

THE IMPACT OF A SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME ON  
UNEMPLOYED WOMEN : SIX LIFE HISTORIES.

BY

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation represents my original work. It has not otherwise been submitted in any form for any degree at any University. Where work from other authors has been used, acknowledgement has been shown.

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*28.04.2016*  
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Date

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the skills development project which aims at developing income generating skills, impacts on the ability of unemployed women to generate income.

Secondly, the researcher wished to know how the women who have been involved with the skills development programme, used the developed skills to generate income.

The study, in order to document the experiences of the women in trying to gain these skills and to use them in generating income, has produced life histories of the women who succeeded in generating income after their dressmaking skills were developed.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Lastly, but not the least, I wish to thank my family members as well as my relatives for support and encouragement.

## **ACRONYMS**

- ABET ----- Adult Basic Education and Training
- ACOMUC ----- the Association for Co-operation with Peasant Women
- AE -----Adult Education
- AIWC ----- All India Women's Conference
- BRAC -----Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
- CDAOP ----- Community Development and Aids Outreach Project
- COSATU ----- Congress Of South African Trade Unions
- DBSA ----- Development Bank of Southern Africa
- DBSA ----- Development Information Business Unit in South Africa
- DFID ----- Department For International Development
- DIBU ----- Development Information Business Unit
- DWCRA ----- Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas
- GEAR ----- Growth, Employment And Redistribution
- GRSO ----- Grass Root Support Organisation
- HSRC ----- Human Science Research Council
- IFAA ----- Institute For African Alternatives
- IGP ----- Income Generating Projects
- ILO ----- International Labour Organisation
- IRDP ----- Integrated Rural Development Programme
- KWDI ----- Korean Women's Development Institute
- LSF ----- Links in Service Fund

MPCC ----- Multi-Purpose Community Centres  
MPI ----- The Ministry of Plan Implementation  
NCWI ----- National Council of Women in India  
NGO ----- Non-Governmental Organisation  
NSF ----- National Skills Fund  
NWF ----- National Women's Federation  
PAAG ----- Pietermaritzburg Aids Action Group  
PLWA ----- People Living With Aids  
PWDP ----- Participation of Women in the Development Process  
RDP ----- Reconstruction and Development Programme  
RDP ----- Refugee Development Programme  
RLF ----- Revolving Loan Fund  
SADCC ----- South African Democratic Council of Churches  
SERNAM ----- National Women's Service  
SME ----- Small Micro Enterprises  
UN ----- United Nations  
UNESCO ----- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation  
UNDP ----- United Nations Development Programme  
VNCW ----- Vanatau National Council for Women  
VTDC ----- Vocational Training and Development Centre  
WCC ----- World Council of Churches  
WDA ----- Women's Development Association

WEP ----- Women Economic Policy

WIA ----- Women's India Association

WID ----- Women In Development

WLARS ----- Women's Liberation And Rehabilitation Society

WLP ----- Women Linking Project

WNU ----- Women's National Union

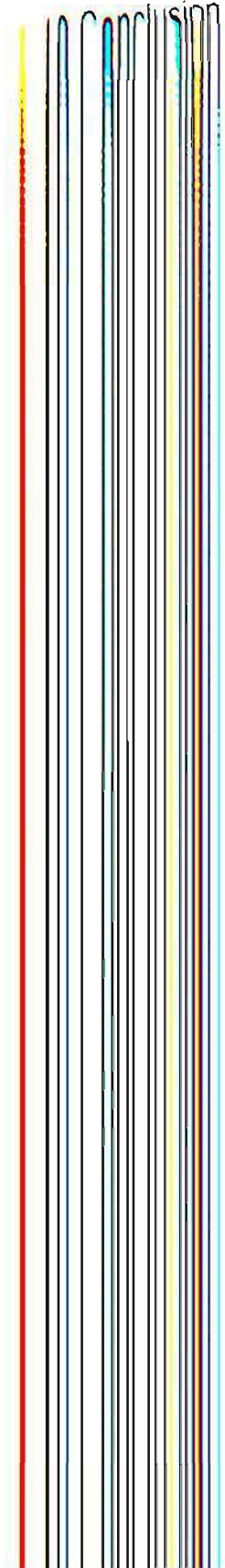
WTC ----- Women Training Centres

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide some background to the project in order to establish its context.

For this study, which is about skills development and unemployed women, I interviewed women who participated in a community development project run by the Development and AIDS Outreach Project (CDAOP) in the greater Edendale area.

The offices of CDAOP were in Prince Alfred Street in Pietermaritzburg. The project was started in 1994 with the aim of helping people infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS, through the training of volunteers as care and community workers who were to visit people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWA) in their homes in the Pietermaritzburg area.

Volunteers, when doing home based care, discovered that some of the PLWA's did not have proper housing and some did not have food to eat because they were unemployed. They were unable to obtain food that would boost their immune system because of poverty.

The co-ordinator of this project decided to form groups of unemployed women with the aim of developing their skills to enable them to generate income. These unemployed women were the relatives or parents of the PLWA's. The aim of the project was that the trained women would use their income to provide the PLWA's with proper food and

some medication. The income-generating activities such as production of floor polish, yoghurt, fabric softener, vaseline and candles were introduced. The project provided women with the material they needed for these income-generating activities.

In 1997, activities such as sewing, baking, catering services, flower arranging and brick and block making were introduced. Sewing machines and other material utilized by the groups of women were provided by the project.

These groups of unemployed women who were involved with the project met once, twice or four times a week, depending on the activities they did. For sewing lessons they met three times a week. The other courses such as baking and catering services were a programme for one month only and all other activities lasted for one day.

## **1.2 The importance of skills development**

The Development Information Business Unit (DIBU) in the Skills Development Strategy (1997) explains the importance of skills development to South Africans by emphasizing that all South Africans need to be empowered with skills to adequately fulfil their roles in a democratic society. South Africans need to be developed in skills that will enable them to generate income so that they are able to cope with the demands of everyday life in a society that is in rapid transition. DIBU proposes the establishment of Multi Purpose Community Centres (MPCC's) as sources of education that should focus in helping with the acquisition of skills that create employment and enterprising opportunities for individuals, especially the unemployed.

The Green Paper on the skills development Strategy for Economic and Employment Growth in South Africa, emphasizes that the development of skills for competent performance by individuals should focus on dynamic, social or economic purposes. Skills development should result in skilled performance so that skilled craft workers are able to generate income for their basic needs.

### **1.3 Meaning of development and skills**

I understand development as the gradual improvement of skills by participating in a developmental course or project, or it can also be defined as an act or process of acquiring new or advanced skills. A skill refers to the practical mastery, improvement or a special ability in a task that is acquired by training.

### **1.4 The South African state and the skills development**

Section 29 of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (108 of 1996) emphasizes that everyone has a right to basic education, including adult basic education and training; that is, everyone should have access to training and developing skills to be able to generate income.

The purpose of the Skills Development Act no.97 of 1998 is to devise strategies to develop and improve the skills of all South Africans. The work of the state is to provide for the financing of skills development by the National Skills Fund in order to regulate employment services and to promote self-employment.

A great emphasis on skills development is shown by the Department of Labour in the Skills Development Strategy for Economic and Employment Growth in South Africa (1997) where it argues that its objective is to support target groups to enter regular employment by increasing access to skills development so as to enable people to remain in employment or self-employment, in order to enjoy rising standards of living. The aim of the ABET policy (1997b, p. 12) is to provide for learners, including adult learners to develop themselves in order to improve the quality of their lives and their communities.

### **1.5 Rationale**

Seeing that there is not much that has been written on skills development or skills training locally, I have decided to do research on skills development. I have noted that women have decided to embark on developing themselves through attending adult

education courses because some of the courses are helpful in providing unemployed people with income-generating skills such as sewing, baking and catering services.

My interest in pursuing this study is to satisfy my personal interest in seeking to understand women as learners, as to how instructions are carried out, and how they respond to the instructions and the methodology that is used. I agree with Cross (1981) when she argues that adults want to learn because of difficulties in coping with current life problems and therefore they return to school to acquire new skills so as to cope with the current demands of living.

I was also interested in doing this study so as to be able to see if the skills development project is able to provide workable income-generating skills by looking at the type of the skills that are learnt and to see if women are able to transfer knowledge and skills that they have learnt from one situation to another by means of applying what they have learnt. In addition, I wanted to know whether and how the skills that women have developed could help them to solve the problem of poverty. I therefore wished to know how these women generated income.

Lastly, I wanted to learn about the experiences that women encounter in trying to gain skills in order to generate income and to know how women relate and interpret these experiences

### **1.6 Research Questions**

The research is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the factors and the specific skills that enable women to generate income?
2. What are the experiences of the women in trying to gain skills with the project?
3. What is the success rate in helping women to generate income?

### **1.7. Literature Reviewed**

I decided to review literature according to the following categories :

Government documents such as the ABET policy, the Skills Development Act, the Skills Development Strategy and other policy frameworks;  
Community development literature;  
Women and development in the Third World;  
Qualitative research, life histories, interviews and story telling.

### **1.8 Research Methodology**

Life histories of the six women who were previously involved with the skills development project were collected through a qualitative research method. Data was presented in the form of narratives constructed from the life histories of the women.

### **1.9 Conceptual Framework**

For this study I have identified and explored four concepts: life histories, skills development, project impact, and women empowerment. I elaborate this in my conceptual framework chapter.

### **1.10 Outline of Chapters**

This study consists of the following chapters :

Chapter One gives the background information for the study.

Chapter Two presents the reviewed literature.

Chapter Three focuses on the research methodology.

Chapter Four gives the life histories of the six respondents.

Chapter Five presents data analysis and findings.

Chapter Six outlines the recommendations and the conclusion.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

I did this study because I wanted to learn and document how unemployed women develop their skills in order to generate income. I also wanted to know what income-generating activities they do and what experiences they encounter when trying to develop their skills and lastly the impact that the skills development programme has on their lives. I have therefore looked at the government documents about skills development, literature on community development, and literature on women in development in the Third World. Some journals on skills development and income generation have also been looked at.

I have looked at this literature so as to know what has been published on skills development and unemployed women by different authors and to see if there are any gaps that can be filled. Reviewing literature, on top of becoming familiar with other work that has been done in this study, has made me aware of issues that are relevant to my study.

From the literature I identified the themes such as women and skills development, the state and skills development, adult education and skills development, empowerment of women, income generation, and the issues facing women in development.

## **2.2 Women and Skills Development**

Many skills development projects have been established all over the world by non-governmental organisations, education departments and other community developmental organisations to help develop the skills of unemployed women so that they are able to generate income.

In most parts of Africa, because of poverty and unemployment, unemployed women joined projects that would develop their skills so as to generate income. These women were trained in income-generating activities such as handicrafts, needlework, fashion designing, tie dye and textile work (Tough, 1971). In Africa programmes which were appropriate to the needs and the background of the people in the target areas were developed. The department of women affairs and church groups in African countries also offered short term women's training on sewing (Somtrakool, 1989). These programmes were established with the aim of helping unemployed women to generate income.

These skills were taught through both formal and non-formal methods. For these training sessions, less expensive material such as cloth, thread and machines were purchased for women's programmes to provide items for sale (Veramu, 1994 in Stromquist, 1992). As far as I can determine in most of the literature, the emphasis is on skills development and income generation by unemployed women but nothing has been written on the success rate of generating income in South Africa.

As many of the poor women in Africa live in rural areas, many of the rural development programmes implemented to date have been designed to improve their income levels and to elevate their standards of living. Rural women were neglected as decision makers in development programmes but have been recently included into the development process. These projects aim at reducing poverty among rural women by providing assistance with income-generating activities. The literature I reviewed failed to clarify how the income-generating projects will be made accessible to all the women who need them, especially in the rural areas. The inclusion of women into the

development process has become the official policy in most communities (Momsen, 1991).

Poor women in Kenya started to develop themselves by making crafts that would help them to generate income. The women had worked together on self-help projects in their towns. Although they had found places to sell their work, women wished to be taught to be business women because some of the sewing and craft they made was not bought as they had no business skills (Houston, 1979 in Duke, 1985). The literature I reviewed is silent about teaching business management skills to these women so that they manage their businesses properly.

Women in Bangladesh who had been taught income-generating activities contribute about 45, 5% of the family income from among the poverty-stricken social groups. The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee was one of the largest programmes which tried to develop the skills of unemployed women in the Third World. Women were organised into groups and attended vocational training in tailoring. Through selling the tailored articles, women were able to generate income. In order to provide solutions for the unemployment crisis in developing countries, women were assisted to enter skills development programmes where they were involved in activities that would train them to have control over their production and over their income (Leonard, 1989 and Jazairy, 1992).

### **2.3 The State and Skills Development**

I reviewed literature on the South African state and development so as to know what the state has done to help unemployed women as far as the development of skills is concerned so that women are able to generate income.

Skills development is a term that has been used to capture the specific perspective that the Department of Labour brings to the project of people development. This perspective's emphasis is on development of competent performance by an individual for a specified social or economic purpose (Green Paper on Skills Development, 1998).

The State has produced documents such as the Skills Development Strategy for Economic and Employment Growth in South Africa (1997), the ABET Act (1997b), the Skills Act (1998) and the Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) in which the purposes of skills development is explained. The State's aim in producing these documents was to ensure that people are able to initiate self-employment so as to service the needs of all South Africans, especially the poorest and the most disadvantaged communities in our society (ABET policy, 1997b, p.12). I reviewed the State's documents because there is some dissatisfaction in most rural communities about the development of skills of unemployed South Africans especially in the rural areas as rural residents think that they are somewhat neglected when it comes to skills development processes.

The focus on skills development in the Green Paper for Skills Development Strategy, (1997) is on the process of deepening individuals' specialised capabilities in order to generate income through community projects which will be able to contribute to the economic success and the social development of the country. This policy links skills formation to skills development, which complements the formal education system.

The funding for skills development, according to the Department of Labour in the Green Paper for Skills Development Strategy (1997), includes a levy grant system as well as the National Skills Fund (NSF). This fund aims to enhance skills formation in South Africa, increase the skills level of South Africa and to increase learning opportunities linked to the work experience. The NSF is to support three major programmes namely, industry, learnership and development programmes. I think that the development programmes are too scarce when one thinks of the number of unemployed people who are not exposed to these developmental programmes, especially rural women.

In the Skills Strategy (1997), the state wishes to increase the peoples' access to skills development so that people are able to remain in employment or self-employment in order to enjoy the rising standards of living. In the Skills Development Act (1998), the State tries to devise and implement strategies to develop and improve skills of the

South African workforce by providing for the financing of skills development by means of a levy-grant and a National Skills Fund and also to provide for and regulate employment services in order to promote self-employment.

The South African State produced the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in 1994 whose aims were to eliminate poverty and inequality among the Black people, as it was to meet the basic needs of the people concerned. According to the policy of the RDP, jobs were to be created so as to develop the skills of the people, especially the unemployed. On the other hand, the aim of The Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy (1994) was to ensure economic growth by promoting land reform as a means of generating employment and income in rural areas (Turok, 1999). Unfortunately the goals of both these policies have not been achieved.

In addition to the Skills Development Act (1998), the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (108 of 1996), section 29, guarantees the right to basic education for everyone and the State is to take measures to see that everyone has access to education and training including skills development. One of the objectives of the Skills Development Strategy initiative which was launched by the Department of Labour in 1997, was to contribute to the development of human resources and to address skills shortages in South Africa by introducing skills development projects in different communities.

Much has been said by the State on its goals on skills development and income-generation in South Africa but nothing is mentioned on the specific skills that the State would wish to develop that will help with income-generation. These documents do not tell us what the South African State will do if the mentioned goals are not achieved.

## **2.4 Adult Education and Skills Development**

I reviewed adult education literature because I wanted to know what Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programmes have done to develop skills of unemployed

women and to know if the programmes were able to help women to generate income and the experiences they had when trying to gain skills so as to generate income.

Development is defined by Mezirow (1978) in Cross (1981) as new learning that transforms existing knowledge to bring about a new perspective. This is supported by Tough (1971) and Duke (1985) when they argue that through adult education, adults learn a wide range of knowledge and skills, thus increasing their self understanding and self-acceptance. Skills development is crucial in reducing poverty and discrimination. Through skills development an individual is able to gain new skills, abilities, strengths and confidence. When an individual has gained new skills, he or she is able to use the gained skills to generate income (Tough, 1971; Duke, 1985).

As adult education acts as an agent for changing and improving the society, adult education's aim is to satisfy the needs of the individuals by developing their skills. Women, in order to develop their skills, should embark on programmes such as education and training that will equip them with the knowledge and skills that will facilitate development and enable them to gain employment and start their own businesses (Walters, 1977). According to my research, African women, especially the unemployed, are keen to change their lives and they also believe that by attending adult education programmes, they will be provided with knowledge and skills that will free them from poverty.

Most authors believe that poverty, because of unemployment, causes women to form or join projects that will develop their skills so as generate income. Tough (1971) thinks that women try to improve themselves by gaining new skills, so that they become better persons in some way. These women will hopefully use the acquired knowledge and skills to generate income which will help them in managing their homes and families the same way as those who are on a job (Tough, 1971). It is important that skills training should be accompanied by the development of positive attitudes among trainees towards the challenges they face in their daily lives. Calder and Mc Cullum (1998) argue

that there is an urgent need to overcome skills shortages and for innovation so as to ensure that emerging new skills are also developed on a radical basis.

Women need the right kind of training so that they acquire new skills or improve or develop new skills because of the changing economy. Lea and Leibowitz (1992) state that the low-skill and low-education jobs will disappear and new jobs requiring a lot of skills will appear. Methods used for acquiring or developing skills should recognise that there are some skills that are much easier to develop than others whereas other skills are not easy to develop and therefore need time and patience. The literature is silent about employability of those women who may not be successful to become self employed because of the shortage of capital after being involved with the skills development programmes.

Adult education and training have a part to play by training and empowering adults with income-generating skills that may help them solve the problems of poverty and unemployment (Lovett, 1982). Skills development is therefore another way of creating jobs for unemployed people because the process of skills development assists in tackling the problems of ignorance, backwardness, helplessness and resistance to change especially among the rural poor (Stein, 1997).

