Ayuk Patrick Ayehsabu

COLLABORATION BETWEEN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERS IN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL SOUTH AFRICA

DEDICATION

To my mother, Mrs. Anastasia Takor Ayuk, who taught me the meaning of education, and how to live like a soldier on the battle field who never gives up even if he is gravely wounded! Your death seriously devastated and left a void in my heart. However, your spirit, love and ideals keep me strong and going because you died at a defining moment. A moment that I am at the crossroads of achieving what has been the core of your tenets in life, and what you have cherished and encouraged throughout your life. I am proud to dedicate this academic piece of work in your loving and blessed memory.

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Skills development has been a point of urgency since the advent of progressive governance in democratic South Africa. Despite many efforts through the National Skills Development Strategies and partnerships, the situation still remains worrisome especially in rural context. The study aimed to identify how the NGOs and education leaders collaborate in skills development, its impact, and possible ways of optimizing such practices. A methodology that considers the perspectives of individuals experiencing the phenomenon was invoked. Accordingly, this study exploits the phenomenological approach. Participants were purposely selected from Sector Education Training Authorities and NGOs involved in Education and Training. Triangulation was also used due to the inclusion of the third kind of participants. Nine participants from five organizations were involved. Data was collected through in-depth phenomenological unstructured interviews and analyzed with the use of phenomenological analytic methods. Findings indicated participants' awareness of the importance of skills development to rural dwellers, and have experienced collaboration through research and other modes, with impressive effects. However, there is great need to strengthen collaboration. Lack of Strategic leadership including strategic partnership practices, and poor rural schooling were the weakest link in skills development initiatives. The study culminated with recommendations aimed at circumventing such problems, enhance skills development, and foster human security in rural areas. It was limited to skills development; hence similar studies on institutional development would be fascinating.

Asiasanat – Keywords: Skills development, collaboration, NGOs, educational leaders, and rural South Africa.
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Osaamisen kehittäminen on ollut tärkeää Etelä-Arfikan hallinnon progressiivisen demokratisoitumisen myötä. Huolimatta kansallisen osaamisen kehittämisen strategioista ja kumppaanuuksista tilanne erityisesti maaseudulla on edelleen huolestuttava. Tämä tutkimuksen tavoite oli tarkastella kuinka kolmannen sektorin järjestöt ja kasvatusalan johtajat tekevät yhteistyötä osaaamisen kehittämisen suhteen, yhteistyön vaikutuksista ja etsiä tapoja optimoida yhteistyön käytänteet. Tutkimusmetodologiana käytettiin fenomenologiaa, jonka avulla tavoitellaan yksilöiden kokemuksia. Osallistujat tutkimukseen valittiin harkinnanvaraisesti kasvatusalan koulutuksen toimialalta ja kolmannen sektorin järjestöistä, jotka ovat mukana kasvatus- ja koulutualalla. Osallistujien triangulaation turvaamiseksi mukana oli myös kolmas toimija-ala. Aineisto kerättiin fenomenologisilla avoimilla syvähaastatteluilla ja analysoitiin käyttäen fenomenologista analyysitapaa. Tulosten mukaan tutkimukseen osallistujilla oli tietoisuus osaamisen kehittämisen tärkeydestä maaseudun asukkaille ja heillä oli kokemusta yhteistyöstä tutkimuksen ja muiden tapojen muodossa, joista oli saatu merkittävä hyöty. Kuitenkin strategiset yhteistyön tavat ja heikko maaseudun koulutus olivat heikoimmat seikat osaamisen kehittämisessä. Tutkimus tiivisti suosittelemaan, että näitä ongelmia vältettäisiin, lisäämään osaamisen kehittämistä ja lisäämään ihmisten turvallisuutta maaseudulla. Tämä tutkimus rajautui osaamisen kehittämiseen, mutta samankaltaisia tutkimuksia tulisi tehdä institutionaalisesta kehittämisestä.

