAINING FACILITY	
1.2. DESCRIPTION OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING ENVIRONMENT	
1.3. AVAILABILITY FACILITATION AIDS	
1.4. AVAILABILITY OF LEARNING RESOURCES	
1.5. AVAILABILITY AND ACCESS OF EQUIPMENT AND MACHINERY	
1.6. QUALIFICATIONS, AVAILABILITY AND ACCESS TO TRAINING STAFF	
<b>2. STUDY OF THE LEARNERSHIP CURRICULUM</b>	
2.1. COMPOSITION OF THE CURRICULUM	
2.2. DURATION OF THE LEARNERSHIP CURRICULUM	
<b>3. AVAILABILITY OF LEARNING RESOURCES</b>	
3.1. USE OF LEARNING RESOURCES	
3.2. USE OF COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY	
<b>4. OBSERVATION OF CORE COMPONENT OF THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME</b>	
4.1. DESCRIPTION AND PREPARATION OF THE LEARNING ACTIVITY	
4.2. FACILITAION OF LEARNING ACTIVITY OF THE CORE COMPONENT OF THE LEARNERSHIP	
4.3. FACILITATION METHODOLOGY	

4.4. USE OF LEARNING RESOURCES DURING FACILITATION	
4.5. ROLE AND INTERVENTIONS OF THE FACILITATOR OR COACH DURING THE LEARNING PROCESS.	
4.6. RESPONSES OF THE LEARNERS	
<b>CRITERIA/FACTORS</b>	<b>REMARKS</b>
4.7. REACTION OF LEARNERS TO RESPONSES OF OTHER LEARNERS	
<b>5. OBSERVATION OF ELECTIVE COMPONENT OF THE LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME</b>	
5.1. DESCRIPTION AND PREPARATION OF THE LEARNING ACTIVITY	
5.2. FACILITATION METHODOLOGY	
5.3. USE OF LEARNING RESOURCES, EQUIPMENT AND MACHINERY DURING FACILITATION	
5.4. ROLE AND INTERVENTIONS OF THE FACILITATOR OR COACH DURING THE LEARNING PROCESS OF CERTAIN OPERATIONS	
5.5. RESPONSES OF THE LEARNERS	
5.6. REACTION OF LEARNERS TO RESPONSES OF OTHER LEARNERS	





# SHOES (Pty) Ltd

FOOTWEAR MANUFACTURERS

Registration No. 2001/020614/07

Pietermaritzburg 3201  
Telephone

P.O. Box Pietermaritzburg 3200  
Fax

14 August 2006

To: Mr. P.K Naicker  
Dear Sir:

**Subject Re: Permission to Conduct Research**

I refer to your humble request relating to you conducting research at our company.

In principle, we feel honoured that you have selected our company as your research subject matter however you may be permitted subject to conditions as follows: -

1. No employee may be forced to participate in your research work.
2. Manufacturing processes are not to be disrupted during your research process.
3. The confidentiality of participants must be respected.
4. The safety and security regulations and trade and manufacturing secrets are not to be breached in any way that may be detrimental to our company.

I conclude by wishing you every success in your research/study.

---

HR Director