Adult education has concerned itself with problems of social equality and social justice and its emphasis, therefore, is to work with the poor, the unemployed and the disadvantaged groups in general. Because of this commitment, authors like Lovett, et al (1983) and Brookfield (1983) see adult education as part of community development; for example, projects which offered activities like candle and soap making have enabled women to enter into economic roles (Stromquist, 1992). On the other hand, departments of women affairs and church groups in the Third World offered workshops to women that offered long term training on sewing. Material such as cloth, thread and machines were purchased for the women's programmes to provide items for sale (Veramu, 1994 in Stromquist, 1992).

## **2.5 Empowerment of Women**

According to the literature, women in the Third World prefer to work in groups to solve their economic difficulties and to promote community solidarity. Women's groups often bring together women from low-income households in urban or rural areas with the purpose of forming organisations and initiating activities to generate income and productive employment so as to meet the basic needs of their families (Chinery- Hesse; Bina; Bare; Mathews; Henriques; et al, 1990).

These organisations aim at developing women's skills so as to generate income. Income generating projects are seen as a way of empowering women because they bring about changes in the women's lives by helping them to support their families. These women empowerment programmes provided opportunities for employment. Empowerment of women reduces dependency because women act as entrepreneurs (Evers, 1993; Kardam, 1991; Rebera, 1990). Through developing women's skills, women are empowered with knowledge that will help them generate income, thus reducing dependency on the State's grants.

Empowerment is seen by authors like Taylor (1997), Coetzee (2001) and Stein (1997) as providing the opportunity for all people in the society to participate equally in the development process and to become more than they are and also to provide people with the right to a meaningful life. Empowering a person is also referred to as improving the situation and the status of the less developed.

In order to involve women in all the spheres of the society, according to the Beijing Report of 1995 (Momsen, 1991), it was suggested that women be empowered and participate fully on the basis of equality in all spheres of society. It was stated that the eradication of poverty based on economic growth and social development requires the involvement of women in economic and social development. The position of women and their role in development were regarded as important because women have to bear the brunt of the daily struggle for survival in rural and developing countries, therefore women should be given training in skills that they do not have.

### **2.5.1 The Commonwealth's Recommendations on Women Development**

According to the Commonwealth report (cited in Chinery-Hesse, et al, 1990), the impact of structural adjustment policies on women as an important issue was identified in the first meeting of Commonwealth ministers responsible for Women's affairs in 1985. In their second meeting in Zimbabwe, members recommended that an expert group establish the extent of women's contribution to different economies. The following suggestions were the general areas for action by governments, international agencies and non-governmental organisations:

It was suggested that women's special needs and contributions to economic production and community organisations be incorporated so as to increase women's productivity by implementing employment creation specially tailored to their needs. Secondly, women's concerns were to be institutionalised by involving women in decision making processes. Lastly, governments were to design programmes which take special measures to employ women through public work schemes and to assist women in setting up small businesses and to ensure that bank loans are received by women.

### **2.6 Income Generation**

I reviewed literature on income generation because I wished to know if women have been able to generate income using the skills developed from the projects. Skills development projects were established in the different parts of the world for unemployed and poor women with the aim of enabling them to generate income.

In Tunisia, for example, Faith Mzali, who was the president of the Tunisian National Women's Union, tried to solve the problem of poverty by starting programmes that taught binding of books, embroidery and sewing classes to illiterate women. Women felt that the involvement of women in women's organisations, which was sometimes ignored by development planners, was essential to women's advancement as well as income generation. Helping women by training them in embroidery was an attempt at including women in the labour market (Boserup, 1970).

Jiggins (1994) argues that women's development is the essential condition of sustainability because women's full participation in the skills development programmes will lead to new ways of solving problems such as poverty and unemployment. In Zimbabwe, for instance, there are women farmers who dominate small farms food sectors. Farming was thought of as a job for males only, but these women's access to advice, credit and other inputs increased the effectiveness of farming programmes. Women have successfully generated income through farming.

Like the Beijing report, in Latin America, Africa and Asia, policies on development were reviewed and addressed questions about development planning and empowerment of women. Development planners or income-generating practitioners started to develop income-generating schemes for women and then developed those skills they hoped that would provide better income (Momsen, 1991).

There were anti-poverty projects which emphasised income-generation especially for rural women in the Third World. Women had been objects that needed help in order to be active participants in the development process. Women from their communities volunteered to develop the skills of the other women in cooking, cleaning and serving services necessary for the implementation of the anti-poverty projects (Mosse, 1993).

On the other hand the Harijan women were taught the fabrics and lace making skills as well as crocheting (Bissilat, 1987) whereas, in the parts of the Caribbean, women's projects, involving housekeeping skills or handicrafts development have been replaced by broader income-generating activities for women (Fisher, 1993). Most organisations worked with women in urban areas on skills development activities such as sewing and crocheting so that women made and sold these products in order to generate income (Fisher, 1993).

These organisations which aimed at formulating more educational goals for women provided skills training, literacy and family planning services (Chinery-Hesse et al, 1990). Also organisations in India such as the Women's Liberation and Rehabilitation

Society (WLARS), the Programme on Women and Rural Development, SADDC, DWCRA and Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) had all one aim of developing women's skills for income-generation. Income-generation projects for women were often seen as a way to bring about change in their lives (Evers, 1993).

Organisations believed in the importance of empowering women through income-generating projects. More income-generating activities such as brick making, weaving, sewing, fishnet making, bakery, ploughing, pottery and bamboo ware were introduced when developing women's skills so that they were able to generate income (Massiah, 1993; Kardam, 1991; Haider, 1996 in Evers, 1993).

In other parts of the Third World, Women Training Centres (WTC) provided a 1000 women with skills training and income-generating activities. In Honduras, a project called the Participation of Women in Development Process made loans to groups of women for various economic activities by using a revolving fund (Kardam, 1991). The Bangladesh Rural Advancement committee (BRAC) was one of the programmes which tried to develop skills for unemployed women in the Third World. Women were organised into groups and were to attend functional education classes and received vocational training in tailoring. Through selling the tailored articles, women were able to generate income (Leonard, 1989).

In the other parts of the Third World, projects such as the Refugee Development Programme (RDP) and the Links in Service Fund (LSF) tried to develop women as decision-makers. Women were empowered in technological skills so as to be able to be employed in the offices as well as in the marketing projects. About 300 women were provided by the LSF with skills such as knitting and weaving which helped them to generate income (Guijt, 1998).

In China, the president of the National Women's Federation (NWF) identified lack of employment for women as one of the major problems facing the Chinese women in the 1980's. As these women were poor, the need for finding employment and developing

new income-generating activities within the rural economy became an urgent problem for the Chinese government. Government encouraged the peasants to expand their commodity economy to include animal husbandry, cash cropping, handicraft, industrial and commercial activities. Rural fairs and markets were established so that goods, foods, local handicrafts and daily necessities produced locally could be exchanged for wider distribution. These developments broadened the scope of women's income-generating activities both on and off the household farm (Croll, 1995).

## **2.7 Issues Facing Women in Development**

Women in development are faced with issues such as gender discrimination, poverty and unemployment. I reviewed literature on these issues so as to compare them with those of the women I interviewed.

Some authors indicated that most of the people engaged in the informal sector, because of gender discrimination, were females of all ages. Women tended to concentrate in a narrow range of poorly paid activities. Activities were allocated according to sex and those allocated to women had lower value attached to them. Women have faced discrimination in the job market because in the past they were barred from some jobs because they were women. Even at the present time most of the women are hired for the worst paid and least skilled jobs (COSATU Policy Unit, 1997; ISS, 1985 in Preston –Whyte, 1991).

Apart from gender discrimination, women were excluded from economic spheres because they were illiterate. At the 4<sup>th</sup> World conference on women in Beijing in 1995, statistics revealed that in Africa alone 340 million women were illiterate. In most cases women were illiterate because their fathers migrate from the countries because of labour force practices and therefore girls had to help their mothers with the housework. According to the procedures of the African tradition, girls' education was limited to the provision of skills and knowledge like reproducing babies and caring for the household and the community.

On the other hand women were also faced with poverty and unemployment. Poverty, because of unemployment, caused women to form or join projects that would develop their skills so as to generate income. Lack of employment for women is one of the major problems facing women in our country. The need for finding employment and developing income-generating activities within the rural economy has become an urgent problem of the present government. Third World women have started anti-poverty projects which emphasise income-generation especially on rural women (Leonard, 1989).

## **2.8 Impact of skills development**

Skills development is a means of assisting in the process of developing a new person in that, a person, after being developed in some skills, is able to use the different skills to generate income; for example, a woman who has been unemployed, who had been unable to satisfy her needs, changes to become self-employed. Lea and Leibowitz (1992) stress that low-skilled jobs will gradually disappear and new jobs requiring improved skills are appearing.

Because in most cases, women receive information from other women, women's networks are encouraged. Contact among women is fostered and therefore women develop self confidence. Women's organisations which are distinguished by their goodwill could be more effective in offering training and income-earning skills.

By developing skills of unemployed women, their standards of living are raised because women are integrated into the national society as they are made to be economically self sufficient. Also a contribution to the national economy is automatically made (Attwood; Bruneau and Galaty; 1988).

Through skills development employment becomes possible. Most rural women have been left behind when it came to skills development. When they underwent skills developed, they became self-employed or were employed as factory workers where

they use their developed skills such as dressmaking, baking, tailoring and others (UNECA, in Attwood, et al, 1988).

Acquiring skills and competencies on an ongoing basis will ensure that people can enhance their employability and thus contribute to the lifelong vitality of organisations and the economy the country. Skills development will not only develop the country's human resources but will also add value to the organization as well as the personal development of the people (Attwood, et al, 1998).

## **2.9 Conclusion**

The reviewed literature suggests that skills development helps by involving people in the developmental processes through activities such as thinking, deciding, planning and playing an active part in things that affect their daily lives. Activities done during the skills development programmes encourage people who are involved to think carefully about what must be done so as to perform better as a group. It has shown that women work better when working in groups because they are able to help and to encourage each other to learn by getting involved with developmental projects so that they are able to generate income.

The key issues identified from the literature such as skills development, income generation, adult education and skills development, issues facing women in development and the impact of skills development have been covered in the literature I have reviewed.

## **2.10 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.10.1 Introduction**

A conceptual framework is a set of ideas that informs and guides research. These ideas may be gathered from one's own experience or from the literature. A concept is an agreed-on meaning that people assign to terms (Maxwell, 1997 in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2001). I have identified four concepts for this study namely, skills development, impact on unemployed women, life history and women empowerment.

### **2.10.2 Skills Development**

When reviewing literature, I found that the South African State developed policies on skills development such as the Skills Development Strategy for Economic Growth, Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994), the Adult Basic Education and Training Act (1997b) and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy (1994). I reviewed these policies because I wished to know what the State says about skills development in South Africa.

The South African State developed the skills development policies with the aim of ensuring that people are able to initiate self employment so as to service the needs of all South Africans, especially the poor and the most disadvantaged (ABET policy, (1997b, p12). In the Skills Development Act (1998), the State tries to devise and implement strategies to develop and improve the skills of the South African workforce by providing for the financing of skills development.

A definition which is relevant to this study is that I refer to skills development as to do with improving people's quality of life by means of using developmental projects or programmes to develop their skills with the aim of generating income.

Different theorists define development in different ways. Their definitions refer to two forms of development namely, *personal and community development*. Mezirow (1978) in Cross (1981) defines personal development as new learning that transforms existing knowledge to bring about a new perspective. This definition, according to my understanding, means that a person does have some knowledge and skills, but when new knowledge or skills are acquired, the existing skills or knowledge are developed or "transformed," to use Mezirow's terms. Coetzee's (2001) definition of community development appears to be more relevant to my study as he refers to development as action plans, strategies and programmes aimed at improving the situation of the poor or rural communities.

For this study I am going to use the concept of skills development by placing skills development within a broader context of the women's lives with reference to issues such as education, their families, previous employment, salaries, their status and their life styles.

### **2.10.3. Impact of skills development**

By impact, for this study, I refer to the results obtained from doing something, that is, the outcomes that skills development and income generation had on unemployed women. The questions that I designed for the interview focus on the impact of the skills development programme that women were involved with.

The impact will be measured in two forms, that is, qualitative and quantitative impact. The qualitative impact will be measured by looking at how the women have managed to improve their living conditions, their participation in employment and economic growth, status, self confidence or self esteem, and an increase in independence. On the other hand the quantitative impact will be judged by the increase in their income that may be used for children's education and the number of things they have managed to do for themselves using income generated.

### **2.10.4. Life Histories**

Life history means telling about the constraints and opportunities that were available in the past and how one dealt with them, and also the plans and hopes for the future. For this study life history may mean data that covers the respondents' events in the life course up to the present (Miller, 2000).

I am going to use life history methodology for data collection because I wish to create stories from the life histories of the six women to be interviewed, therefore data will be presented in the form of stories.

The purpose of presenting data in story form is because stories have values such as

The purpose of presenting data in story form is because stories have values such as sharing experiences, drawing people close to one another and also to encourage the art of listening and reading. People reading stories are able to interpret life or expose their feelings from the text (Baker and Greene, 1977). According to Rubin (1995), data presented in stories is read with pleasure because people enjoy reading stories because story reading sometimes makes the reader aware of the things not noticed before.

#### **2.10.5 Women Empowerment**

By women empowerment I refer to the involvement of women in economic and social development by means of promoting employment opportunities through skills development and training. So far, empowerment through skills development is done by the NGOs, women's organizations and various State departments.

Empowerment can be seen as experiential learning for developing a sense of autonomy and control on the part of a person being empowered when learning is rooted in the idea of human growth and development. Empowerment can increase a person's awareness of his or her own personal power and may increase his or her confidence about taking action in the world (Mulligan and Griffin, 1992).

On the other hand, empowerment is competence shown in the use of a variety of internal actions and strategies that are needed to transform experience into learning so that a person may be able to control one's life. Empowerment through skills development may help an individual to achieve social and economic mobility.

For this study empowerment of women will be judged by their success in generating income after attending skills development programmes, which gave them strength or chance to participate in the building of our country's economy. Empowerment may lead to self confidence. Women empowered by the skills development projects are able to generate income from selling their products.

#### **2.10.6 Relationships between the identified concepts**

I think the identified concepts are related to each other because after the women's skills were developed, they were able to generate income through making and selling of the articles using knowledge gained from the skills development programmes. The impact of skills development and income generation will be measured by looking at what they have done to address their basic problems such as poverty and needs such as education of their children. Presenting life histories will encourage other unemployed women to participate in developmental programmes so that they generate income.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I discuss the characteristics of the qualitative research approach and why I have used it in the study. The purpose of the interviews and the different types of questions to be used during the interviews is explained. Also, I explain why I decided to use life history approach in my study. I give some definitions to stories and why I preferred to present data in story form. Lastly I discuss how I collected data for my study.

For this research I have used the qualitative research methodology. Six women who were previously enrolled with the Community development and Outreach project were interviewed face-to-face and notes were taken. The tape recorder was used. Life histories of the women were collected with the aim of knowing where these women come from, what the skills development project did to help them change their lives and the impact the programme had on their lives. Data is presented in the form of stories. From the life histories of the six women I did cross-case analysis of their experiences so as to pull out the themes from the women's experiences. These themes were analyzed.

#### **3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH**

##### **3.2.1 Definition**

Qualitative research methods are often associated with the collection and analysis of written or spoken text or the direct observation of behaviour (Cassel and Symon, 1994). In Cassel and Symon, 1994, Fryer (1991:3) suggests that:

Qualitative researchers are characteristically concerned in their research

with attempting to accurately describe, decode and interpret the precise meanings to persons of phenomena occurring in their normal social contexts and are typically pre-occupied with complexity, authenticity, contextualization, shared subjectivity of researcher and researched, and minimization of illusion.

### **3.2.2 Characteristics of Qualitative Research Approach**

The qualitative research style is sometimes called “naturalistic inquiry” because nothing is predefined or taken for granted and qualitative researchers focus on natural settings (as quoted from Lincoln and Guba, 1985 in Sherman and Webb, 1988). On the other hand Similar (1985) in Sherman and Webb (1988) sees qualitative research as the study of events as they “evolve” in natural settings or contexts because people who are studied speak for themselves.

The qualitative research approach uses methods such as participant observation and in-depth interview. In-depth interviews give an in-depth understanding of a situation and accurate knowledge of one setting because gathered data provide some detailed description of events, situations and interaction between people and things (Carson and Gilmore, 2001)

Vulliamy, Lewin and Stephens (1990) also argue that qualitative research is flexible because questions being asked are open-ended. With open-ended questions, the participant does the majority of talking therefore the research involves extended periods of participant observation (Vulliamy, et al, 1990). The researcher is engaged in interacting with people in their own language and on their own terms. The more proactive role is assigned to the participants in the research process (Cassel and Symon, 1994). In-depth interviews will give an in-depth understanding as the central data gathering methods (Bryman, 1988).

In addition to the above, qualitative research is interactive, intensive and involves a long-term commitment, therefore researchers are likely to build up a social relationship

with the respondents by actively sharing their experiences. It is concerned with things that really happen in our societies as researchers and people who experience them (Carson, et al, 2001) and Cassel, et al, (1994). The focus of the qualitative research is on interpretation rather than quantification as it allows the researcher to change the nature of his or her own intervention as the research develops in response to the changing nature of the context.

### **3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE**

Marshall and Rossman (1989) define an interview as a method of data collection that may be described as an interaction involving the interviewer and the interviewee with the purpose of obtaining valid and reliable information. The interviewer's approach should convey the idea that the participant's information is acceptable and valuable. An interview is a useful way to get large amounts of data quickly.

On the other hand authors like Bogdan and Taylor (1984) refer to qualitative interviewing as flexible and dynamic. It is also defined as nondirective, unstructured, non-standardized, open-ended and in-depth. During in-depth interviewing there are repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants' directed towards understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words.

However, according to Sherman and Webb (1988), in-depth interviewing is a data collection technique that is relied on extensively by qualitative researchers and is often described as a conversation with a purpose because it is more like conversations than formal or structured interviews. During this interview the researcher is able to explore topics that help to uncover the respondent's meaning perspective.

Bogdan and Taylor (1984) have identified the three closely related types of in-depth interviewing. The first one is the life history interview where the researcher tries to capture the salient experiences in a person's life and that person's definitions of those experiences. Burgess (cited in Bogdan and Taylor, 1984) explains that life histories

reveal the inner life of the person, that is, his moral struggles and his successes and failures in the world.