Muita tietoja – Additionalinformation

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
AU	African Union
BCM	Black Conciousness Movement
CRDP	Comprehensive Rural Development Programme
CREATE	Consortium for Research on Education, Access, Transitions and Equity
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ECCD	Early Child Care and Development
EFA	Educaton for All
EU	European Union
GEAR	Growth Employment and Redistribution
GNU	Government of National Unity
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
LED	Local Economic Development
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRYSC	National Rural Youth Services Corps
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SANGOCO	South African NGO Coalition
SAQA	South African Qualification Authority
SETA	Sector Education Training Authority
SSP	Sector Skills Plan
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WB	World Bank
WSD	Workplace Skills Development

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1 INTRODUCTION

The collapse of apartheid and the birth of progressive governance introduced a fresh impetus in the history and political life of South Africa (Binns & Nel, 1999, p. 390). However post-apartheid South Africa inherited economic and social problems that have been exacerbated by the challenges of globalization and neo-liberalism (Binns & Nel, 1999, p. 389). Poor governance, which was an integral feature of the apartheid regime, generated corrosive effects on the development process with far reaching negative economic and social ramifications in post-apartheid South Africa. Capacity development is one way of reversing the corrosion. (Hope, 2006, p. 588.) There is therefore no iota of surprise that skills development has become the orbit of livelihood security, sustainable development and poverty alleviation in post-apartheid South Africa. The researcher is interested in human capital development. Consequently, this study focused on the impact of the partnership between Non-governmental organizations and educational leaders, on developing, and strengthening skills in rural South Africa, for sustainable livelihoods.

Democratic South Africa from inception was confronted with the challenges of dealing with absolute and relative shortages of skills, which were the hallmarks of the apartheid "bantu" system of education. There was a serious mismatch between the demand and supply of labour—the supply of labour could not meet the demand. (Daniel, 2007, p. 5.) As a result, poverty, inequality, mass rural exodus, and other forms of human insecurity that come with livelihood insecurity due to lack of or inadequate skills are common features in the new South Africa. Akoojee and Macbrath (2005, p. 40) concurred that unemployment is the heart of poverty, education and training are central to job creation. Skills development is therefore crucial for the socio-economic

development of democratic South Africa, especially among the rural poor. The skills development Act of 1997, which was amended in 2008 and 2010, and implemented under the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), through the National Skills Development Strategies (NSDS) and Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs), focuses on education and training that improves the quantity, quality and significance of skills, with the overall goal of increasing self-reliance, economic competitiveness and improving the quality of life of South Africans. (Powell & Lowlana, 2011, p. 5; Republic of South Africa, 2011; DHET, 2010.)

Notwithstanding the different rural development strategies introduced by the government since 1994 such as Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), and the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP), they have failed to attain the initial goals of reconstructing and restructuring the living conditions of the majority of the rural dwellers. Moreover the state of education provided to rural learners remains appalling, and poverty remains rampant (Seroto, 2012, pp. 77-84; National Development plan, 2011, p. 1). One is tempted to observe that without appropriate education and training, skills development especially amongst rural folks will remain an illusion. It is more rewarding to give a child a hook so that she/he can determine when and how to fish. This invites a paradigm shift in South Africa's development agenda, one that "moves from passive citizenry receiving services from the state to one that systematically includes the socially and economically excluded, where people are active champions of their own development and where government works effectively to develop people's capabilities to lead the lives they desire" (National Development Plan, 2011, p. 1). Concentrating on building skills and empowering urban communities at the expense of rural communities appears like building skyscrapers on sand or sitting on an active volcano. This therefore invokes the concept of Local Economic Development (LED) as a sine qua non for pro-poor employment, growth and wealth creation. Investing in local skills and initiatives (human, social capital and enterprise) enhances livelihood security and self-reliance. (Binns & Nel, 1999. pp. 390-392; Nel & McQuaid, 2002, pp. 60-61.) Rural dwellers in South Africa need to move "from users and choosers to makers and shapers" (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2000, p. 50). One way of attaining this outcome is by building and reinforcing their skills and competences in relevant fields.

In South Africa, the Department of Higher Education and Training takes care of the framework of the National Skills Development Strategy. In a vibrant democracy like that of South Africa, skills development can't be the task of educational leaders alone. Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) also play an array of roles in skills development which amongst others include, advocacy, being watchdog, service delivery, research, policy input and social capital creation (Tandon, 2000. pp. 71-72; Aisha, 2004, p. 10). One is inspired to assume that it would be worthwhile for both institutions to work collaboratively, with each stakeholder performing a unique role. The notion of coordination has been highlighted by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund and many NGOs are increasingly involved in capacity development initiatives (McEwan, 2002, p. 12; Ulleberg, 2009, p. 8). State-civil society collaboration produces "Synergistic effects". That is, better outcomes or performances are accomplished than if partners acted independently.(Brinkerhoff, 1998, p. 2.) However, NGOs and educational leaders face many challenges in relation to collaboration and skills development (Economic Commission for Africa, 2006. p.11; Sector Education Training Authority), especially in rural communities.