The second type of in-depth interviewing is directed towards learning about events and activities that cannot be observed directly. In this type of interviewing the interviewees are the informants in the truest sense of the word. As informants they are not just to reveal their own views but also to describe the happenings and how they view them.

The third type is the one that is intended to yield a broad picture of a range of settings, situations or people. This type of interview is used to study a relatively large number of people in a relatively short period of time to what would be required in participant observation research.

### **3.3.1 Purpose of Interview**

The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is on someone else's mind. The purpose of open-ended interviewing is not to put things in someone's mind but rather to access the perspective of the person being interviewed. We interview people to find out about the things we cannot directly observe, for example, feelings, thoughts, intentions behaviours and experiences. Interviewing for programme evaluation purposes allows the evaluator to capture the perspectives of the programme participants, the nature of the programme and the experiences of the programme participants (Patton, 1980).

Patton (1980) has identified five kinds of qualitative research questions that can be asked of people. These questions are asked with the aim of eliciting descriptions of experiences, behaviours and activities that would have been observable had the observer been present. These questions focus on opinion, feeling, knowledge, sensory, experience and background. The aim of the opinion questions is to know what people think about specific programmes. On the other hand feeling questions are asked to understand the emotional responses of people to their experiences and thoughts. Knowledge questions help to find out what factual information the respondent has. Sensory questions allow the interviewer to enter into the sensory apparatus of the

respondent, whereas the background questions help to identify the characteristics of the interviewee, for example, age, education residence and occupation.

### **3.4 WHY I CHOSE TO USE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH IN THIS STUDY**

I used the qualitative research methodology because I considered it the best for my research. It promised to meet a variety of the study's objectives, for example, identifying the experiences or examining the reasons why the particular needs arise. For my study I wanted to know what experiences the respondents encountered.

Qualitative research methods place me as a researcher in face-to-face relationships with other human beings and their ethical or personal problems that may arise (Eisner and Peshkin, 1990). The qualitative research approach helps me to understand different behaviours of people that I may use as respondents to create a particular kind of data. By doing in-depth interviews I collected in-depth data that was used to write life histories of the respondents.

I used the qualitative research approach because it is the one that is associated with the collection and analysis of spoken text or the direct observation of behaviour (Cassell and Gillian, 1994). This type of research approach provided me with information that I analysed and then shared with other people through stories. From these stories people will learn about other people's feelings, thoughts and experiences.

The qualitative research method which is usually conducted through contact of a life situation (Miles and Huberman, 1994), allows me as a researcher a role to gain a holistic overview of the contexts under study, its logic and arrangement. The data was captured from the inside of the respondent (Miles and Huberman, 1994). I learnt about the problems that the respondents face and how they were dealing with these problems.

The qualitative research approach is an intentional way of learning about people's feelings, thoughts and experiences; therefore, the respondents were encouraged to describe the world according to how they feel and think of it (Rubin, 1995). Qualitative

research helped me as the researcher to explore specific topics, events and happenings. It allowed me to share the world of others so as to find out what is going on, why people do what they do and how they understand themselves and the world they live in (Rubin, 1995).

### **3.5 LIFE HISTORY**

Life history is defined as a deliberate attempt to define the growth of a person in a cultural milieu and to make theoretical sense of life. Life history is viewed as an account of how a member enters a group and becomes capable of meeting the traditional expectations of that society for a person of that individual's sex and age (Dollard, 1935 in Marshall and Rossman, 1989).

I agree with Miller when he argues that it may be naïve to believe that the experience of relating life histories is always positive in that respondents relating life histories can find themselves reliving painful episodes in their past or re-evaluating their lives (Miller, 2000).

Biography or life history allows us to view an individual in the context of his or her whole life, from birth to the point at which we encounter him or her. Biographies can lead us to a fuller understanding of the stages and critical periods in the processes of the individual's development. Biographies look at the individual's past successes as well as failures and their future hopes or fears. They allow us to see an individual in relation to the history of her time and how she is influenced by the religious, social, psychological and economic currents present in her world (Plummer, 1983 in Miller, 2000).

#### **3.5.1 Rationale of Life History Research**

I used the life history approach because I wanted to know where the respondents come from and what their experiences were from birth to the present. Life histories give a vivid picture of a person whose life matters (Prackschuder, 2001 in Miller 2000).

The view of the author, Miller (2000) appears to be more relevant to the context of my study as he proposes that narrative approach, as one of the basic approaches to the biographical perspective, bases itself fundamentally upon the ongoing development of the respondent's viewpoint during the telling of a life or family history. It allows the interviewer to understand the respondent's unique and changing perspective over questions of fact. In the narrative approach of biographical interview, context includes both positioning in social structure and time. The interplay within the interview partnership of interviewer and interviewee is important and is the core of this approach because these two people are collaborators as they both compose and construct a story the respondent can be pleased with (Miller, 2000)

As Prackschuder (2001) in Miller (2000) argues, the biographer develops the skills of being a decision maker, an enquirer, a hypothesizer, a compiler, a researcher, a selector and a writer. As a biographer I must be seen as a guide, companion, interpreter, analyser, critic, classifier and artist and be prepared to take up the burden of explaining lives of the respondents and why they were led as they were.

Writing life histories helped me to know what information to choose and talk about so as to tell accurately, fairly and with comprehension of related texts. Life history writing helped me to be more careful because a few mistakes in things such as dates, names and location throw the accuracy and place the value of the entire work into question. Biographers should be able to deal with massive amounts of information because misinterpretation may occur if the organisation of information is faulty (Backscheider, 2001).

Biographers, should dedicate themselves to careful, lucid and lively writing because *uninteresting sentences and structures work against absorption and entrancement*, which are technical terms for deep reading. Because some people are more interested in reading life histories, I decided to use this approach so that the success stories of the respondents will be read all over, thus encouraging other women to do likewise.

Life history studies emphasize the experiences and requirements of the individuals, that is, how that particular person copes with society, rather than how society copes with the stream of individuals (Mandelbaum, 1973 in Marshall and Rossman, 1989 )

Life histories are helpful in defining problems which were encountered by the respondents so that people facing the same problems would be able to solve their problems by using the information obtained from reading the life histories. The women that were interviewed had a lot of problems during and after the skills development programme, but because they worked in groups, they encouraged one another to go on with their work until they finished the course. People reading their histories could also be encouraged to be patient when encountering contextual problems so as to gain success.

The value of life histories goes beyond usefulness or providing specific information about events and customs of the past by showing how the individual interacts with the culture. Life histories are valuable in studying cultural changes that occurred over time, in learning about cultural deviance and in gaining an inside view of a culture. I chose to use the life history approach so that I could investigate how the respondents are able to deal with diverse cultures in their communities.

Life histories provide a basic source of knowledge about how people experience and make sense of themselves and their environments (Cassel and Symon, 1994). Also life history methodology emphasizes the value of a person's own story and provides a picture of a concept. Life histories have strong appeal to readers because of the subject matter and the narrative form in which they are written (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). Respondents will be proud to see their life histories being read all over and will thus be encouraged to work more hard if they see that their work is known all over the country.

In life history research a proper focus on historical change can be attained in a way that is lacking in many other methods. Such a focus is a dual one, moving between the changing biographical history of the person and the social history of his or her life-span.

The gathering of a life history will entail the subject moving to and fro between the developments of their own life cycle and the ways in which external crises and political, religious, employment situations have impinged on this. A life history cannot be told without a constant reference to historical change, and this central focus on change must be seen as one of life history's great values (Plummer 1983:70 in Miller, 2000).

### **3.5.2 Data Collection on Life History**

Biographical data range across time. The respondent who is telling us about his biographical history does so in the present, but this biography ranges over the past. The typical life history covers the events of the respondent's life course up to the present. A biographical approach is indicated where the area of interest is either the effects of change across time, historical events as these events have impinged upon the individual, or his or her movement along the life course. The techniques of biographical interviewing facilitate recall through a process of cross-referentiality as the respondent moves back and forth in their life history and makes linkages between different types of events and segments of their life (Miller, 2000).

The biographical perspective centres itself midway between social structure and the individual as social actor. To tell about one's biography means telling about constraints and opportunities that were available in the past and how one deals with these i.e. circumventing obstacles or taking advantage or missing of opportunities. The respondent will have plans and hopes for the future (Miller 2000).

### **3.5.3 Limitations**

I agree with Miller (2000) as he argues that the life history approach may have limitations such as that collecting life histories, because even if focus is on only a limited part of the life, is expected to be a lengthy process because the questions are open-ended. A life history interview is an invasion of privacy and people may not feel capable of meeting this commitment. People may not wish to reveal their secrets to a stranger even if that stranger is an academic. Some people who are approached about telling their life histories may have misgivings about the effects upon their own psychological

stability if they put themselves through the experience. Also, they might not tell the truth. Life history involves the subjective perspective of the interviewee who tells the story and the researcher who reconstructs and represents it.

### **3.6 STORIES**

I have presented data in the form of stories because stories best tell a sequence of events that are important to the narrator and the audience (Denzin, 1989, p37 in Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). By listening to the stories people tell about them, the researcher is able to illuminate the moments of crisis that occur in a person's life (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

#### **3.6.1 Definition**

A story has a beginning, middle and end parts so as to sustain its coherence. Stories are purposeful accounts of continuous events. A story is sometimes referred to as structured events, happenings or actions.

Stories are constructed by human beings for a variety of reasons such as drama or film-making. Some stories are purely fictional but others are factual whilst some are both fact and fiction. Some stories are told to answer questions but some do raise the questions. A story develops, i.e. it indicates essential continuity in a sequence of events so as to make sense of it. Stories may be certain messages conveyed by the narrative form (Lemon, 1995).

It is possible to construct a story from fact rather than fiction to deliver a message. The author determines what to include, omit and amend in one's story. It therefore shows that creating a story involves selection or omission of events as determined by the purpose of the story. Telling a story is the description of events as regards their happening, that is, why they took place (Lemon, 1995).

### 3.6.2 Presenting of data in story form

The purpose of presenting the data in the form of stories is because stories have values such as sharing experiences, drawing people close to one another and also encouraging the art of listening or reading.

Stories encourage the ability to visualize, fantasize and be creatively imaginative (Baker and Greene, 1977). People reading the stories are able to interpret life or expose their feelings from the text. By listening to stories, relationship between the teller and the listener are formed because story telling provides a means of preserving and transmitting ideas, images and emotions that are universal (Baker and Greene, 1977; Cassady, 1990)

Data presented in stories is read with pleasure because people enjoy reading stories, as they are refined versions of events that may make a point indirectly so that the reader may have to figure out the meanings himself (Rubin, 1995). Stories are experiences to be lived and enjoyed because they are efforts to answer the question, "What happened?" Story reading makes the reader aware and become familiar with the things he hadn't noticed before because stories communicate significant themes that explain a topical or cultural arena (Rubin, 1995; Boynton and Mark, 1983).

I agree with Pellowski (1990) when he describes storytelling as a means of recreating literature by taking the printed words in a book and giving them life. He argues that the purpose of storytelling is to entertain and to delight the audience; also storytelling is an important factor in the development of the healthy human personality.

Stories have to be intriguing and interesting as distinct from obvious. They are in some way useful and helpful to us as they have the potential to nurture sensitivity, enlightenment, empowerment and delight (Wood and Richardson, 1992).

The views of Wood and Richardson (1992) of storytelling appear to be relevant to my study when they say that people tell stories in order to understand why things happen

and how events are connected with each other. Stories help us to know that our experiences of life are not just one inconsequential thing after another, but are full of threads, links, causes and consequences. By sharing stories we build shared agendas, values and intentions. By writing stories we help the readers to make sense of their own experiences of life, whether, small-scale experiences or overall life-story. Stories help people to develop their story telling skills so that they become more effective story tellers themselves. Stories help in introducing people to the heritage and traditions to which they were born so that they may have a sense of belonging to the community and of being supported by the community. Stories are about shared values and meaning, shared beliefs and insights and shared agendas and goals. By telling stories, people are enabling the culture and the community to be transmitted and maintained but also to be questioned, renewed, improved and developed (Wood and Richardson, 1992).

Story-telling is the oldest form of literacy communication. From stories people may find scenes that may address different forms of life because the power of mental visualization offers people outward vision and an actual picture of the recorded life (Shedlock, 1951). The importance of listening or reading stories, according to Zipes (1995), is that people share experiences and learn something from the shared experiences.

By telling stories we share experiences and expose our deepest feelings and our values. Because stories produce relaxed and restful feelings, they establish a happy relationship between the teller/writer and the listener/reader. Story-telling provides the opportunity to interpret life forces which are beyond the person's immediate experience. Hearing stories being told gives people practice in visualization because as they listen to the story they create scenes, the action and the characters. This ability to visualize and to fantasize is the basis of creative imagination. Stories have the ability of creating a positive effect on social and cognitive development and they give insights into the motives and patterns of human behaviour (Baker and Greene, 1977).

In most cases some people read stories for pleasure or in search of information. Using the information acquired from the books, a person may be able to prevent the same action from occurring. Some stories are read in order to strengthen the motivation to persevere with the process of innovation and to slow down hasty attempts at implementing change (Gersie, 1992).

### **3.7 SAMPLING**

Six women were interviewed – they are now self-employed. These six women were involved with the Community Development Project in the Edendale area. They were selected purposely and were willing to participate. I therefore made generalisations from the findings.

#### **3.7.1 Sampling frames**

A sampling frame is the list from which a random sample of elements in the population are selected. The ideal sampling frame includes every element in the target population. Convenience sampling involves selecting those people in the street or seeking respondents amongst participants at a meeting. The idea is to select elements in the population which would be considered representative (Slater, 1990).

#### **3.7.2 Selecting Respondents**

I had to select six women who were already self-employed and who were successfully generating income as they were the ones who showed the impact of skills development and income generation on unemployed women.

The usual procedure for selecting respondents for biographical research is that of selective sampling. Selective sampling is when people to be used in the study are chosen on a conceptual basis. For my study six women were selected and they were chosen because they had completed the course and were willing to participate. The goal of selective sampling was to secure a spread of individuals that represent all of the types or groups that are significant for the topic under consideration, in this case, the impact of skills development on unemployed women. As have been said, the numbers

chosen in a selective sample is much smaller because once an adequate number of respondents as judged by the researcher have been chosen to represent the main variety of phenomenon in the groups of interest, there is no need to take any more (Schotzman and Strauss, 1973 in Slater, 1990).

## **3.8 Ethics**

### **3.8.1 Introduction**

Before starting with the research I sought permission to carry out an investigation in a formal written approach to the organisation concerned. In the letter to the organisation I outlined my plans for the proposed research. I had to wait until I was granted permission to undertake the research. I had to make contacts with the appropriate people who were previously involved with the organisation so as to negotiate access.

Before meeting the participants, I revisited the aims of the research so that I prepared the relevant design, methods and procedures for my research. I also had to bear in mind the number of respondents, the activities to be observed, the time involved, the role of the feedback and how the findings could best be disseminated. Preparations were to be done so as to avoid the problems such as long, complicated and irrelevant questions for the particular participants.

### **3.8.2 Informed Consent**

Firstly, I had to be honest by telling the participants the whole truth on my identity and the reasons why I was conducting the research. I had to obtain the consent and the co-operation of the participants because they might experience some emotional duress when sharing in-depth data of their life histories. Because the study required in-depth data on the life histories of the participants, I decided to anticipate the potential problems such as forgetfulness, hiding the truth, emotions and reliving some of the memories that could arise because of the nature of the research (Cohen, et al,2001).

Following contact with the participants, I negotiated with them the process to be followed during the interviews. I gave them information about the aims, the nature and the procedures of the research. I allowed the participants to choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed that their exposure to risks was undertaken knowingly and voluntarily (Bell, 1991; Denier and Crandal, 1978 in Cohen, et al, 2001). I made a thorough explanation of the risks, rights and dangers involved as a result of their participation in the research project to the participants. I emphasised to

them that they had a right to refuse or withdraw once the research has begun should they feel that they no longer wished to participate (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992 in Cohen, et al, 2001).

### **3.8.3 Privacy**

During the investigations I always told the participants that they had the "right to privacy" and this right was never to be ignored. Privacy, according to Denier and Crandal in Cohen, et al, (2001), can be considered from three perspectives, namely, the sensitivity of the information given, the setting observed and dissemination of information. As a researcher, therefore, I always remembered that certain kinds of information were more personal than others and could be more threatening. I had to protect the privacy of the participants by giving them freedom to decide for themselves when and where and to what extent their personal attitudes, opinions and cultures were to be communicated or withheld from others (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 1981 in Cohen, et al, 2001).

### **3.8.4 Anonymity**

I offered the participants the opportunity to remain anonymous unless arrangements to the contrary had been made with the participants in advance. By anonymity it was meant that in no way must the information provided by the participants reveal identity. The participants were therefore ensured that their names, addresses and other details would all bear anonymity. Their names would be changed and places could be shifted (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992 in Cohen, et al, 2001).

### **3.8.5 Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is another way that I used to protect the participants' privacy. Although I knew the person who had provided the information, I could in no way make the connection known publicly so as to ensure confidentiality (Cohen, et al, 2001). Kimmel (1988) in Cohen (2001), in his account of confidentiality, notes that some respondents may refuse to co-operate when assurance of confidentiality is weak, vague or thought to be breached. I gave the participants the opportunity to verify their statements when the

research was in draft and the participants will be given copies of the final report (Bell, 1991 as quoted in Cohen, et, al, 2001).

### **3.8.6 Respect**

All the participants were treated with equal respect and I accepted that all participants were entitled to the same basic rights as others. I did not discriminate against them because of their religion, culture and sexual orientation.

Last, but not least, participants were thanked for giving their time and allowing me to conduct interview with them.

## **3.9 PROCEDURE**

I firstly made an appointment with the Community Development project co-ordinator by telephone asking for permission to collect data from the women who were enrolled with the project before. I had to ask for permission because some project organisers do not allow current or ex-students to disclose information about the project. As I talked to him, I could hear that he was uncomfortable with my request because he kept on asking why I had to choose that particular project whereas there were so many skills development projects in the area.

I insisted that I had chosen his project because I had seen the work done by his ex-students and that I wanted to know more about the project. Although he did not like the idea, he eventually gave me permission. He referred me to the facilitator of the project who was to help me to identify the women to be interviewed. I had to see these women so as to arrange times and the venues for the interviews.