An undergraduate degree in Educational Foundations and Administration, a graduate degree in Development Studies, coupled with the experience of living and working in South Africa, indeed solidify the researcher's epistemological position and enthusiasm to do research in this area. Skills development and livelihoods, though with varied magnitude are common challenges especially in rural communities of Sub-Saharan Africa (see e.g. Aitchison & Alidou, 2009, pp. 3-9; Bryceson, 1999, pp. 171-189; Johanson & Adams, 2004; Marope, 2010). As an African, from Cameroon, who has experienced rural life, the choice of this topic was obvious as it could improve the livelihoods and security of the inhabitants of the most impoverished, marginalized and vulnerable African communities. Though many studies on rural South Africa relating to education, growth and development have been carried out (see e.g. Arendse, 2011; Binns & Nel, 1999; Bloch, 2009; Gardiner, 2008; Seroto, 2012), probably very limited studies have indeed focused on the impact of collaborative leadership practices between the NGO, and the education and training sectors on skills development and human security.

The desire to fill that gap also galvanized my inspiration to conduct this research, with the aim of exploring how leaders of Non-governmental Organizations and the

education department (SETAs) collaborate, the impact of this collaboration on skills development, challenges involved and possible ways of improving efforts geared towards this direction in rural South Africa. Such objectives were motivated by the fundamental belief that the study would help to enhance collaborative leadership practices among stakeholders, skills development and reinforcement initiatives. This will also promote self-reliance, sustainable livelihoods, and assist in alleviating poverty in rural communities. In addition, it could ease pressure on urban areas, and to a certain degree spur the overall growth and development of the country's economy. Furthermore, since many Sub-Saharan African countries have similar challenges of cross-organizational collaboration especially between NGOs and state institutions in education and training, results of this study could also serve as a reference point for Cameroon and other Sub-Saharan African states. Hence the study is crucial in strengthening cross-organizational collaborative leadership, policy and practices that enhance skills development efforts and human security especially in rural communities. In order to attain the stated objectives and enhance the significance of this study, the research design was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do NGOs and educational leaders collaborate in building skills?

2. What is the impact of collaboration on skills development and lives of rural dwellers?

3. What are the challenges faced by NGOs and educational leaders in building skills in rural South Africa?

4. How can skills development in rural communities of South Africa be improved?

2 GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

This chapter briefly reflects on the geographical location of the area of interest of this study and the historical dynamism of state - NGOs relations in South Africa. While focusing on the geography of South Africa as a whole and rural South Africa in particular, the size and scope of education NGOs, and some historical trends in state - civil society relations, the researcher simultaneously attempts to provide clarity to the context in which specific concepts or terms like rural South Africa, civil society, NGOs and educational leaders applied to this study.

2.1 Geographical and historical contexts

South Africa, a medium-sized country with a total landscape of about 1.2 million square kilometers and a population of 49 million people is found at the Southern tip of the African continent. The country has a semi-arid climate with a substantial variation in climate and topography. It shares borders with Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and curves in around Swaziland. It has nine provinces, with Gauteng as the smallest in terms of landscape, though most crowded and highly urbanized. The Northern Cape, which is the largest in land size, takes up almost 1/3 of the country's land area. Cape Town, Bloemfontein and Pretoria are the legislative, judicial and administrative capitals respectively. On the 31st of May 1910 the country was named the Union of South, formed by the amalgamation of four British colonies (Cape colony, Natal, Transvaal and Orange Free State). On the 31st of May 1961, it was declared a Republic, and became a democratic state with the majority rule on the 27th of April 1994. (The world factbook & South Africa.info.)

It is problematic and complex to clearly define rural South Africa because of the country's history of racial segregation. Rural areas have been largely viewed in terms of apartheid categorization of areas into "Bantustan" or "homelands' (Binns & Nel, 1999, p. 395; Gardiner, 2008, p. 8; Makgetla, 2010, p. 1). The racial policy of the apartheid system which forced all black people to homelands that are far away from urban areas, was a falsehood used by the former regime to control the movement and economic aggrandizement of black South Africans (Gardiner, 2008, p. 8). However, various features have been used to identify and differentiate rural from urban areas.

Rural areas of South Africa were historically characterized by abnormal high levels of poverty and joblessness, combined with very limited employment in agriculture, which greatly reflected the economic structures designed by colonialism and apartheid. The existence of large commercial farms, impoverished and densely populated communities with limited natural resources and government services were some of the hallmarks of rural areas especially during the apartheid regime that was established in 1948. (Makgetla, 2010, p. 1.) This notion relates to the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and Engineering and Project Company (2005, p. 30) observation that, when people are asked about the meaning of rural, what intrinsically comes to their minds is "isolation, vulnerability, lack of opportunity, the need for self-reliance, a sense of community and commitment to traditional values". According to HSRC and Engineering and Projects Company (EPC), rural life and identity are often defined in relation to urban world of plenty and possession. South African rural dwellers see rural areas as places that are located far away from town, with poor infrastructure and means of transportation, no white people live there, places with no street names, no health facilities and social amenities, places where there are no choices except to go to cities for work, and where the police do not follow cases. This isolation signifies vulnerability, which translates to daily fight against hunger, for livelihoods and basic survival (HSRC & EPC, 2005, p. 31).

It is not the prime objective of this study to get involved in the debate of providing an adequate definition of rural South Africa. However, rural South Africa in this research means non-urban and impoverished neighborhoods, the countryside, remote villages, and townships, with low living standards, weak infrastructure, services and manufacturing base, and wherein agriculture and other natural resource based activities provide the basis for many livelihoods. Rural inhabitants are the poorest members of

South Africa's population (Binns & Nel, 1999, p. 395). Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo are provinces that are predominantly rural (Arendse, 2011, p. 347; Gardiner, 2008, p. 7; Seroto, 2012, p. 81). Furthermore, the poorest and the most underdeveloped rural communities are those that were situated in the former homelands (Gardiner, 2008, p. 9).

The culmination of apartheid marked the genesis of democratic South Africa in 1994. The main challenge of the new government for rural development was to eradicate the marginalization of the rural poor and poverty. This required significant changes in access to resources, significant improvements in the provision of education and skills, transformation of market institutions to serve local communities, and improvements in rural infrastructure and other government services. (Makgetla, 2010, p. 1.) Attempts to attain such underlined objectives manifested through a series of state initiated rural development strategies such as: The Reconstruction Development Programme (RDP) 1994; Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) 1996; Comprehensive Rural Development Programmme (CRDP) 2007; Broad-based Employment Creation and Skills Development (Expanded Public Works Programme) 2009; National Rural Youth Services Corps (NRYSC) 2009; and Public Sector Education and Training Authority. (Binns & Nel, 1999, p. 397; Department of Rural Development & Land Reform, 2012, pp. 1-3; Seroto, 2012, p. 77; Republic of South Africa, 2010, p. 36.)

It is therefore not by chance that capacity development particularly in rural communities was an integral component of such poverty alleviation endeavours. However, sustainable livelihoods and human security initiatives particularly in education and training cannot rest on the shoulders of the state alone. As Binns and Nel (1999, p. 389) and the Republic of South Africa (2010, p. 116) acknowledged, there is a growing need for collaboration between the state and the third sector. NGOs and development practitioners are focusing more and more attention on strategies that build upon local knowledge, skills and resources.

2.2 The size and scope of education NGOs in South Africa

In South Africa, there are so many NGOs involved in an array of projects that foster human security. Swilling and Russel in 2002 estimated that there are 98,920 NGOs in South Africa, of which 53% are less formalized, community-based organizations that operate at the local level (Swilling & Russsel in Morrow, 2004, p. 320). In their opinion, the whole NGO sector employs about 645,316 workers with just above half of this figure in paid employment, and the rest as volunteers (Morrow, 2004, p. 320). However, the scope of this study was limited to NGOs that focus on education and training, and whose leaders do collaborate with leaders of Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs) in developing the skills of rural dwellers.

According to Morrow (2004, pp. 320-322), a study of the NGO sector of 28 countries, wherein South Africa was one of them, carried out by the John Hopkins Centre for Civil Society Studies in its series of large-scale international research, classified NGOs into 11 categories including education and research. According to the study, there are 5,691 NGOs in South Africa in education and research (5, 8% of all NGOs), 4,667 of them operate in elementary, primary and secondary education, and 1024 in adult and continuing education respectively. The categories of public health and wellness education and job training programmes have 1,038 and 3,790 organizations respectively. Morrow's (2004, p. 322) research report further claimed that 142 NGOs were formed before 1976, 1901 between 1976 and 1993, and most of the existing NGOs in education (3,648) in South Africa were formed after 1994. NGOs in education employ about 23,962 fulltime and 1,629 part-time workers, and 5,540 volunteers.