I started to prepare the interview schedule. I submitted my first draft to my supervisor who advised me to redo it because most of the questions were not related to the research topic. According to my supervisor, most of the questions should have been on skills development and its impact on unemployed women. When I submitted the second interview schedule, she was very much impressed.

When trying to identify the interviewees, I prayed that the chosen respondents, as Gorden (1987) proposes, would be able to supply me with the relevant information, would be physically accessible and would be very much willing to give information. Six women were chosen to be participants.

My supervisor suggested that I do the pilot interview before doing the actual interviews. Mrs Khumalo agreed to be the pilot interviewee. I had to always remember that the focus, when conducting the interviews, should be on the purpose of the study.

Before I started with the interviews, I had to be prepared for the inhibitors that could affect the interviews. The inhibitors, according to Gorden (1987), could make the respondent unwilling to provide the relevant information. The inhibitors could be the demands for time to be spent, withholding the information that the respondent may feel may threaten her self-esteem or when the respondent may feel that she is forced to relive the original emotions associated with the experience. Also I had to be prepared for the possibility that the respondent might be unable to give relevant information because of forgetfulness or fading memory.

When I was ready, I went to interview Mrs Khumalo as a pilot interviewee and then the other six women. At first all the respondents were nervous. In order to calm them down I always started by introducing myself and then told them why I wanted to interview them. Some of them, like Mrs Ndlovu, wanted to know if they were going to get something in return. I explained to them that I was doing the interviews for my dissertation. I had to ask for the permission to use the tape recorder; although they were reluctant at the beginning, they ended up by giving me consent to use it after I had explained to them why I wanted to use the tape recorder.

All women were interviewed face-to-face and some notes were taken. Most of the questions were open-ended and some of the questions made the respondents relive the original emotions associated with their experiences. I had to read from their facial

expressions if they were not happy with the question I had asked. Respondents sometimes gave me irrelevant responses (Reddy, 2000).

When the interviews were over, I switched off the tape recorder so that we shared experiences. When sharing experiences, I discovered that most of the women had been through the same experiences, for example, they had to leave school because of the shortage of funds resulting from the death in the family and also from the parents' being unemployed (Reddy, 2000).

Interviews took about 1 hour and 30 minutes. I always preferred to give the respondents a chance to suggest the time that would be convenient for them. Because most of the women were busy with their work, I had to stick to the time that we had agreed upon. Because women were interviewed at their homes, I could see the sewing machines and the piles of fabric lying in wait to be used.

When I reached home I had to listen to the conversations from the tape recorder before I transcribed them. I would only choose data that was relevant to the topic. I also had to arrange the facts chronologically and to ensure that all the important information was included in the transcription. After the approval of the transcripts by my supervisor, I had to create stories from it. I decided to present data in story form to show a need and a desire to share experiences with those who will be able to read these stories.

### **3.10 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I have explained what the qualitative research methodology is all about and why I have chosen to use it for this study. As I have preferred to present the life histories of the six women in the form of stories, I have tried to make clear why the life history approach is suitable for the study. I present the life histories in story form because most people like to read story books more than non-fiction books as most of the stories are based on certain lessons. Also narrated stories are more interesting and are easy to understand.

## CHAPTER 4 LIFE HISTORIES

### 4.1 Introduction

From the collected data which consisted of the life histories of the six interviewed women, I created the following stories:

### 4.2 Life History of Mrs Khanyisile Mbatha (not her real name)

I met Khanyisile at her home at Unit 18 Imbali. Her daughter is my colleague at school. I sent her daughter to arrange an appointment with her, which she did, and we had to meet on a Friday at her home. It was a very big house and Mrs Mbatha was busy with her sewing in the outside building.

From our talk I learnt that Khanyisile was born at Edendale in September 1952 to Dorah and Joseph Ngcobo, both unemployed. Her father had a vegetable garden and he sold the produce to make some much needed money. Khanyisile started school at Caluza Primary School where she went up to standard five, then her parents could not afford to pay for her studies anymore. She was obviously not educated enough to get decent employment so she stayed at home until she got temporary employment at Volans Dry Cleaners in Pietermaritzburg. Things were better for a while because there was another source of income besides the money made from her father's vegetable garden.

In 1970 she got married to Petros Mbatha from Imbali where they now live. They were blessed with two daughters and two sons.

For her, being unemployed was hurting and frustrating because she needed money to buy clothes and food for her children. Although Petros, her husband, was employed, his salary was not enough to cover all that they needed. They needed money to pay for

their children's education and to extend their two-roomed house which had become too little to shelter the whole family.

In 1999 her sister told her about the skills development programme and she decided to get involved with the programme. She and other women had to organise their own accommodation and they had to use the New Central Church for their classes. It was a good deal because they were not required to make monthly rental payments. They were, however, required to pay for the electricity bill.

The programme offered courses such as pattern making, dress making, sewing, cloth decoration, flower arranging, jam making and baking. She chose to do dressmaking because she liked making clothes and she wanted knowledge on how to make them.

The sewing course was to last for six months and they met three times a week, that is, Monday to Wednesday between 08h00 and 14h00. A total of 25 women were involved with the project but only 15 women took the dress making course. The sewing course was facilitated by Themba Bhengu (not his real name) who was employed by the project management.

They were taught how to make and cut patterns, how to use the sewing machines and dress making. Because there were not enough sewing machines, women were divided into three groups of five and the work was alternated between them, that is, for example, group 1 would be sewing, group 2 would be learning pattern making, whilst group 3 would be busy with cutting fabric using patterns.

Being part of the programme was not very easy at the beginning because they had to get their own material equipment like fabric, sewing machines and sewing threads. It was no surprise that there were days when she did not attend classes, being a wife and mother. She missed a lot of work in her absence and sometimes new work was done when she was not there. On such occasions she relied on her cousin who was also on the programme, to show her the processes that she had missed out. Their tutor showed

his kindness by arranging that they do extra classes with those who had been left behind because of absenteeism.

Her wish to participate in the skills development programme stood upon her love for sewing, the longing for independence and the need to make a living. She remembered those days back when she still had difficulties with her work, like when she would not accurately cut the patterns, or when the sewing machine was broken and she had to spend the whole day trying to repair it, or the fact that she had to bring her little children along to classes because there was no one to look after them at home.

Little did she realize that by getting involved with the project, it would mean the betterment of her life a great deal. The project gave her new knowledge and added more knowledge to what she already had. Although she was very nervous at the beginning, it was all worth it in the end. She is happy that she had acquired more skills than she had before getting involved with the programme, and she did not pay anything for the course. At the end of the course she got a Certificate of Accomplishment.

Her family was very happy to see her gradually learn to sew clothes all on her own. They were even prouder after she made a shirt for her husband. She still remembers that it was made of brown and cream fabric. She showed me the first skirt that she sewed for herself.

After the course it was time that Khanyi started dreaming about her work. She wished that she could get sponsors to supply her with fabric, but it was just a dream because she had to make do with reality. She and other women formed a group and started making student uniforms for local schools. She had to pay back the loan she made from the women's club she is a member of, which she used to buy her sewing machine at an auction and fabric at Material Mart.

Having sold her first few items, she used the money to buy more material, like fabric, sewing thread, buttons and zippers. She needed these because she gets regular

customers. Her customers, besides for the school uniforms, usually require her to make those fashionable African-inspired outfits which she makes out of ethnic material.

She does get busy with the orders, a situation which she can only cope with by applying 100+% devotion to her work, working long hours. She has also taught her daughters a thing or two about sewing, which comes in very handy when she is inundated with customers' orders, because they can help out.

Her daughters were also helpful when she made a man's suit for her neighbour, which she describes as the most challenging thing she has ever sewn. This was complicated, but Khanyi did not put her tail between the legs and walk away; she was too determined to do that. Fitting the lining and inserting the sleeves was a big challenge. Then there was stitching. She claims she had never had to use the unpicker the way she did that time, doing and undoing stitches. It took quite a long time but getting it finished, neat and tidy, brought a great sense of satisfaction. She charged R550.00 for the suit.

She averages a monthly income between about R3500 and R5000, and proudly boasts that this is the most that she has ever been able to earn in her entire life. She uses the money to pay her children's school fees, buy groceries and pay her accounts. The biggest investment she has ever made was buying a second-hand minibus taxi. She has hired a driver and, surprisingly, she makes more money than she ever dreamt of. Having her house extended and renovated was another huge challenge. This is a far cry from the R1000 she made working at the dry cleaner. She has opened a bank account at NBS; she had never had a bank account before.

The more she achieves, the more she strives for better things in life. She now wants to study fashion designing and also to master the skill of shoe covering. She finds her customers require this all the time.

Her business has boomed so much that she has even started doing her sales on credit for her loyal customers and clients. She allows two month-end instalments. She still

requires them to pay 50% cash deposit which she uses to buy the additional materials needed for their clothes. She feels that the increase in the number of her customers tells her that they are satisfied with her work.

Advertising her work is easy, she just encourages her customers to spread the word. She herself, as well as her children, wear the outfits and people usually ask about the person who made them.

Being self-employed is one thing Khanyi cannot stop raving about; there is no boss to give orders all the time. She manages her work and time herself. Her children are happy, her life has seen and continues to see great improvements and everything is looking up. Being self-employed was a dream realized as she now runs her own business from home. The skills development programme has brought in a welcome change.

All in all, Khanyi is a happy woman who has big dreams for herself, her children and her two grandchildren. She is a community leader and a business woman. Her happiness comes in being able to balance all these roles with great joy. Her life has improved tremendously, thanks to the skills development programme.

#### **4.3 Life History for Ntombizodwa Mbhele (not her real name)**

Ntombizodwa Mbhele was born at Machibisa in Edendale on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 1972. Her parents are Catherine and Justice. She is living together with Linda Mkhize at Willowfountain. They have been living together since 1991 when her father chased her away from home because she was pregnant. Ntombizodwa and Linda are not married but they have four children, three boys and one girl.

I met her when I had gone to visit Mrs Babongile Zondi. Mrs Zondi introduced us and I came to know that she also attended the skills development programme together with Mrs Zondi. I made an appointment to interview her the following day.

When I arrived at her house, her boyfriend was there watching television. During our interview I discovered that her partner, Linda, was unemployed. He did grade 12 at Kwamthiyane High School and had been hunting for a job in vain. Ntombizodwa did her primary education from 1979 at Mabane Lower Primary school at Sweetwaters, then went to Bhekizizwe Higher Primary school for grade 6 and 7. She eventually matriculated at Qoqisizwe High School. She then stayed at home and made applications for employment. She got a temporary job as a domestic servant which lasted for 4 months only and she soon found herself unemployed again. At her home she stayed with her two parents and her two younger sisters.

She remembered that, as has been said previously, her father chased her away from her home and her family because she was pregnant. Her father was very much hurt, and when Ntombizodwa tried to apologise to him, her father told her to take her belongings and leave. Ntombizodwa, not knowing where to go, decided to go and inform her boyfriend about the situation. Her boyfriend couldn't accommodate her. I think she had a heart attack because she said that she didn't know what happened after that because she became conscious when she was lying in a hospital bed. Her father was not prepared to accept her back home and that is why she is staying with her boyfriend.

Being unemployed was terrible for them. She depended on Linda's family to provide for their children. Ntombizodwa couldn't provide anything for her children and therefore her future as well as the future of her children looked really bleak. She had already had two children when she heard about the skills development programme in 1998. The ward councilor informed them about the project at a community meeting. Mr Bhengu, the programme director, had promised to include them in the project if only they could organise their accommodation where classes could be held. They got accommodation at the community hall at Imbali. They had to meet for five days a week between 8H00 and 15H00.

The project offered courses such as sewing, dressmaking, yoghurt- and fabric softener-making and cloth decoration. Ntombizodwa decided to take sewing because she was more interested in making clothes. She hoped that by doing a dressmaking course, she would be able to make a living by selling the clothes she had sewn. She really felt it wise to take advantage of this opportunity. The dressmaking course was to last for six months. During the lessons they were taught how to thread a machine and how to make seams using the sewing machine. They also learnt pattern cutting and placing and inserting zippers and buttons on the articles.

Their teacher was Zanele and was employed by the project management. The course was done free of charge and only a few machines were provided by the project management. Sometimes, because of shortages, they had to provide their own fabric although the project did provide some fabric, sewing cotton and zippers. Because there were not enough sewing machines, they had to use them in turns. Ntombizodwa decided to borrow a sewing machine from their neighbour to avoid waiting for her turn in using the machines. There were only seven machines to be shared by 15 women who took the sewing and dressmaking course.

She decided to get involved with the skills development programme because she was unemployed and had a hope that somehow she would be able to acquire enough skills to make a living and be able to provide for herself as well as her family. By getting

involved with the programme she expected that they would be taught how to be self-employed so as to deal with potential starvation and to be able to pay school fees for her children. She also wished to repair their house which was busy falling apart. She didn't know how to do sewing using the machine, so she needed a lot of practice because they had to rush over the new processes because the time was limited.

She sometimes had to look after her sick children and had to be away from classes. When she was absent from classes, she had to ask her classmates to update her with what they did while she was away. In order to cover the work that was done during her absence, she had to work after hours and had to use Saturdays and Sundays to avoid lagging behind with her work.

During the programme they had so many experiences. Power failures were a big problem. It would just happen whilst they were right in the middle with their sewing. There were some days when their tutor would arrive late or would be absent without them knowing. They would wait and do nothing for the whole day except if one of them knew how to do the process to be done. Those who were a bit ahead of them with their work used to help them when their tutor was away.

One day she had to unpick the almost finished dress because she had been unable to make the correct measurements. Their tutor named her the "unpicker's friend". She was very much discouraged but eventually, she managed to cope with the situation. The course was really not enjoyable at first.

There was no one to look after her children when she attended the skills development programme. Because she could neither afford a nanny nor crèche fees she asked her granny to look after them. She had to go via granny's house before and after classes to leave and to collect her children.

When she attended the skills development programme she was very excited because she had thought it was a dream come true. After the first day of their attendance,

because she had thought that it was going to be easy, she realised that the work needed more dedication if she wished to be on par with the time allocated for the course. When she first used the sewing machine, she discovered that "*kwakungasiniswa amahleza*" meaning that it was not child's play as she had thought before attending the skills development. She used to make crooked seams, therefore she did a lot of unpicking.

Ntombizodwa feels that the duration of the course was too short. She wishes that she could redo the course so as to acquire more skills that she might use to teach women to be self-supporting. The course helped her a lot because she acquired skills such as dressmaking, pattern making and sewing. Their tutor was patient with them and she knew that she was able to do what she could do because of her dedication to her work. At the end of the course she got a Certificate of Accomplishment.

When they finished the course it was about time they put what they learnt to practice. Because she had no money to buy her own sewing machine, sewing cotton and other materials, she had to approach her councilor and borrowed a sum of R1500. The councilor was sympathetic and he offered Ntombizodwa some money on condition that she repaid it within six months time. With the money she bought her own sewing machine from an Indian shop at East Street, PMBurg because prices there seemed to be cheaper and affordable. The first thing that she sewed was a red apron which she said she wears it with pride. She then sewed her son's tracksuit. Seeing that she had been able to do it, she made more children's tracksuits. Her children went from door to door selling these tracksuits and they came back with money and more orders for tracksuits of different sizes; that was the start of her business.

Most of her regular customers place orders for children's tracksuits, duvet covers and different types of outfits. She sometimes becomes too busy with customer's orders especially during holidays and when schools reopen in January. During the busy months her income ranges between R4 000 and R5 000 per month.

She uses some of her income to buy lots of different fabrics so that she never runs short of fabric for her customers. When she becomes too busy with her work, she works day and night so as to meet the deadline dates for her customers. When her work exceeds her capacity, she asks her aunt who is not a busy dressmaker to help her through the customers' orders.

Attending the skills development programme helped her to become self-employed. She feels she still needs some more skills like advanced dressmaking and tailoring. Her current income has made a great difference in her life because she is no longer dependant on her children's grant fees. She has bought a stove, a refrigerator and has opened a bank account at ABSA bank.

The biggest article she had ever sewn was a ball gown for a matric dance. She made it for her customer's child. Because she was doing it for the first time in her life, she was nervous, fearing that she wouldn't be able to make it. It was not easy and a lot of time was to be spent on making it because it had so many layers and decorations. She did a lot of unpicking when she tried to fit in the lining of the dress. Its decorations took her about the whole day to finish; she had to make its hem three times before it was even. She decided to be careful as she didn't want to spoil the expensive fabric she was using. She sometimes had to put the whole thing aside and to rethink what she had to do as the next step. Making the dress was really stressful to her and she celebrated the day on which it was finished. She made it for only R 800 but she thinks it was not worth it.

She was happy that the customer was more than satisfied with what she had done. In fact, she thinks that her customers are happy with her work because not a single one has complained about her work. She has a lot of regular customers but she never gives them her articles on credit. She only takes cash and lay-byes to avoid conflict if one customer decided not to settle his/her debts with her.

She advertises her work by wearing her self-made articles to church or to other gatherings so that prospective customers may place orders of the same or nearly the same outfits. She also hangs, for display purposes, her completed work in the corner of the verandah at her home so that the passers-by may see the articles.

She feels great to be self-employed especially because her customers give her great support. She always remembers to treat her customers with great care and always tries to satisfy them because she knows that she would be nothing without them.

Her family is proud of her and she always gets advice to look for bigger accommodation for her work is piling up almost daily. She was very happy that she has bought herself a more advanced sewing machine, an overlocker and a big deep freezer. She has also bought ceramic tiles for her home.

She felt happy to be part of the interview because she thought that some of the questions I asked her, had raised her awareness. She hadn't expected to be interviewed some day about her work.

#### **4.4 Life History of Mrs Zandile Ndlovu (not her real name)**

I heard about Mrs Ndlovu who stays at Imbali for the first time when I visited a colleague who praised Mrs Ndlovu's work as a dressmaker. I then decided to pay Mrs Ndlovu a visit so as to see her work. She showed her work to me which impressed me very much. I then placed an order for my mother's outfit. She promised to do it for me provided I gave her my mother's measurements. After a week I took my mother's measurements to her and that was when I decided I wished to know more about her. Because she was a very busy woman, I had to make an appointment to interview her.