2.3 Reflection on state - civil society relations

Prior to the end of the white minority rule in 1994, South Africa's history was that of racial discrimination, translated over decades in such a way that blacks were deprived of basic human needs and could not participate in the political and economic process of the country. Black communities therefore were constantly at the fringe of their country. (Greenstein, 2003, p. 12.) Antagonistic - collaborative relations could be witnessed

along racial lines. Civil societies owned by blacks were always in a divergent form of engagement with the state.

Moreover, political and social organizations had minimal access to the state, and could not interact with it. In this regard, the prevailing aspects in civil societies were that they operated as either pro-apartheid or pro-business organizations or institutions such as the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and Broederbond and Nederlaandse Gerfermede Kerk (NGK). Institutions like unions and organizations linked to the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) which were against or critical of the state and the socio-economic system or policies faced severe suppression. Under such adverse conditions, they were forced to exert pressure on the state from outside. (Greenstein, 2003, p. 13; Habib, 2005, p. 674.) Guy and Omano (2004, p. 69) further explain that, the apartheid regime was authoritarian, repressive, abusive, unaccountable and non-transparent. These led to the exclusion of most of the black population from the governance process. It was therefore a country wherein participation in the decision making process and benefits were defined in racial terms. According to Morrow (2004, p. 318), NGOs' emancipation record as radical antagonists to the state was a source of inspiration for the sector.

The advent of democracy in 1994 marked the rebirth of South Africa, and ushered the genesis of ample space for a vibrant state - civil society partnership. The partnership model of state - civil society relations was understandably a principal point of interest during the transition period. (Tait, 2005, p. 2.) The new political dispensation ushered new methods of formal engagement, opportunities and challenges in state - civil society relations (Ranchod, 2007, p. 4). The Government of National Unity (GNU) incorporated the elements of suspicion of the third sector of the old regime and the African National Congress. On the flip side, the NGO sector was not ready to undergo a transition from being an opposition to a collaborator with the state. Many NGOs found it difficult to cope with the new state of affairs which required them to redefine themselves and adapt to the new order. (Morrow, 2004, pp. 318- 319.)

Civil society organizations were in a funding quagmire as foreign donors now stopped giving funding directly to civil society organizations. Donors preferred to give the entire fund to the legitimate government and the government could now channel it to areas of need, including the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). This however limited the time and capacity available for CSOs and many disappeared from the scene.

The first years of democratic South Africa were aimed at dealing with the injustices of the apartheid regime through rural development programmes like RDP and GEAR in 1996. (Ranchod, 2007, p. 4.) Hence, amazingly, an attempt was made through the state's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) to centralize and incorporate the forms of activities typically executed by NGOs (Morrow, 2004, p. 318). However, GEAR (formed to promote employment and economic growth in disadvataged communities) failed to ignite state - civil society participation. The civil society was neglected with regard to contributing in decision making in service delivery and poverty reduction. (Ranchod, 2007, p. 4.)

The introduction of the Non-Profit Organization Act of 1997 clearly defined the role of civil society organizations in partnerships with the state. Though limited to service delivery at the beginning, it became so broad in relation to the various dimensions of human security, wherein capacity building is an integral component. (Ranchod, 2007, pp. 5-6.) NGOs are part of the civil society. They are characterized by non-profit motivation, exist separately from the state and market, form by people with common values and goals, and play an important and sometimes leading role in activating citizen participation in socio-economic development (Aisha, 2004, pp. 3-4; Nikkhah & Redzuan, 2010, p. 85; Ranchod, 2007, pp. 2-4; Ulleberg, 2009, p. 12).

Cross-organizational collaboration that occurs between leaders of Sector Education Training Authorities and Non-governmental organizations influences skills development in many ways (see DHET, 2010; Powell & Lowlana, 2011, p.5; Republic of South Africa, 2011). The Education Roadmap also highlighted the need for collaboration with NGOs and it relevance on education and training outcomes (Consortium for Research on Education, Access, Transitions, and Equity—CREATE, 2009, p. 4). Because educational leaders work in SETAs that function under the Department of Higher Education and Training, which is managed and controled by the state or government, in this report they are sometimes referred to as the education sector or the state. Conversely, since NGOs fall within the broader dimension of the civil society, the term civil society is sometimes used to imply NGOs.