Mrs Ndlovu was born in 1963 into a poor family at Sweetwaters in Pietermaritzburg. Her father was unemployed and her mother Doris was employed as a domestic worker at Clarendon in Pietermaritzburg. Her hard-working mother supplemented her salary by selling second hand clothing that she bought from the auctioneers in Pietermaritzburg. When her father turned 45, he got a job as a messenger at The Natal Witness. Unfortunately he worked for only one year before he died.

Mrs Ndlovu, the eldest in the family of five, got married twice. Her first husband, Mr Shezi, passed away in 1980 after a short illness and left her with two children. Because she was unemployed, she decided to remarry a man who could help her with the maintenance of her family. In 1983 she married Mr Ndlovu who was from Imbali. They were blessed with three children, two boys and one girl. After three years of marriage, Mr Ndlovu got sick and eventually passed away. Mrs Ndlovu was left with five children to look after. She looked for a job and was fortunate to be employed as a domestic worker in Pietermaritzburg.

Mrs Ndlovu did her primary education at Sweetwaters Primary School. She thinks that she was good in Needlework at school because she was never told to unpick what she had sewn. Having passed standard six, she went to Ashdown Secondary School to further her education. Because her mother was unable to pay for her education any longer, she had to leave school when she was doing standard eight. After leaving school she had to stay at home doing nothing until she got married. She was unhappy

with doing nothing because she needed money to buy what she needed in preparation for her wedding.

She became aware of the skills development programme in 1990 after meeting with Ntombi (not her real name) who was employed by the project management. Ntombi invited Mrs Ndlovu to a meeting which was co-ordinated by Peter (not his real name) who was responsible for the project which was interested in developing skills of unemployed women from the greater Edendale area. Mrs Ndlovu was excited and decided to be involved with the programme. Peter told the women to organise their accommodation because he was going to supply them with fabric, sewing materials and a tutor. One of the women, Mrs Dlomo, also from Imbali, offered them the use her garage for classes. She offered it free of charge and the women had to pay for the electricity they consumed every month. Eighteen women were involved with the programme.

On the first day of attending her lessons, Mrs Ndlovu felt very excited. She had thought that it was going to be easy, but she found that she had to work very hard. The programme offered courses like producing floor polish, yoghurt, fabric softener, vaseline and candles. Later activities such as sewing, baking and catering services were introduced. Mrs Ndlovu chose sewing because she was interested in sewing outfits for herself. The sewing course was to take 6 months and other courses took 1 month only. Not all women took the sewing course; only eleven of them were interested in sewing.

Their tutor was Zanele who was also employed by the project management. During the sewing lessons women were taught pattern making, pattern cutting, fabric cutting and garment sewing. The project co-ordinator supplied them with only three sewing machines. They had to share the machines and some of the women had to borrow sewing machines from their neighbours to use during the lessons only.

Mrs Ndlovu decided to be involved with the skills development programme because she was unemployed and needed money to pay school fees for her children and to buy food

and clothing for them. Although she had done sewing at school, she had never used the sewing machine and therefore she felt that the duration of the course was not long enough especially because she had no sewing machine of her own and she needed more time for practice. Because of the shortage of the machines, they had to work in groups. While the one group was doing the cutting of garments, the other group would be using sewing machines. She was sometimes unable to attend classes, for example, when her child became sick. She had to arrange to have extra hours to cover new work that had been done during her absence.

She did have skills such as knitting and crocheting before attending the skills development programme. She was happy to have gained additional skills like pattern making, fabric cutting and using the sewing machine from the programme.

She remembered the experiences of placing patterns upside down and unfortunately realized her mistake after she had finished cutting the fabric. She had to buy and replace the spoilt fabric. Their tutor was not a sympathetic person, therefore Mrs Ndlovu was nervous to report the matter to her and had to spend the rest of the day doing nothing.

Another setback was when their facilitator became sick, they were without a facilitator for three weeks. Their facilitator never came back because she became seriously ill and eventually passed away. It was sad to wait for another two weeks before another facilitator arrived.

Mrs Ndlovu's family is happy about her work and she also feels that the programme helped her a lot by developing her sewing skills. She feels that without the programme she would not be where she is now.

Because Mrs Ndlovu already had a sewing machine which was a gift from her aunt, she had to go to money-lenders to make a loan to buy fabric, sewing thread and other sewing material. With the R500 she got from a loan she bought fabric from Ragland

and made two pairs of sheets and pillowcases which were bought by her neighbour who is a pensioner. From then on she got a lot of orders from customers who wanted sheets, curtains, skirts and blouses, track suits and two-piece suits. With the money she got from selling the sheets she bought more fabric and started sewing customers' articles.

Sometimes Mrs Ndlovu becomes very busy when sewing articles for special occasions such as weddings and graduation ceremonies or school uniforms. On busy days she sacrifices her sleeping hours and she feels that she needs someone to help her with the cleaning of the house and cooking because, being a mother, she has to cook, prepare her children for school and clean the house before starting with her customers' orders. She remembered that, when she was busy in the kitchen one day, one of her children destroyed her customer's half finished skirt by cutting it into pieces with a pair of scissors. She had to replace the fabric and redo the outfit before the customer collected it.

Mrs Ndlovu became very excited after finishing the wedding gown which was the biggest article she had ever sewn. She experienced some problems when doing the wedding gown such as preparing a different pattern from the usual ones. She needed a lot of time just to lay and to cut the fabric. She felt nervous because it was the first time she had sewn a wedding gown and she had to create a lot of ideas. She had to ask the owner of the gown every now and then to come and fit the dress because she did not want to spoil it. She did a lot of unpicking because she made a lot of mistakes before she finished it. She also had problems when she was using beads and lace for decorating the wedding gown. She charged R2000 for it which the customer paid willingly because she was satisfied with Mrs Ndlovu's work. She felt great after finishing the wedding gown as she was not sure whether she would be able to do it, but she was able to do it because there were no complaints from the customer.

Mrs Ndlovu has a bank account at ABSA bank where she keeps her money. Her income ranges from R3500 to R4000 a month which is high compared to the R500 she earned as a domestic worker. With her income she has bought herself an electric stove,

furniture for her house and some building materials. She now has no problem with paying her children's school fees and her clothing accounts. She also buys a lot of fabric and stores it for customers' orders. She does not give her customers their articles on credit as she knows that some may not pay her at all.

She advertises her work by wearing her outfits to church meetings, parents' meetings and stokvel meetings. Her customers also advertise her work the same way. Although working from home, in her bedroom, she has a lot of customers, which means that they are satisfied with her work.

She feels great about being self-employed because she has no transport problems to and from work. She is responsible for all her work because she gets paid from what she has done – she says that she works harder so as to earn more money.

She has trained herself to manage her finances and is trying her best to work fairly with her customers, that is, first come first served. Her children are willing to help her with minor processes when sewing customers' outfits. She thanks the skills development programme for empowering her with skills that enabled her to generate income and the certificate of Accomplishment she obtained after the course, which was the first one in her life.

#### **4.5 Life history of Mrs Hlengiwe Nxumalo (not her real name)**

Mrs Nxumalo was amongst the group of women who were busy sewing tracksuits for a local school. I met them in January 2000 when I went to place an order for my grandson's tracksuit. They were using the hall of the Methodist Church at Imbali. Mrs Nxumalo, a married mother of four, was born on January 25<sup>th</sup> 1957. Her parents were Mluleki and Ntombenhle Duma. Both her parents were unemployed. Although she was born in Bulwer, she is now a resident of Imbali because she got married to Mboneni Nxumalo of Imbali in 1981.

Like most women in the Skills Development Programme, she only went up to standard 5 at Bulwer where she did subjects like IsiZulu, English, Afrikaans, Mathematics, Social Studies and Needlework. Although she did not know it at the time, it would be the same Needlework that would be the foundation of her only source of income in her adulthood.

She was initially employed as a domestic servant in Pietermaritzburg in 1972, but lost her job and was told it was only temporary. For the first time in her adult life, Hlengiwe felt the horror of being unemployed, the horror of being unable to make a living. They sometimes had to sleep without any supper because her husband was also unemployed. However, that all changed in the year 2000.

She met Mr Zungu, the director of the Skills Development Programme in her community, who told her about the programme. Hlengiwe was unemployed, and she really had enough time on her hands and so decided this was the one opportunity she should grab and not let pass her by. That turned out to be the most important decision she had ever made.

The programme taught women skills that were designed to help them to be self-supporting. Courses like basic tailoring and dress-making were offered. They also learnt how to use the sewing machine and overlocker. With her prior knowledge of needlework, she felt compelled to grab as much knowledge as she could and so

decided to do all these courses. The entire course would cost R850.00 which was paid in monthly instalments of R170.00.

14 women signed up for the programme, which turned out to be too many to fit into one room. As a result, two different venues were used, first an old building accommodated most of them and the rest met at an old library. Fortunately, they were not required to pay rent.

Mr Thulani Zungu taught these women all the courses. Although there was a shortage of sewing machines, Hlengiwe did not have a problem because her mother already had a sewing machine and she simply gave it to her. She comes from a family of really talented people in handwork and, as a result, classes were not difficult.

On the first day women were divided into two groups of seven. They were taught to make and cut patterns as well as tailoring. Hlengiwe enjoyed herself a lot and loved every minute. She loves handwork and, because she had a natural gift for it, she found everything easy to understand.

During the six months over which the project ran, Hlengiwe and the other women met daily from 08H00 to 13h00. There was a sad time for her when her husband became sick and eventually passed away. She had to stay at home making preparations for the funeral. She was left behind with her lessons and it took her long to recover from the trauma. She had to look after her children alone as a single parent. Her classmates were sympathetic and tried to help her where possible.

There were times when her children were sick and had to be taken to the clinic, which forced her to be absent or late for classes. That was no problem for her, however, as she could quickly catch on with her work. Her classmates helped her a lot on weekends in that regard.

At the end of six months, Certificates of Accomplishment were issued to the women and Hlengiwe prepared herself to use hers to the best advantage. She decided to do something different and started a bed linen business. With her knowledge, skills and passion it was no surprise that the business really did take off in a very big way. She also makes clothes for some of her regular customers, herself and the rest of her family.

Being able to make money to support herself and her family was very important to her and with the skills she acquired through the programme, she was able to do just that. She knew that even if she hadn't found a job, the situation would not be as bad. She complained that the duration of the course was not long enough; she felt it was rather too short compared to the work to be done. A lot could have been done had it ran longer than six months.

A lot of testing incidents occurred during the programme, like the frequent power-cuts. There were even a number of times when the instructor was sick and the women had to carry on by themselves. It was during such times that her love for sewing kept her going and made her motivate other women who might have given up.

She had a couple of skills before attending the programme, like hand sewing and knitting. Attending the skills development programme added more value to her life because she learnt a lot more and the project gave her some direction as to where she could go from there on.

She had enough time to practise sewing with the machine at home as all her children were already of school-going age and were away the whole day. After classes she would get home and practice some more before preparing supper for her family.

The women were required to participate in a fashion show which was taken as a final examination. The students would all be graded on their work, skill application and talent. Everyone wanted to shine, which was a little difficult because they had to buy their own material, like fabric, for the fashion show. Hlengiwe bought hers at Deluxe stores. The

women were required to raise their own funds for buying this material, but it all worked out perfectly in the end.

She remembered well, when one day she forgot her sewing machine at home. When she arrived in the classroom, she looked everywhere for the machine, her classmates looked for the machine but it was nowhere to be found. She suspected one of her classmates to have stolen her sewing machine. Their tutor advised her to go home because she was crying. When she arrived home, her machine greeted her. When she went to class the next day, everyone laughed at her. She was happy to find her machine but she had missed the information because new processes were introduced when she was away at home.

There were sometimes white people who visited the institution. Although the women were never told who they were, they suspected that they were either sponsors or inspectors.

After the course she created a straight-cut, A-line skirt made of navy linen which was bought by her neighbour. From then on she made more articles like clothes and bed linen which she sells to her community and the teachers in nearby schools. She gets regular customers, who ask for duvet covers, pillow-cases, continental pillow-cases, and, at the beginning of each year, they also ask her to make school uniforms for their children. It is on such occasions that she becomes really busy and her eldest daughter helps her wherever she can.

Sometimes Hlengiwe does not sleep at night trying to finish people's orders in time. She does admit, however, that the hard work always pays off. She always gets her time's worth.

The money she makes varies from one month to the next, but on average she makes R3500. I asked Hlengiwe how this income compares with what she received as a domestic worker, and she laughed, saying she cannot even compare this amount to the

money she made when she was an employee because it was so little, she felt she was as good as unemployed. She made R40.00 a month then.

Now with the money she makes from selling her articles, she buys food for her family as well as takes care of the other needs they might have. She always banks the rest. This is one other thing she feels proud of, having a bank account. She opened hers at ABSA and it just felt like some kind of accomplishment. She had always wanted to have a bank account, but she never had enough money to save. It would all be used up buying things for her children.

She also says she feels more valuable to her family now that she is able to buy herself some furniture and clothing. Making that kind of contribution to her family makes her feel alive and useful again.

The biggest article she has ever made was a wedding gown. Her cousin's daughter was getting married and they asked her to make the wedding gown. She felt really grateful that they would even consider her worthy of the job. It was not as easy as that, however. The work was hard. Firstly she cut the wrong size pattern, which meant she spent a lot of time making adjustments. Secondly, the fabric she chose for the dress was sheer and slippery and she had to do re-enforced seams. One of the women who was with Hlengiwe in the programme had decided to specialise in wedding gowns after the course and helped a lot when Hlengiwe came asking for help. She made it and when the bride wore it, she couldn't help but feel a strong sense of pride and accomplishment. She was paid R1 500 for it.

For most of her clients she asks for 40% - 60% deposit *before* even starting with the article. She uses that to buy the material for the clothes ordered. When the customers praise her work and place more orders, it makes her feel happy and satisfied with the work. In a way she feels that her family is happier now.

Hlengiwe did something all the other women did not do. She thanked me for the interview and said that having chosen her makes her believe her work is well-known and appreciated. I was so touched at this point that I placed an order myself.

#### **4.6 Life History of Miss Babongile Zondi (not her real name)**

After meeting with the skills programme director, Mr Peter Banda, about interviewing women who had attended the skills development programme, he referred me to some of the women who were busy with the sewing of school tunics for the local school. I went to them and made appointments to see them individually. That is when I met Miss Babongile Zondi. She agreed that I may visit her at her home at about 18H00 the following day.

I arrived at Ms Zondi's house at Imbali when she was busy preparing supper for her family. I waited until she finished before we started with our interview. From our talk I learnt that she was born in 1961 at Edendale. Her parents were Thembani and Bongani. She was the second daughter in a family of five daughters. Their father, who was employed at a shoe factory in town, died after a short illness. Her mother depended on her father's salary to educate them and when their father died, their mother had to go and sell fruit in town so as to be able to pay for their education.

Babongile's father died in 1972 when she was doing grade 5 at Edendale Primary School. Her mother managed to pay her school fees because she finished her primary education and then went to Mehlokazulu High school at Imbali to do her secondary education. She completed grade 12 but her mother could not afford to pay for the tertiary education. She had to leave school with the hope of finding a job. Fortunately, after staying at home for the whole year, she got a job at a wood factory at Imbali. She worked there for two years and she was retrenched. At this factory she met Sphiwe Mlaba, who is the father of her two children. Sphiwe and Babongile were not married and they eventually stopped their affair. Babongile is staying with her mother, her sisters and her two children, a boy and a girl.

Because Babongile was unemployed and desperately needed money to supplement her mother's income from selling fruit, she got involved with the skills development programme in 1998, after hearing about it from the lady who was employed by the project management. They met at Imbali community hall for their courses. The project

offered courses such as dressmaking, pattern making, yoghurt- and fabric softener-making and cloth decoration. Babongile was interested in dressmaking because she had long wished to be able to sell dresses that she had made herself. They firstly had to be taught how to use the sewing machine and how to make and cut patterns before starting with the making of dresses. They had to meet for lessons five times a week from 8H00 to 14H00 so as to cover all the lessons and practical work because the course lasted for 6 months only. Because there were not enough sewing machines supplied by the programme management, they had to work in turns.

She remembered that, after being involved with the course for two months only, she had to be away from the lessons for 3 weeks because she was involved in the taxi accident and was admitted to hospital. The accident occurred when she was returning from town where she bought fabric and buttons. She had to stay in hospital because she had a complicated fracture in her leg. She missed a lot of information during the absence. Her classmates used to pay her a visit in hospital and told her that a lot of work had been done. She eventually became better and was discharged from the hospital but she had to use crutches when walking. She did attend the classes but could not use the sewing machine because she had to use both her hands and her left foot to operate the machine. Their tutor, Zanele, was sympathetic to her and made arrangements that she finished her course a month later than the others. Her classmates always helped her where they could.

When she recovered from her injury, she spent more hours doing her work. She sometimes had to sacrifice her sleeping hours so as to be able to cover all the prescribed work. They experienced problems during the course when their tutor sometimes failed to come to classes. They had to help each other but made a lot of mistakes that were to be corrected when their tutor arrived. This demotivated them a lot. All the excitement and happiness that she felt when she first attended the skills programme was a thing of the past; she now had to work very hard to fulfil her dreams to become a successful dressmaker. Working hard pays: after struggling so hard, she finished the prescribed work and received the Certificate of Accomplishment.

After finishing the course she struggled to get some money to buy the sewing machine and other materials used for dressmaking. Her final decision was to make a loan from the Womens' Club (ISITOKIFELA). She took the amount of R1 500 which was to be repaid with 20% interest. She was able to buy a sewing machine for R 950 from Game stores and used the rest to buy fabric, cotton, zippers and pairs of scissors.

She made a red pair of curtains which she sold for R100 to her aunt. She sewed more curtains and her children moved from house to house selling the curtains. Because they are a big family and they live in a four-roomed house, she decided to rent a room not far away from where she stays which she uses as a dressmaking room. She rents it for R200 a month. She has regular customers who usually place orders for curtains, duvet covers and two piece outfits. She sometimes has to sleep at 2H00 when she sees that she won't meet the customers' deadlines because she doesn't want to lose customers just because of her failure to meet deadlines for collecting their finished articles. She feels that she needs someone to help her but she has not hired one yet.

Her current income has made a great difference in her life. She earned R200 a week from the wood factory and now her income ranges from R3 500 – R4000 per month. During the busy months, for example, in January when the schools reopen, she easily makes an income that ranges between R4 500 and R5 500 per month. When sewing school uniform, they work as a group and share the earnings, but for individual people's orders, she manages to do them on her own. With such an income she has been able to make renovations to their four-roomed house by extending the kitchen's size and has bought built-in cupboards for the kitchen.

A sad incident happened one day, which makes her feel like crying whenever she thinks of it. She had collected a lot of money as cash deposit for making tracksuits for 20 learners. She just hid it under the table cloth with the sewing machine on top of it with the aim of going to buy fabric and zippers the following day. The next morning, when she entered the sewing room, she discovered that someone had made a forced entry

into the room. Everything had been thrown on the floor. The table cloth was also lying on the floor and the money was gone. She couldn't believe her eyes. She shouted and her neighbours came running to her. When seeing the damage, the neighbours phoned the police. The police didn't help her because till today, she hasn't got her money back. From then on she organised that the burglar proof doors and windows be erected to protect her belongings from thieves. She now keeps her money at the First National Bank.

She sometimes encounters a problem with her sewing machine. In one incident the machine broke when she was busy sewing an outfit which was to be collected on that same day. Because it was late in the afternoon and the workshops where repairs for the machine could have been made were closed for the day, she had to go to town to her friend with a sewing machine to finish up that article. She slept at 01H00 the following morning because the customer needed it before 06H30 that morning. She took her machine to the technician who took hardly 30 minutes to fix the machine at R210. She was happy because her customer got her article on time for the wedding.

Like most dressmakers interviewed in this study, the biggest article that challenged her creativity was a wedding gown that was a special order from her aunt. Making the wedding gown was not as easy as she thought it would be. She had to redo most of the processes because she had made them wrongly. Also, she did a lot of unpicking as most of the stitches were not perfectly done. She had problems with decorations on the bodice of the dress. The owner wanted her to sew in white beads in the front of the dress, but because it was made of silk fabric it was not easy for her to stitch through the fabric using hand needle because her machine could not make decorations. She had to negotiate with the owner of the dress about alternative ways to decorate her dress.

Seeing that the dressmaker was having a problem with the fabric and beads, the owner of the wedding gown finally agreed that the beadwork be replaced by cotton decorations. The owner was pleased with the alternative decoration. She charged

R1 200 for it. She said that making this wedding gown was time consuming and needed more attention otherwise it wouldn't have been perfectly done.

Babongile does not give her customers their articles on credit because some of them end up not footing the bill. She asks 50% cash deposit from the customers before she starts cutting the pattern made for that particular customer. She uses this cash to buy fabric suitable for the chosen pattern and other accessories to be used when making the outfit. A customer has to pay the balance when collecting the finished article.

Babongile thinks that her customers are happy and satisfied with her work. Customers always appreciate the work she had done and more and more customers place orders for their outfits. She advertises her work by means of displaying the articles she has made at the window. Customers then decide on the type of articles they like by looking at her display. She also advertises her work by wearing articles sewn by her in public places.

She feels very proud by being self employed because she has learnt to be responsible, to be independent and to be able to manage her time. She has no starting time and no finishing time, her work controls the time for starting and finishing her day.

Babongile's family is happy to see a lot of differences that she has made at her home. She has bought a lot of household electrical appliances and their house is fully furnished. Her family is very much excited about her work and they encourage her to go further with her work because they wish that she could become more famous and that their family name be known nationally.

She felt great because I chose her as one of the interview participants. She hoped that our interview would help open her eyes and her mind so as to be able to do a lot more.

#### **4.7 Life History of Mrs Tholakele Zondi (not her real name)**

I met Mrs Tholakele Zondi at Imbalenhle clinic when I went to collect my chronic medication from the clinic. She wore an unusual patterned dress which attracted my eyes. I asked her the name of the boutique from which she bought her dress. She laughed, then told me that she was the one who designed and sewed the very dress she was wearing. I took her telephone number and on the following day I made an appointment with her to interview her about her work.

From our interview I found that she was born in 1962 at Sinating, Edendale in Pietermaritzburg. The highest class she passed was standard seven at Amakholwa High School. She left school because her parents were poor and were not able to afford her further education. She is the third born in a family of seven. She had to stay at home and was tempted to get married when she was only eighteen years of age with the hope that life would be more comfortable since her husband was employed, but it did not go according to her expectations.

Her husband is Sibusiso (not his real name) and they stay at Unit 15 Imbali with their four sons. As soon as their children started schooling, financial problems arose and that was when she decided to look for a job. Unfortunately she did not find a job until her friend, who runs a hair salon in town, taught her how to do different hairstyles. Her friend promised to offer her a temporary job at her salon only on busy days. At least the salary she got from the salon kept her going until she heard about the skills development project which had just started around the area. She decided to enroll with the skills development project.

Tholakele's cousin, Mrs Mthethwa, was already enrolled with the skills development programme and she encouraged Tholakele to attend because she had already learnt a lot from the very programme. Tholakele, who liked to wear fashionable outfits, was very much interested as she thought that she was going to be able to make fancy clothes for herself and her family. She imagined herself as one of the best dressed women in Pietermaritzburg; that made her more and more interested.

Tholakele got involved with the skills development project in 1994. Their tutor was Zinhle who owned a fashion boutique at Imbali shopping complex. They used the back of this boutique for their classes. Different skills such as dressmaking, beadwork, cloth painting and tie dye were offered. Tholakele chose to do dressmaking. Sixteen women including Tholakele did dressmaking.

They started with threading the sewing machine and then did exercises on the correct manipulation of tools, for example, scissors and fabric, before doing the actual dressmaking. Women had to do pattern making, pattern cutting and placing and then sewing. Although the dressmaking course took longer than the other courses, Tholakele feels that the period of one year was not enough because there was a lot to be done and time was limited for each and every process done. She was not used to using the sewing machine and therefore moved very slowly. By the end of the year she did not receive her certificate when her classmates received theirs because she was unable to complete the prescribed work. She had to reregister for the following year and finally got her certificate of achievement.

Women had to pay R420 for the course and a total amount of R650 monthly for rent and electricity which was divided among those who did dressmaking. Although she had little children, she tried by all means not to be absent from the classes. Her first two sons were already schooling and the two last ones were at a pre-school. Mr Zondi, her husband, was faced with financial problems because he had to pay school fees for his sons as well as his wife.

After completing the skills development programme, Mrs Zondi did not take a break but started sewing skirts and blouses for herself. She had no problem with the sewing machine because her husband bought her a sewing machine when she was involved with the skills development programme. Tholakele wore the skirts and blouses she had sewn to meetings, church congregations and to parties unaware that she was automatically advertising her work. Her family helped her with cooking food, unpicking

wrong stitches and by pressing down the fabric with a hot iron whenever she became very busy with her customers' orders.

Mrs Zondi smiled throughout our interview which lasted for about one hour when she remembered their tutor who was always harsh and shouted at them when they had done wrong. Their moody tutor made them feel uneasy, but as a group, they decided to ignore her and to help one another wherever they could. Their group was supportive and that motivated each one of them to work harder under unwelcoming conditions. She remembered that she cried one day when Zinhle, their tutor, shouted at her as if she was a child just because she did not finish up the garment on the specified date.

She remembered one incident when she was given a pair of trousers by her neighbour to shorten. Her measurements were unfortunately not accurate and the trousers were cut too short for the owner. The owner of the trousers was very cross with her and demanded that she replaced them. When Tholakele went to the shop to buy the trousers she was surprised to find the pair of trousers very expensive. She had underestimated its price and did not expect it to be worth R599,99 and she was not prepared to part with such a sum of money unexpectedly. She went back to the owner of the trousers and negotiated with him to repay it in three instalments.

One of the biggest articles she had ever sewn was a wedding gown. Her cousin asked her to sew one for her. At first she had refused to sew it because she was nervous that she may not be able to make it. The challenges she faced were the selection of the fabric suitable for a wedding gown and the beadwork which was to be done on the bodice of the dress. Fortunately the shop owner helped her to find a suitable fabric and she then started sewing it. She had to redo many processes but in the end she was able to make it. Her friend helped her with beadwork. She asked R1500 for it. It took her about three weeks to make it. Her cousin was happy with it. Tholakele was proud with the work she had done and she knew that she was then an expert in making wedding gowns.

She has a bank account at FNB and has a fair amount of bank balance. She uses some of her money to pay for a Family Funeral Fund, to pay for stokvels and for the education of their sons. She has bought 200 plastic chairs and 2 tents for hire. Her income is about R3500 a month on average but it goes higher up to R4500 per month on busy months such as March when she becomes busy making outfits for Good Friday Services and in December when people hire her tents and chairs for various celebrations.

Mrs Zondi's family is proud of her. One of her sons told me that they are very much happy about their mother's work and they are proud to have such a mother. There are days that she sleeps for only one hour because of the pressure from her customers' orders, but she said that she enjoys doing her work especially when she does it at her own pace because when there is no work, there is no pay. She also has bought furniture for the house and a lot of electrical appliances with the money from her customers.

The Zondi family had been staying in an outbuilding but now, with the help of Mrs Zondi, they are building a six-roomed house on their premises. She is able to help her husband with buying building materials and by paying the builder. She is going to use one of the rooms as a sewing room.

For Mrs Zondi, being self employed has taught her to manage her time and to be self-disciplined. She enjoys being self-employed because she earns according to what she has done. She thinks that she needs at least one responsible person who can help her with her work so as to avoid the piling up of her customers' outfits. Her life has improved tremendously, thanks to the skills development programme.

## CHAPTER 5

### DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

#### **Data Analysis**

##### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I discuss the aims of analysing data, the process of analysing data and the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative data analysis. The reasons why I have used the qualitative style of data analysis is also discussed. Lastly, I discuss the findings, looking at the socio-economic background of the women; experiences of adult learning; gender, learning and work; economic and personal empowerment and also at why women succeeded.

In qualitative research, "analysis" is the process by which a person uses data to identify themes, to construct hypotheses and then to show support for these themes and hypotheses. Analysis of data is an ongoing process starting from the time the fieldwork begins but it is at the end of the fieldwork phase that the researcher concentrates mostly on analysing the findings (Bouma and Atkinson, 1995 in Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 1996). Mouton (2001) argues that analysing data involves "breaking up" the data into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships. Moore (1983) in Blaxter et al, (1996) suggests that the first step when analysing data is to process data so that it is ready for analysis. As a researcher I checked and verified the returns, looking for errors and odd results and I then coded the responses so that data were ready for inputting.

##### **5.2 Aims of analysing data**

The aim of analysing data is to understand the various constitutive elements of one's data through an inspection of the relationships between concepts, constructs or

variables, and to see whether there are any patterns or trends that can be identified or isolated, or to establish themes in the data (Mouton, 2001).

Blaxter, et al (1996) argue that the business of analysing data that has been collected involves two closely related processes namely:

(a) managing data by reducing its size and scope so that it is reported adequately; and  
(b) analysing the managed set of data by abstracting from it and drawing from it what one feels is of particular importance.

The techniques that I used for managing data, drawing on Blaxter, et al (1996), were as follows:

- Coding. This is the process by which items or groups of data were assigned codes that were used to simplify and standardize data for analytical purposes.
- Annotating. This is the process by which written material was altered by the addition of notes or comments.
- Labelling. Passages with significant words were labelled. These labels served to direct to further analysis.
- Selection. Interesting, important, unusual or representative items were chosen to illustrate one's argument. Selection was done for a variety of reasons, for example, data that needed emphasis and discussion were selected.

According to Winberg (1997), gathered data requires analysis. When doing analysis I looked for explanations, relationships, predictions, generalisations and theories. Most of the questions to be answered are Why questions, for example:

- Why did women attend skills development courses?
- Why did NGO's provide such projects?
- Why did the women leave school after doing only primary education?

The information from these questions was used to develop understanding through comparing, theorising and relating to other factors (Winberg, 1997). After analysing the data, the data was then interpreted. Interpreting data means trying to arrange general

coherences within logical systems. Interpretation of the analysed information should occur in correspondence with the obtained information without personal opinions or prejudices (Winberg, 1997).

The first step in drawing conclusions is to remember what it was that the researcher asked. It is useful for a researcher to remind herself of the question which originally motivated one to do the research because a researcher may have gathered a lot of data and may therefore forget what the central issue was. Data to be analysed should focus on the question that was asked. The second step for the researcher is to remind herself about her findings, for example, what are the implications of the findings for the defined research question? The third step requires the researcher's exact conclusion.

### **5.3 Process of Analysis**

The purpose of analysing data is to pull out the themes from the women's experiences so as to see if there are any patterns or differences in the women's experiences and to try to find out why the things are the way they are.

I agree with Blaxter, et al, (1996), as they argue that words like *analysis*, *concept*, *explanation*, *theory* and *understanding* are at the heart of the process of analysis. Analysis is about the search for explanation and understanding, in the course of which concepts and theories are likely to be advanced, considered and developed. They define concepts as abstract or general ideas that are important when we think about particular subjects or issues and define theories as suppositions which seek to explain something. Explanations are seen as statements which make something intelligible about why things are the way they are and understanding as the perception of our meaning to something, in this case, the impact of skills development and income generation on unemployed women.

## **5.4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Qualitative Data Analysis**

I have decided to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative data analysis so that I understand the difference between the two and therefore try not to fall into a trap of using the disadvantages for my study.

### **5.4.1 Advantages**

Denscombe (1998) in Blaxter et al (1996) discuss these advantages which in my view fit well in my study :

The data and the analysis are "grounded", i.e. the descriptions and theories such research generates are grounded in reality. The data are rich and detailed. Qualitative research deals with in-depth study of the focused areas therefore it deals well with complex social situations. There is the prospect of alternative explanation because qualitative research draws on the interpretive skills of the researcher; it opens up the possibility of more than one explanation being valid.

### **5.4.2 Disadvantages**

The data may be less representative because generalizability is still open to doubt than it is with well-conducted quantitative research. Interpretation is bound up with the "self" of the researcher because the findings are necessarily more cautious and tentative as it operates on the assumption that the findings are a creation of the researcher rather than a discovery of fact. There is a possibility of decontextualising the meaning as there is danger for the researcher that in coding and categorising of the data, the meaning of the data is lost or transformed by wrenching it from its location within a sequence of data. There is danger of oversimplifying the explanation. In the quest to identify themes in the data and to develop generalisations, the researcher can feel pressured to underplay, possibly disregard data (Denscombe, 1998 in Blaxter et al 1996).

## **5.5 Why I used a Qualitative Approach of Data Analysis**

For this study I have used a qualitative approach of data analysis for the following reasons :

A qualitative research approach focuses on understanding through contextualised data collection, interpretation and planning for action. It produces descriptions of why and how people do certain things. Qualitative research is inductive because qualitative researchers develop their understanding in the course of the research, they learn and develop theories from observation and experience (Winberg,1997).

Qualitative research approaches are a way of learning about peoples' feelings, thoughts and experiences. This approach allows me to share the world of others so as to find out what is going on and why people do what they do and how they understand themselves and the world they live in (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). The qualitative research approach is suitable for life history research because it provides in-depth interviewing. The life history technique provides knowledge about how people experience and make sense of themselves and their environment (Cassel and Symon,1994).

According to Blaxter, et al (1996), qualitative researchers try to experience the reality that other people experience; they empathise with the people they study in order to understand how they see things and to learn from them. As a researcher I look at people in their contexts, which can include their past as well as their current situations, as events can be understood adequately only if they are seen in context.

In this study a modified form of content analysis was used to analyse the qualitative responses. As analysis involves the study of psychological meaning and significance of documents and records, Lewin (1979) argues that it includes both qualitative (themes and content) and quantitative (frequencies) aspects.

Most of the questions I used were open-ended and therefore no categories existed prior to the administration of the questionnaire since categories were to emerge from data itself.

The procedure for analysing responses was based on the recommendations of Holsti (1969) who suggests that all the responses are to be read by the researcher to gain a general overview. The responses are to be read again in an attempt to ascertain common elements. From the data a number of categories and sub-categories are then formed (coding). Responses are then analysed in terms of the categories and sub-categories, and then recorded.

## **5.6 Discussion of the findings**

This chapter will discuss the findings from the responses of the interviewees. The responses were selected and coded for easy analysis and discussion according to the purpose of the research.

The purpose of the research is threefold. The first one is to ascertain the success rate of the sewing training in helping women to generate income. Secondly, it is to find out the factors and the specific skills that enable women to generate income and lastly to share the experiences of the women in trying to gain skills with the project.

To gain answers to the above questions I interviewed six women who were involved with the skills development project. The women I interviewed at first were not open, but as the interview progressed their voices grew in confidence and independence (Shostak, 1981).

The interviews were conducted in their primary language which is isiZulu and were translated into English. I thought that six women would be enough to supply me with the responses that would help me reach the purpose of this study. I did face-to-face interviews because I wanted to see how they reacted to the past

experiences by using facial expressions and other body language to show their different emotions.

From analysing data four themes that I examined arose. They are:

1. Socio-economic background of the women,
2. Experiences of adult learning,
3. Gender, learning and work, and
4. Economic and personal empowerment.

### **5.6.1 Socio-economic background of the women**

This theme will look at the socio-economic background of the interviewed women and why the women decided to join the skills development project.

The six women I interviewed said they decided to join the skills development project because they were unemployed. Women were responsible for the welfare of their families and therefore needed to generate income so as to provide their families with meals and to satisfy their immediate needs. For example, Mrs B. Zondi had no stove and she needed money to buy it, Mrs Nxumalo's family was starving and Ms Mbhele's house needed repairs as it was falling apart. In order to generate income women needed to attend skills development projects. UNDP (1995) in Taylor (1997), supports this statement where it concludes that skills development is a process of enlarging peoples' choices including access to income, a healthy life, education, a healthy environment and participation in decision making that affects people in their daily lives. Problems affecting our society such as ignorance, helplessness and backwardness are also tackled by the process of development (Stein, 1997).

The six women had been employed temporarily before as domestic workers as in the case of Mrs Nxumalo, Mrs Ndlovu and Ms Mbhele. Mrs Mbatha and Mrs Zondi were employed as factory workers. They all had earned very little, for example, Mrs Zondi and Ms Mbhele earned only R300 a month from the previous

employer, but they had to do the work because they needed money. It shows that women tended to concentrate on a narrow range of poorly paid activities which have lower value attached to them (ISS, 1985 in Preston-Whyte and Rogerson, 1991). It is true that women, in order to participate fully in economic and social development, because of the demands of the changing economy and the rise in the skills requirement of jobs, should develop their skills by attending training programmes because upgrading of skills of workers is essential (Green paper on Skills Development, 1998).