3   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter concentrates on a complete review of literature relating to what scholars have said about collaborative leadership and team performance with specific reference to the impact of collaboration between NGOs and educational leaders on skills development, especially in rural South Africa. It has been organized into two broad sections or headings: Leadership for learning organizations and communities, and collaboration and skills development in rural South Africa, with the aim of correlating fundamental theories to the phenomenon being studied. Consequently, the chapter expounds on collaborative leadership theories and practices that influence learning organizations and communities; significance of cross-organizational collaborative leadership on skills development and rural dwellers and communities; roles and modes of collaboration between leaders of respective organizations; factors hindering collaboration and skills development especially in rural South Africa; and possible ways of strengthening collaborative leadership practices and skills development.

3.1 Leadership for learning organizations and communities

Human resource (human capital) development and teamwork are indispensable and fundamental components in high performing organizational settings. A broad spectrum of research in learning organizations and communities (e.g. organizational behavior, group relations & team work, employees empowerment & development, group capabilities, & effective leadership) has led to a pool of theories that extensively and diligently postulate the correlation between human capital (skills, capacity and empowerment) and intra- or cross-organizational collaborative practices, and high performance. The significance of leadership that encourages and enhances the capacity

of individuals, and partnership or teamwork is therefore very crucial. As observed by Yukl, Gordon and Taber (2002, p. 15), a great deal of research on leadership effectiveness aims to identify specific leadership behaviours that enhance individual and collective performance. In order to have an adequate understanding of the indispensability of collaboration and leadership that fosters it, on organizational performance, it is worthwhile to have a recap of theories that have correlated collaboration or cooperation as a cornerstone to learning organizations and communities.

3.1.1 Reflection on theories of learning organizations and communities

Multi-level theories and research that include collective processes at group and organizational levels are relevant in understanding organizational learning. These in a way also highlight why there is deservedly a growing interest in theories of team leadership, strategic leadership, and shared leadership. Though the influence of a leader on individual subordinates is important, it is more relevant to comprehend how multiple leaders influence collective learning through teams and organizations (Yukl, 2009, p. 50). Since organizations are required to continuously change internally as well as adapt to changes in their operational environments, learning is observed as a pre-condition for continued existence of contemporary organizations (Lähteenmäki, Toivonen & Mattila, 2001, p. 113).

Theories help to identify the intra- and inter-organizational processes by which organizations build knowledge in both their internal and external environments to deal with relevant contemporary problems, different forms of resources and social arrangements that unearth some types of learning, and sometimes provide positive warnings about ample barricades or obstructions to learning that are attributable features of learners, interactions, and organizations (Robinson, 2001, p. 66). Therefore, the ever increasing demand to know more through theories about the most favourable conditions for learning, as well as to understand the processes of both organizational learning and change, in order to improve learning effects is very comprehensible and justifiable (Lähteenmäki, Toivonen & Mattila, 2001, p. 113).

For instance, as a result of the European integration dynamics, learning and learning-related theories have gained major EU significance. The EU has invested heavily in learning both within the EU and externally, in relations between the EU and other regional blocs (Zito & Schout, 2009, p. 1104). According to Zito & Schout (2009,

p. 1104), "exploring the relevance of learning concepts may illuminate the integration process and offer insights into learning in the (EU's) multi-level context. Without this concept, there remains an unsatisfying puzzle about how the EU process has rebounded from its many challenges." From what has been said above, one can clearly comprehend why the relevance of learning theories as benchmarks and fundamental guidelines for effective or high performing intra and cross-organizational collaborative leadership practices need not be overlooked.

Cross-functional teams that range from representatives of specialized subunits of individual organizations and representatives from joint venture partners outside the organization are now increasingly used in interdependent activities with each team responsible for planning and conducting multifaceted activities that require considerable coordination, cooperation, and joint problem solving among parties (Yukl, 2006, p. 320). Again, the researcher may rightly deduce that organizations are neither isolated entities nor archipelagoes, and the occurrence of learning is not restricted to collaborative practices within individual organizations. It also involves organizations building external networks or coordinating with other organizations. Hence, the relevance of learning both as organizations and communities cannot be overemphasized especially for high performing teams.

Varied definitions have been postulated in relation to what constitutes learning organizations and communities. "Learning" may imply either a product of something learned or the process that produced such a product (Argyris & Schön, 1996, p. 3). With specific reference to ideas of organizational action, inquiry, and knowledge, Argyris and Schön (1996, pp. 6-15), see organizations as collectivities and accurately explained the meaning of organizational learning by employing the theory-in-use wherein each member of the organization strives continually to perceive his or herself in a broader picture, in relation to others. There is therefore a continuous and concerted networking or interconnectedness of individuals' images of their activity in the context of their collective interaction (Argyris & Schön, 1996, p. 15).

Senge (1990, p. 6) and his fifth discipline also highlighted the concept of seeing organizations as systems when he identified systemic thinking as the epicenter of the disciplines of the learning organization. The author used the water cycle which consists of a series of events that are distant in time and space, and yet are all connected within the same pattern as an analogy to portray the relevance of systemic thinking as a

discipline. According to Senge (1990, pp. 6-12), systemic thinking, personal mastery, team learning and mental model, "each provides a vital dimension in building organizations that can truly "learn," that can continually enhance their capacity to realize their highest aspirations". System thinking has been designated as the fifth discipline because it integrates the disciplines by fusing them into a coherent body of theory and practice, and with a system orientation, we are motivated to look at how the disciplines interrelate. By enhancing each of the other disciplines, it insinuates and continually reminds us that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Senge, 1990, p. 12). However, system thinking cannot fully function on its own. It also needs the disciplines of building shared vision, mental models, team learning, and personal mastery to realize its potential (Senge, 1990, p. 12).

Argyris & Schön (1996, p. 20), recommended a change or shift in theory-in-use from single-loop (single-feedback loop caused by organizational inquiry) to double-loop learning in order to attain productive organizational learning. Single-loop learning implies "instrumental learning that changes strategies of action or assumptions underlying strategies in ways that leave the values of the theory of action unchanged." Double-loop learning (two-feedback loop mediated by individuals or organizational inquiry) refers to "learning that results in a change in the values of theory-in-use, as well as in its strategies and assumptions" (Argyris & Schön, 1996, pp. 20-21). On the basis of these theoretical foundations, Argyris & Schön (1996, p. 16) expounded that:

> Organizational learning occurs when individuals within an organization experience a problematic situation and inquire into it on the organization's behalf. They experience a surprising mismatch between expected and actual results of action and respond to that mismatch through a process of thought and further action that leads them to modify their images of organization or their understandings of organizational phenomena and to restructure their activities so as to bring outcomes and expectations into line, there by changing organizational theory-in-use. In order to become organizational, the learning that results from organizational inquiry must become embedded in the images of organization held in its members' minds and/or in the epistemological artifacts (the maps, memories, and programs) embedded in the organizational environment.

By implication, one can easily infer that organizational learning is feasible when there is a change in individual and organizational values and these newly acquired values are institutionalized as part of the organizational culture. Argyris & Schön's explanation also unearths the relevance of institutionalized values or organizational culture as a fundamental ingredient and panacea for continuity in high performing teams (see e.g. Spiro, 2011, pp.73-74; Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 6; Schein, 2004, p. 17). According to

Schein (2004, p. 17), the culture of a group or organization can be defined as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptations and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems." Despite so many ways of defining organizational learning, a fundamental aspect of most definitions is collective learning by members of the organization. Vital processes include the discovery of relevant new knowledge, diffusion of this knowledge to people in the organization that are in need of it, and application of the knowledge to develop or improve internal processes and external adaptations respectively. This new learning must become a culture of the organization (institutionalized) in a manner that it is maintained so long as it is not irrelevant. (Yukl, 2009, p. 49.)

In my opinion, the concept of learning organizations and learning communities are seemingly inextricably bonded. Likewise, and as literature seems to portray, organizations need to undergo internal learning before they can successfully build external networks (partnerships/collaboration) and relate with other organizations as communities of practice. Learning organizations and communities are therefore interwoven or adjoined, and the causality is obvious. As observed by Cross (1998, p. 5), the most fundamental and/or logical concept of learning communities is based on the concept of collaborative learning. The term collaborative learning has been captured by its proponents as something of a trademark and has become associated with a distinctive epistemology for learning communities. Cross (1998, p. 4) for instance sees universities (involved in exchange programmes, scholarships, research cooperation and other forms of networking or partnerships) as learning communities, and in that light aptly defines learning communities as "groups of people engaged in intellectual interactions for the purpose of learning". In a similar fashion, Wenger (2000, p. 225) elaborated that, from time immemorial human beings have formed communities that share cultural practices reflecting their collective learning. Furthermore, knowing is an act of participation in complex social learning systems, and the success of organizations depends on their ability to design themselves as social learning systems and also to participate in broader learning systems such as professional groups, an industry, a region, or a consortium. Participation in these communities of practice is also fundamental to our learning (Wenger, 2000, pp. 225-229).