Four of the women, Mrs T. Zondi, Mrs K. Mbatha, Mrs Nxumalo and Mrs Ndlovu had their highest education ranging from standard 5 to standard 8. Mrs B. Zondi and Ms Mbhele had senior certificates. All these women were unable to continue with their education because they were from poor backgrounds. Although they were from working backgrounds, their parents were unable to pay for their further education because they had other responsibilities and other dependants. On the other hand, in the case of Mrs Ndlovu, the parents did not believe in educating girls because they thought that it was a waste of money as girls get married and end up being housewives. This is confirmed by some authors, as they argue that, following African tradition, girls' education was limited to the provision of skills and knowledge like reproducing and caring for the household and the community.

Poverty related to unemployment was the main reason why the women were unable to continue with tertiary education and were rather employed as domestic workers.

### **5.6.2 Experiences of adult learning**

In most cases, adults decide to participate in adult learning because of job enhancement and for income generation.

These skills development projects were attended in groups ranging from 14 to 25 women at a time and they lasted from 6 months to 12 months depending on the course one had taken. All interviewees complained that the duration of the course was not sufficient. They had to do a lot of processes within a limited time therefore they had to work very hard so as to complete the prescribed work within the specified time. Women previously were developed in skills which improved their housewifery and not for generating income. This is confirmed by Parthasarathy (1988) in Momsen (1991) when he argues that the integration of women in developmental programmes was done with the aim of improving housewifery. Women were only trained to do practical skills such as cooking and childcare but later Non-governmental organisations saw a need for integrating women in development projects so as to generate income.

As far as I am concerned, I think that such projects are fewer than the number of people who need them. Few women are able to attend because of the scarcity of such projects. The interviewed women, because they were unemployed, needed such projects so as to gain skills in order to generate income. Skills development is crucial in reducing poverty and adult education acts as an agent for changing and improving the society, therefore it must aim at satisfying the needs of the individuals by developing their skills (Tough, 1971). Women, especially unemployed African women, are keen to change their lives and they believe that by attending adult education programmes, they will be provided with knowledge and skills that will free them from poverty.

Taylor and Conradie (1997) argue that developmental education is based on peoples' life experiences as it allows for experiential learning and integrates political, social, cultural and environmental spheres. The interviewees experienced different types of tutors, for example, Mrs Thokozile Zondi's tutor was harsh that she even wished to deregister from the course. Mrs Mbatha's tutor was kind but Ms Mbhele's tutor was unfriendly though patient. Women had to be patient because there was a need to attend the skills development projects

so as to reduce poverty and to provide basic needs for their families through income generation.

Mrs T. Zondi experienced a lot of problems with her work because she was a slow worker and was always the last one in class to finish the processes whereas Mrs Mbatha , Mrs Nxumalo and Mrs Ndlovu made a lot of mistakes and therefore did a lot of unpicking. Mrs Nxumalo saw the course as stressful as she sometimes had to sacrifice her sleeping hours in order to cover the prescribed work. Mrs B. Zondi's tutor was moody. "She always shouted at us". Because of the negative experiences with the tutors and personal commitments women could decide to withdraw from the course. Knox (1977) in Jarvis (1978) confirms this by arguing that older people do have many commitments which may make additional information given to them harder to recall. He suggests that teachers of adults should provide opportunities during learning and teaching sessions, so that adults have time to begin the process of storing information that they have gained. According to Jarvis (1978), adults accumulate a wide range of experiences which they store up in their memories; learning is therefore the process of transforming the present experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes and emotions.

When trying to gain skills with the skills development project, almost all the women had new experiences such as making patterns for the first time and using the sewing machine for the first time in their lives. They could not make straight seams and they sometimes had to start all over again when struggling to make the correct measurements. Also Mrs B. Zondi suffered a fracture and was admitted in hospital for 2 weeks. Mrs Nxumalo's husband became sick and died and she had to mourn for her husband for three weeks. For adult learners, learning is based on learner's needs and therefore learners choose or do not choose to learn in the face of embarrassment or coercion. An adult educator should be willing to commit him/herself to knowing issues that may affect the teaching-learning exchange and therefore may design effective and efficient

teaching and learning exchanges in terms of their own teaching (Cooney, Cross and Trunk, 1993).

Brill (1978) in Brookfield (1983) describes facilitators of adult learners as being in a "helping relationship" as such a relationship is said to offer "exciting possibilities for the development of creative, adaptive and autonomous persons". Tough (1971) in Brookfield (1983) identifies ideal helpers as warm, loving, caring, having high regard for learners, open to change and always seeking to learn from new experiences.

Sometimes the women had to learn from others when their tutor became sick and was unable to come to the classes for the whole week as in the case of Mrs Zondi. Women had to do their work on their own because their tutor was sick and was unable to come to the classes. Those who were a bit ahead of the others had to help their mates who were behind with their work by showing them what they had to do next. Some women made a lot of mistakes and had to unpick everything they did during the tutor's absence when the tutor came back to class. The tutor labelled the woman as fools. Tough (1979) argues that adults have a wide range of abilities for planning and guiding their own learning activities. He therefore proposes strategies that might help adults become self-directed learners. Strategies such as group programmes could be used to enhance and incorporate the skills into existing courses of study and establishing centres of self-education where people could receive help in working on specific learning projects.

Women supported and sympathised with Mrs Nxumalo after the loss of her husband and gave her a hand so that she would not be too far behind with her work. When Mrs Zondi was admitted in hospital, she tried to deregister from the course but other women encouraged her not to and promised to help her where they possibly could. The educator of adults, according to (Knox, 1977 in Jarvis, 1978), must be aware that physical health can affect learning in various ways

and should know that it is more difficult for adults to sustain a high rate of learning as their reactions slow down. If adults are expected to undertake learning at too fast a pace, they experience stress and anxiety which leads to unsatisfactory situations in which learning is inhibited or prevented.

Almost all the groups had challenges such as the breaking of the sewing machines. Women had to share the few machines that were available while waiting for those that were being repaired. It took at least two to three weeks before the machine that had gone for repairs were available. Sometimes, as in the case of Mrs Mbatha, they would leave the classes in the afternoon without using the sewing machine because of the shortage. There were sometimes power failures and the women had to wait for the whole day for electricians or technicians, only to find that they had been waiting in vain until the following day. The Beijing Report (1985) suggests that the position of women and their role in development are to be regarded as important because women have to bear the brunt of the daily struggle for survival; therefore women are to be given training in skills that they need for income-generation purposes.

When trying to make the sophisticated outfits they experienced more problems with different types of fabric to be used, for example, silk fabric was slippery and needed great care. New processes like inserting sleeves and fitting in of the lining were time consuming. Most women had to spend the whole day trying to fit in the lining of a dress or a coat. They had to unpick the stitches until the fabric was spoiled. Mrs Mbatha who had spoiled the most expensive fabric had to hide under the table from the cheeky tutor. Knowing that the tutor would shout at her, she stayed there until it was time to leave the classes. She had to buy more fabric to replace the spoilt one. Most women could not sleep at night thinking about the work that was supposed to be done the following day. The course was said to be stressful at first and most women did not enjoy it but as time went on, they got used to working hard and they ended up enjoying everything. For most women there was nothing more stressful than redoing the process that had been

wrongly done. Jarvis (1978), recommends that adults are to be enabled to learn at their own pace, because they feel free and unpressurised. Freire (1973) in Jarvis (1978) suggests that a model for teaching adults is one that concentrates upon the humanity of the learner and places great value upon the human being.

It is surprising that most adults are not involved in adult education activities when they are so much in need of money. Is it because of the social norms or unawareness of educational activities available?

### **5.6.3 Gender, learning and work.**

Women have multiple roles which cannot be separated from each other and which are equally important to them.

During the skills development course the interviewees encountered different family problems as women and mothers. As women, they all had husbands with the exception of Mrs Ndlovu who was a widow and Ms Zondi as well as Ms Mbhele who enjoyed common law marriages. Husbands sometimes got sick as in the case of Mrs Nxumalo. Mrs Ndlovu had to be absent from the classes for the whole week because her children had flu. They missed a lot of information during their absence.

Wolf and Leah (1998) in Cooney, et al (1993) have edited a book that gives educators of adults "guidance and support for creating learning environments to meet the needs of learners undergoing life transitions." Mrs Nxumalo, for example, lost her husband. Wolf and Lea (1998) recommend that adult educators should assist learners in responding to these transitions. Mrs Nxumalo had to mourn her husband's death by wearing black clothing for the duration of 1 year. Wearing black clothing is a sign of discrimination and oppression within the Black communities because men never wear black clothes when mourning the death of their wives. Adult educators, according to Schlossberg, et al (1995) in Cooney, Cross and Trunk (1993) should make time that the learner may need after the

event of death to assimilate loss and make sense out of a seemingly different world.

It was hard for these women because on top of the work that was to be done from the skills development programmes, they also had to look after their families. Women had to participate in skills development projects so as to develop their skills and self confidence in order to overcome the effects of discrimination, oppression and humiliation as women in South Africa (Taylor, 1997). Considering high rate of female participation, despite women's heavy burden of work and multiple roles, one tends to assume that the programme content met the women's needs (Duke, 1985).

Almost all the interviewees were from poor backgrounds, but it is surprising that they had an average of four dependant children. It seemed that the belief that the place of the women is in the kitchen and that the woman's duty is to reproduce is still going strong with men in Black communities. According to Kimane, et al (1998) in Robinson-Pant (2004), an example from Lesotho is that the role of men is to earn money and contribute to the well-being of the household; on the other hand, the role of the woman is child reproduction, child rearing, managing the home and doing household chores such as cooking, washing and fetching wood. Women are not paid for these types of work. Studies have shown that, with the growing unemployment rate, women in South Africa are increasingly actively looking for work, both formal and informal, in order to supplement the household income that used to be supplied by employed men (Gwagwa, 1998 in Robinson-Pant, 2004).

I think it is now time that women stand up for their rights by giving themselves time to participate in educational activities.

#### **5.6.4 Economic and personal empowerment**

Women should have positive feelings towards skills development projects and try to attend these programmes so that they are economically and personally empowered.

According to the Beijing report (1985), it was decided that women should be empowered and participate fully on the basis of equality in all spheres of society. Eradication of poverty based on economic growth and social development required the involvement of women in economic growth and social development.

After completing the course the women had to struggle to buy their own sewing machines and other sewing materials because they had no money. Mrs Ndlovu had to make a personal loan from micro lenders and others had to make loans from women's clubs or stokvels to buy what they needed to start practising what had been preached to them from the skills development programmes. All the women started by making easy-to-make articles such as straight skirts, sheets, pillowcases, duvet covers and aprons. They sold their first articles as a means of advertising their work to their neighbours and their communities.

Women were developed in skills such as pattern making, basic tailoring, fabric decoration, pattern cutting and formal dressmaking. Because of the skills that they acquired, they were able to generate income. They had regular customers who bought finished articles and also those who made orders for their specific tastes or patterns. They even made big and complicated outfits such as men's suits, wedding gowns and ball gowns. Because making the outfits was time consuming a lot of money was charged from the customers. For just one wedding gown, a customer would have to part with her R1000 at a time. Women should make outlets to sell their outfits to the public so that they advertise their work. In Swaziland, for example, a Sukumani Bumaka shop provided an outlet to sell the finished products of women's groups and associations to the public (Nxumalo, 1990 in Duke 1990). One of the Commonwealth's recommendations

was that governments were to encourage women's participation in marketing so that they have better opportunities to retain the income from selling their products and to give special attention to providing women with technical and entrepreneurial skills.

These women who were then dressmakers had to charge 50% cash deposit before making the article that had been ordered so as to be able to buy fabric and sewing cotton for that particular outfit. Almost all the women advertised their articles just by wearing them to church meetings and to special gatherings. They were all happy and proud of the work they were doing. They all thanked the skills development project for what they had become. Duke (1985) supported this statement by arguing that in Tunisia, women felt that the involvement of women in women's organisations was essential to women's advancement as well as income generation.

The women were interviewed in the year 2004. Seeing that some women had been generating income for about three years, I think that the project succeeded in helping the women to be able to generate income within two years. Almost all the women I interviewed were already self-employed and were making a good income ranging between R3000 and R5000 per month. Their income was about five times more than what they earned as domestic and factory workers before getting involved with the skills development projects. It is surprising that the project has helped them become self-employed by attending the course for only six months. The difference that the project has made to their lives is great when one thinks of what they have done for themselves since they started with their dressmaking.

These women have become independent because the skills development project has helped them to satisfy their basic needs. This has been emphasised by the Women's Forum (WF) which recommended that new ways of funding projects should be developed in order to reduce dependency, so that women are aware

that entrepreneurship in the skills development projects will help in the satisfaction of basic human needs (Rebera, 1990).

The women felt that they learnt a lot from the skills development project. They were aware that the course was helpful to them and it really opened their eyes because it helped them to acquire skills that they were using for income generation. They were unemployed or temporarily employed in low grade jobs but they were then self employed. The course gave them a sense of liberation because they have become bosses themselves. They were working at their own pace and independently.

Women who had their skills developed were personally developed as they have learnt new things. Some of them had hand sewing skills already and these skills were developed by learning to use the sewing machines. The knowledge that they had before was transformed into new knowledge (Mezirow, 1978 in Cross, 1981). Their situations were improved by developing their actions and strategies which helped them to improve their quality of life – they had been poor and unemployed but the skills development programmes helped them to bid farewell to poverty and unemployment.

By having their skills developed, the women contributed in developing their communities too, for example, Mrs Zondi bought a tent and chairs for hire using the money she got from selling some of the outfits she had made. Her community hires a tent and chairs from her when having parties and other functions. They have learnt to use tents instead of using their small houses to accommodate their guests. Even their furniture is now safe from being spoiled by their guests because they use plastic chairs. Also, Mrs Mbatha bought a second hand taxi which contributes by taking the members of the community to and from their workplaces. The driver of the taxi who was unemployed is now employed and is earning an income for his personal needs. Rebera (1990) thinks that participation by women in development programmes leads to human dignity and

the meaning of human community as this empowerment of women provides opportunities for employment.

The women had opened bank accounts and they were able to save some money thus contributing to the development of our country's economy. They had bought themselves household appliances such as stoves, refrigerators and other electrical appliances. One of the women, Mrs Mbatha who had bought herself a second hand mini bus taxi, generated more income and the other one, Mrs Zondi, who bought a tent and 100 chairs for hire also generated more income because almost every weekend people came to hire her tent and chairs. Jiggins (1994) argues that women's development is the essential condition of sustainability, for he thinks that women's full participation in the skills development programmes will lead to new ways of solving problems such as poverty and unemployment.

### **5.7 Why the women succeeded**

Women's success was based on networking, communication and a sense of responsibility.

These women had every right to be proud of themselves because of the experiences they encountered when trying to gain skills with the project. They remembered the time when they were unemployed or doing temporary jobs so as to make ends meet.

Making loans from the local Women's clubs when they needed sewing machines was a way of sharing resources and empowering the club because they were going to repay a loan with interest. The very same club members gave them support by placing orders for their outfits from them. The women did not move away from their communities when they were ready to start their income generating activities but they decided to serve their communities. Mrs Mbatha who bought a taxi had her taxi serving the Imbali community where she stays.

The way they communicate with their customers was one way which made them to be successful. They were humble and treated their customers with equal respect. They always tried by all means to meet the deadline dates when making outfits for their customers to avoid disappointing their customers. They sacrificed their sleeping hours doing their work so as to encourage their customers to put faith in them. Their customers were satisfied with their work because, according to them, they had never received any complaints from them.

Although these women were self employed, they were responsible because they always tried to keep their promises, customers were their first priority. Being self disciplined helped them to win more customers.

Responsibility, patience, self discipline and self confidence have helped these women to succeed in their work.

### **5.8 Conclusion.**

The impact of skills development and income generation has been displayed in the self employment of all the women who had attended the skills development programmes. Income generation made a great difference in their lives as they became self-employed through self determination and responsibility. The programme helped them to develop their sewing skills and they are successfully generating income.

## CHAPTER 6

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### **6.1 Recommendations**

From the previous chapter where I analysed the data, I suggest the following recommendations :

1. The relevant departments should encourage women's participation in marketing so that they are able to generate income from selling their products. Also places where women would be able to display their articles and the outlets for selling their articles should be provided.
2. Women should be encouraged to attend adult education activities for better opportunities to promote employment by skills training.
3. More skills development projects should be established and funded for the unemployed in order to overcome poverty.
4. Women should not be discriminated against because of gender when attending training programmes. They should be developed in all the available skills.
5. The state should arrange that unemployed women be allowed to make loans from banks if they wish to start their small businesses after completing the skills development courses.

## **6.2 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, I have discovered that unemployed women, when given a chance, are able to reduce poverty through skills development because they can generate income from selling their products. The skills development programmes help by training women to acquire the skills they did not have, and also gave them lifelong learning. Because of their developed skills, their income is almost five times better compared to what they earned as domestic workers or factory workers.

Skills development programmes empowered women with different skills which are designed to help them generate income. Skills development programmes brought about changes in their lives because they have bank accounts for the first time in their lives. Interviews also empowered them as they had a chance of discussing their developments with the researcher which made them aware of their changing lifestyles. Their status changed from being poor unemployed women to self-employed women.

Women, although they experienced problems such as having multiple roles of being mothers, wives, housekeepers and learners when attending the skills development programmes, encouraged one another to work harder because they worked in groups. Group work trained them to work in teams which contributed in forming women organizations.

Almost all the respondents were from the poor economic background, therefore they were not well educated and that was one of the reasons why they were unemployed. Attending the skills development project trained them to be self disciplined and they are working independently. Some of them have employed other community members with the aim of reducing poverty in their communities.

From their interviews I learned that women were proud of their work as business women. They succeeded because of their being responsible, patient, self disciplined and dedicated towards their work.

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# Appendices

Appendix A  
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. BACKGROUND AND FAMILY

- Tell me about your family.

2. EDUCATION

- Tell me about your educational background
- After leaving school what did you do?
- If unemployed, how did you feel about being unemployed?

2. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

2.1 Introduction

- How did you know about skills development programme?
- What really made you wish to attend the skills development programme?
- What skills did you have before attending the skills development programme?
- When did you get involved with skills development programme?
- Who organised accommodation for women involved with skills development programme?
- Did you pay rent? How much did you pay?
- How many women were involved?

2.2 Content of Course

- How did you feel when you first attended skills development programme?
- What courses were offered by the project?

- What courses did you take
- Why did you choose to do these courses?
- How long did these courses take?
- Did all women take the same course as yours?
- What really did you do during the lesson?
- Who was your sewing teacher?
- Who is her employer?
- Did you have enough resources/material?
- If not, how did you manage?
- How many machines did you have as a group?
- From where did you get the machines and sewing materials that you used during sewing lesson?

### 3.1 Experiences

- What made you wish to participate in the skills development programme?
- Did you have any immediate needs?
- Did you know how to do sewing before you did skills development programme?
- What were your expectations about the course?
- Were they met?
- Why do you think they were/were not met?
- Do you think the duration of the course is enough?
- Did you pay for the course?
- If yes, how much did you pay?

- Who looked after your children when you were attending the course?
- Were you ever absent from the classes?
- Did you miss any information during your absence?
- What did you do if you were absent from the lessons and you feel that you have been left behind?
- What skills do you have now?
- Were you told what you were going to do after the course?
- What did you wish to do after the course?
- Did you have your own sewing machine?
- Where did you get fabric that you used during the course?
- Did the project have any sponsors?
- Who were they?
- What did they offer?
- Did you get any certificates at the end of the course?
- What were they called?
- What is the most important event that you remember when doing this course?
- How did your family feel about the programme?
- What were your experiences during the skills development programme?
- What is your feeling about the course as a whole?
- Can you remember one important thing about the course, what is it? Why do you say it is important?

## 4.IMPACT

### 4.1 Introduction

- When you finished the skills development programme, what did you do?
- Where did you get money to buy you machine and other sewing material?
- Where did you buy your sewing material from?
- Why did you choose that shop?
- What did you first sew?
- Do you remember its colour?
- What did you do with the first article that you sew?
- If you sold it, how much was it?
- What did you do with the money you got from selling this article?

### 4.2 Experiences

- When did you start sewing the other articles?
- When and where did you sell your articles?
- Who bought them?
- What did you do with the money?
- Do you have regular customers?
- What do your customers usually ask you to sew for them?
- Do you ever become busy with customers' orders?
- If so, how do you cope?
- Do you have someone to help you?
- How much do you pay him/her?

- Being a mother how do you cope with customers' orders?
- What is the most important event that you remember when you were busy sewing the customers' articles?
- Did attending the skills development programme help you to find a job?
- How did you feel when you first sold your articles?
- What is the biggest article you have ever sewn for your customers?
- What experiences did you encounter when making this article?
- Do you think you were able to make it?
- Who bought it?
- How much did it cost?
- What experiences did you encounter when making this article?
- How did you feel after making this article?
- Do you get any support from the project? If yes, what kind of support?

#### 4.3 Income generation

- How much is your income a month?
- Is your current income better than the one you got when you were previously employed?
- How much did you get from your previous employer?
- What do you do with your income?
- Does your current income make any difference in your life?
- What difference does it make?
- Do you have a bank account?
- At what bank?

- Did you have a bank account before?
- Is your bank balance different from the one you had before doing skills development programme?
- Do you think your customers are satisfied with your work? If yes or no,
- Why do you say that?
- Do you work from or away from home?
- Do you pay rent? If so, how much do you pay?
- Do you give your customers things that you have sewn for them on credit?
- When do they usually pay?
- Do you accept cash deposit?
- Do you take cash deposits before or after sewing the customers' articles?
- Why do you do that?
- Do you advertise your work?
- How do you advertise your work?
- Do you think you still need some more skills?
- What skills do you wish to have now?
- How do you feel by being self-employed?
- What are your experiences of being self-employed?
- How does your family feel about your work?
- What have you done for yourself that you were unable to do before?
- How do you manage your finances? Who taught you?

Thank you very much for your time. How do you feel about our conversation?

Appendix B  
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**1. BACKGROUND AND FAMILY**

- **Tell me about your family.**

My name is Zandile Ndlovu. I was born in 1961 from a poor family at Sweetwaters. My father was for a long time unemployed. My mother, Doris, born Mtshali, was a domestic worker in town. Mother supplemented her salary by selling second hand clothing that she bought from the auctioneers in Pietermaritzburg. My father, Mr Ngubane, got a job at The Natal Witness when he was 45 years of age. He worked for one year only before he passed away. Both my parents were illiterate.

I, Mrs Ndlovu, was the eldest in the family. I got married twice. Firstly, I got married to Mr Shezi who passed away and left me with two children to look after. Because I was unemployed I decided to remarry. This time I got married to Mr Ndlovu. We were blessed with three children, two boys and one girl. Mr Ndlovu also got sick and passed away. I had to look for a job because I was now left with five children to care for. I worked as a domestic worker in Pietermaritzburg.

**2. EDUCATION**

-**Tell me about your educational background.**

I did my primary education at Sweetwaters. I did subjects like isiZulu, English, Arithmetic and Needlework. I think I was good in sewing because I was never told to unpick what I have sewn. I passed standard six and then went to Ashdown Secondary to further my education. Because my mother was unable to pay for my education any longer, I had to leave school when I was doing standard eight.

- **After leaving school, what did you do?**

I did nothing. I had to stay at home and help with the domestic work until I got married.

- **If unemployed, how did you feel about being unemployed?**

I felt very unhappy. I had my needs that I could not satisfy. I also needed money to prepare for my wedding. I had to depend on my mother for everything I needed. When married I had to depend on my husband.

**3. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

**3.1 Introduction**

- **How did you know about skills development programme?**

A lady called Zimnyama who was employed by the project is my neighbour. She.

knowing that I was unemployed, invited me to a meeting which was coordinated by a man known as Hum who was from the project offices. He told us that the project wished to develop the skills of unemployed women from the greater Edendale area. We were very much excited with the idea. Hum told us to organise our own accommodation. He was going to supply us with the materials that we were going to need and would offer us somebody who was to help us in developing our skills.

- **What really made you want to do skills development programme?**

I wanted to learn to sew garments and to sell them so as to generate income because I was unemployed.

- **What skills did you have before attending the skills development programme?**

I already had sewing skills using the hand needle. I also had knitting and baking skills.

- **When did you get involved with skills development programme?**

It was in 1990.

- **Who organised accommodation for women involved with skills development programme?**

After struggling for quite sometime, one of our neighbours, Mrs Khumalo, offered us to use her garage for our lessons.

- **Did you pay rent? How much did you pay?**

She offered us free of charge. We only had to pay for the electricity we had consumed.

- **How many women were involved?**

18 women

### **3.2 Content of Course**

-**How did you feel when you first attended skills development programme?**

I felt very excited. I was not aware that I could not thread a sewing machine. I had thought that it was going to be easy but it was not. I even made crooked seams because it was the first time that I used the sewing machine.

- **What courses were offered by the project?**

The project offered activities like making of floor polish, yoghurt, fabric softener, baking and sewing.

- **What courses did you take?**

I took the short courses first, that is, making of polish and yoghurt and then I took the sewing course.

- **Why did you choose to do these courses?**

I was very much interested in knowing how to sew outfits for my customers and for myself.

- **How long did these courses take?**

6 months

- **Did all women take the same course as yours?**

No, some women did other courses.

-**What really did you do during the lesson?**

We did pattern making, pattern cutting, fabric cutting and sewing of articles.

- **Who was your sewing teacher ?**

Zanele was our tutor.

- **Who is her employer?**

She is employed by the project management.

- **Did you have enough resources/material?**

No, resources were not enough.

- **If not, how did you manage?**

We worked in groups. While the other group was doing cutting of fabric, the other group would be doing sewing.

- **How many machines did you have as a group ?**

We had only five sewing machines.

- **From where did you get the machines and sewing materials that you used during the sewing lesson?**

We got everything free of charge from the project coordinators.

### 3.3. Experiences

- **What made you wish to participate in the skills development programme?**

I wanted to learn how to sew garments so that I see them in order to generate income.

- **Did you have any immediate needs?**

Yes. I needed money to pay school fees for my children and to buy school books and clothing for my family.

- **Did you know how to do sewing before you did skills development programme**

No, I last did sewing at school. I cannot remember well what we did at school except stitches like tacking, hemming and running.

- **What were your expectations about the course?**

By attending the programme I expected that I was going to be taught how to make outfits and how to generate income.

- **Were they met?**

Yes, I think so.

- **Why do you think they were/were not met?**

I was taught how to cut and sew the garments and I am now able to generate income through selling these articles.

- **Do you think the duration of the course is enough?**

No, it is not enough. We had to do a lot of work within a short period of time.

- **Did you pay for the course?**

No, we received our lessons free of charge.

- **Who looked after your children when you were attending the course?**

I used to ask my neighbour to look after my home and my younger child. Other children were at school. I used to wake up at 05H00 and cooked lunch for my children because I had no money for their sandwiches.

- **Were you ever absent from the classes?**

Yes, sometimes.

- **Did you miss any information during your absence?**

Off course yes. I missed the information if something new was introduced during my absence.

- **What did you do if you were absent from the lessons and you feel that you have been left behind?**

I used to consult my classmates so that they show me what I missed during my absence. I had to visit them on Saturdays so that I covered what they did when I was absent.

- **What skills do you have now?**

I am now able to make and cut patterns, cut fabric and to use the sewing machine..

- **Were you told what you were going to do after the course?**

Yes. we were told that we would be able to generate income by selling what we have sewn.

- **What did you wish to do after the course?**

I wished to have many customers' orders so that I get money and buy more and more sewing materials and then generate income.

- **Did you have your own sewing machine?**

Yes. I had one.

- **Where did you get fabric that you used during the course?**

We got everything that we used from the project management.

- **Did the project have any sponsors?**

It looked like they were there although nothing was mentioned about them. We were sometimes visited by strange people who were interested in our work.

- **Did you get any certificates at the end of the course?**

yes

- **What were they called?**

Certificate of accomplishment.

- **What is the important event that you remember when doing this course?**

My children were for the whole week sick with flu and I could not attend the classes that week. When I got back I was too far behind the group in such a way that I thought of deregistering but my classmates encouraged me to went on with the course and they promised to give me help wherever they could.

**- How did your family feel about the programme?**

My children were not happy at the beginning but later when they saw my completed work, they were very much excited.

**- What were your experiences during the skills development programme?**

There was a competition among the group because we always wished to be the first one to finish the processes that were introduced. We always had to congratulate the one who had done the correct processes within the stipulated time because we always made some mistakes and did a lot of unpicking.

**- What is your feeling about the course as a whole?**

The course has helped us a lot by developing our skills. We are now using these skills to generate income. I feel that without the skills development programme I would not be able to give my family financial support.

**- Can you remember one important thing about the course, what is it? Why do you say it's important?**

One day we were told that we would be visited by people from overseas to look at what we had done. We had to make a lot of preparations such as cleaning of our classes as never before. The course coordinator brought along piles of fabric and sewing cotton to the classrooms. We could see that she was nervous and she asked that we be punctual on that day. She even brought along the articles that were not done by us and displayed them for our visitors to see. When they arrived they were very much impressed by the display and they were very happy to see what we had done.

## **4.IMPACT**

### **4.1 Introduction**

**- When you finished the skills development programme, what did you do?**

I did have a sewing machine that was a gift from my aunt but I could not use it I did not have other sewing materials such as sewing cotton, fabric, and other things that I would need when making dresses. I therefore decided to go and help my aunt who was also a dressmaker. She later felt sorry for me and accompanied me to make a loan from the money lenders. Because I was unemployed they could offer me only R500.00. My aunt volunteered to be my guarantor.

**- Where did you get money to buy you machine and other sewing material?**

I got it from the money-lenders.

- **Where did you buy your sewing material from?**

I went to Ragland where they sell fabric remnants and bought cotton fabric.

- **Why did you choose that shop?**

I chose Ragland because the fabric was on sale that time. I got a lot of fabric with the little money I had.

- **What did you first sew?**

I sew two pairs of sheets and pillowcases.

- **Do you remember its colour?**

The first pair was green and the other one was pink.

- **What did you do with the first article that you sew?**

I showed the sheets to my neighbours and they were excited but they did not buy the sheets, they only placed orders for the sheets with different colours. On the pensioners' day I went to the hall where they are paid their pension money and sold the sheets to them. Because the price of the sheets was made lower than those from the shops, more orders of the sheets were placed.

- **If you sold them, how much were they?**

They were only R85,00 a pair.

- **What did you do with the money you got from selling this article?**

I bought more fabric, sewing thread and buttons.

#### 4.2 Experiences

- **When did you start sewing the other articles?**

The day on which I sold the sheets to pensioners was the day I started selling my articles. From that day onwards I made and sold my articles.

- **When and where did you sell your articles?**

People started placing orders and I made and sold more sheets.

- **Who bought them?**

My neighbours, pensioners and church members.

- **What did you do with the money?**

I bought more fabric and paid school fees for my children.

- **Do you have regular customers?**

Yes, I've got a lot of regular customers.

- **What do your customers usually ask you to sew for them?**

In most cases my customers want curtains, sheets, track suits, two piece suits and some want me to make adjustments of hems and seams.

- **Do you ever become busy with customers' orders?**

Yes, especially during school holidays.

- **If so, how do you cope?**

I work day and night and I sometimes ask my aunt to come and give me a hand.

- **Do you have someone to help you?**

Yes, my aunt sometimes helps me on very busy days.

- **How much do you pay him/her?**

I thank her with any amount just to encourage her.

- **Being a mother how do you cope with customers' orders?**

I always wake up early in the morning and clean the house, cook food and prepare my children for school, before starting with the day's work. I now feel that I need someone to help me with the house work because I have a feeling that I am overworking.

- **What is the most important event that you remember when you were busy sewing the customers' orders?**

One of my naughty children took a pair of scissors and cut the half finished outfit into pieces. I nearly cried because the owner of the outfit was to come and collect it the following day. I had to go and buy the same fabric and remade the outfit.

- **Did attending the skills development programme help you to find a job?**

Yes, I am now self employed.

- **How did you feel when you first sold your articles?**

I felt great because I knew that my dream was gradually coming true.

- **What is the biggest article you have ever sewn for your customers?**

A wedding gown.

- **What experiences did you encounter when making this article?**

Firstly I had to cut a different pattern from the usual ones. A lot of time was needed to lay and to cut the pattern. I was nervous because I was making it for the first time. I needed to create a lot of ideas. I had to ask the owner of the dress to come and fit the dress every now and then because I did not want to spoil the dress. I also did a lot of unpicking as I made a lot of mistakes before I finished it. It was another great experience when I had to use the beads and lace for decorating the bodice of the dress.

- **Do you think you were able to make it?**

Yes. I think so.

- **Who bought it?**

One of my neighbours

- **How much did it cost?**

R2000.00.only.

- **How did you feel after making this article?**

I felt great because I was not sure whether I would be able to make it or not. When the customer asked me to make the dress for her I had refused because I did not trust my self. From then on I trusted myself and I have made three more wedding gowns.

- **Do you get any support from the project? If yes, what kind of support?**

No. nothing.

#### **4.3 Income generation**

- **How much is your income a month?**

It is about R3500. 00 depending on the amount of work I have done. During the busy months I get about R5000. 00.

- **Is your current income better that the one you got when you were previously employed?**

Yes, five times better.

- **How much did you get from your previous employer?**

R500. 00 per month

- **What do you do with your income?**

I buy more fabric, pay rent and services for our home. and buy food and clothing for my children.

- **Does your current income make any difference in your life?**

Yes. it does. a great one.

- **What difference does it make?**

I am now able to buy anything that my family needs. My electricity and water bills and rent for our house are always paid by the due dates. I no longer owe school fees for my children and we never sleep without having food because of financial problems.

- **Do you have a bank account?**

Yes.

- **At what bank?**

At ABSA bank

- **Did you have a bank account before?**

No. I always used up all my earnings and I had nothing to take to the bank.

- **Do you think your customers are satisfied with your work? If yes or no,**

**Why do you say that?**

I think they are satisfied with my work. I have never had any complaints with my work but instead more customers bring their orders to me.

- **Do you work from or away from home?**

I do my work at home.

- **Do you give your customers things that you have sewn for them on credit?**

No. I never do that.

- **When do they usually pay?**

They usually pay for their outfits when they come to collect their finished articles, in most cases at month ends.

- **Do you accept cash deposit?**

Yes. I ask for 50% cash deposits.

- **Do you take cash deposits before or after sewing the customers' articles?**

I take cash deposit before making their articles.

- **Why do you do that?**

I take cash deposits before making their articles so that I buy fabric, sewing thread and other accessories for that particular customer's outfit.

- **Do you advertise your work?**

Yes, I do.

- **How do you advertise your work?**

Because I work from home I use my verandah to hang the finished articles so that people are attracted to come and see what I have on my display. I also wear the outfits I have made for myself to town and to other gatherings. People appreciate my outfits and place orders for the same outfits .

- **Do you think you still need some more skills?**

I think I still need some more skills.

- **What skills do you wish to have now?**

I now wish to acquire tailoring as well as knitting skills. My customers sometimes ask me to make them tailored or knitted outfits.

- **How do you feel by being self-employed?**

I feel great and I am proud of myself.

- **What are your experiences of being self-employed?**

I don't have to wake up early in the morning so as to get transport to work. I am now responsible for my work as a whole. I get paid for what I have done, working hard helps me to earn more money from my customers. I have trained myself to manage my money and also I have trained myself to work fairly with my customers, that is, first come, first served, I do not practice favouritism to my customers.

- **How does your family feel about your work?**

They are happy because they are never worried about where they are going to get money and food from, they know that I no longer have financial problems.

- **What have you done for yourself that you were unable to do before?**

I have bought a lot of furniture for my house. I think that I have now bought all the electrical appliances I had always wished to have.

- **How do you manage your finances? Who taught you?**

I was never taught to manage my finances but I always pay for the services such as electricity, water and telephone. I invest some money with the stokvels and take the rest to the bank.

**Thank you very much for your time. How do you feel about our conversation?**

I feel very much happy to share my experiences with you.