3.1.2 Strategic leadership and collective learning

Many organizations seem unable to master the learning processes despite the fact that organizational learning is a crucial determinant of long-term performance and continuous existence of an organization. Leadership can either influence organizational learning positively, or act as an obstacle to the process. (Yukl, 2009, p. 49.) There are so many frames or lenses through which leadership can be perceived. However, in this study, definitions of leadership that foster intra and particularly inter or cross-organizational collaborative practices, aimed at attaining higher learning have been adopted. In relation to the context of this study, much congruency with Yukl's (2006) and Northouse's (2010) definitions of leadership have been observed. According to Yukl (2006, p. 8) "leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives." Northouse (2010, p. 3) sees it as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal." It is worthy to note that it is not by chance that *process, influence, facilitation, individua*l and *collectiveness,* and *shared values* or *objectives* are some of the key words in both definitions.

One of the major challenges for leadership at all stages in organizations is how to create the kind of conditions that supports, facilitate, and sustain a conducive level of innovation and collective learning (Yukl, 2009, p. 50). Leaders can directly encourage and make possible team learning by what they say and do, and they can indirectly influence it by implementing or adapting relevant programs, systems, and structures (Yukl, 2009, p. 50). Researchers and practitioners have identified many ways leaders can either facilitate or hinder collective learning.

Authentic communication and dialogue

Genuine and reliable communication and dialogue has been observed by many scholars as fundamental determinants of strategic leadership practices that enhances team performance or collective learning (e.g. Mazutis & Slawinski, 2008, pp. 438-449; Yukl & Lepsinger, 2005, p. 20; Yukl, 1994, p. 65; Yukl, 2009, pp. 49-50). Leaders with effective and reliable leadership capabilities such as self-awareness, self-regulation and relational transparency, are best placed to encourage authentic dialogue among organizational members, and thus enable learning at and between multiple

organizational levels (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2008, p. 438). One fundamental prerequisite for team learning is for members of a team to understand each other. Understanding each other's perceptions and role expectations enables members to coordinate their actions more easily. This is possible through dialogue sessions. (Yukl, 2006, p. 333.)

According to Mazutis & Slawinski (2008, p. 447), authentic dialogue characterized by open, honest, and transparent exchanges enables shared meanings and understanding, affects positively the way groups learn to detect and correct errors, encourages members to question assumptions, reduces the feeling that sensitive issues are in-discussable and will have negative consequences, allows both great ideas and pertinent concerns to flow through the organization, and facilitates or increases inevitability of the occurrence of double-loop learning. Their argument is based on the following propositions: The more a strategic leader exhibits the authentic leadership capabilities, the more the organizational culture will be characterized by authentic dialogue. A culture that is characterized by authentic dialogue (open, balanced and transparent communication) will be positively associated with feed-forward learning that promotes double-loop learning, and feedback learning that reinforces double-loop learning (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2008, pp. 447-449).

Yukl (1998, p. 459) observes that "secrecy is the enemy of learning". Many change efforts fail partly because of lack of proper communication and leaders' inability to win a critical mass of followers (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 4). Lack of communication or poor communication triggers "primary and secondary inhibitory loops" or conditions of error. Withholding important information, treating important issues as undiscussable and the existence of scattered information triggers a feeling of mistrust and uneasiness among individuals. Incompatibilities in the organizational theory-in-use are made visible by individuals through interpersonal conflicts (Argyris and Schön, 1996, p. 91). According to Argyris and Schön (1996, pp. 99-100), secondary inhibitory loops like organizational defensive routines, which are activities and policies, enacted within an organizational environment, with the aim of protecting individuals and the organization as a whole from experiencing embarrassments also generates obscurity in correcting relevant problems. Since defensive routines and secondary inhibitory loops related with them are accepted as inevitable or natural, and part and parcel of management it is not amazing that the most common reaction to them is a

sense of helplessness. Furthermore "cynicism leads to pessimism and doubts. For example: Nothing will change around here; they don't really mean it; I doubt if anyone will listen" (Argyris & Schön, 1996, p. 102).

Strategic leadership therefore demands the need for organizational structures that promote effective communication and dialogue that influences collective learning within and between organizations. Such communication requires informing members by disseminating useful information about decisions, plans, activities to people that need it to do work, providing written materials and documents, answering requests for technical information; consulting by checking with people before making changes that affect them, encouraging suggestions for improvement, inviting participation in decision making, incorporating ideas/suggestions of others ; and networking by socializing informally, developing contacts with people who are a source of information and support, and maintaining contacts through periodic interaction, including visits, telephone calls, correspondence, and attendance at meetings and social events. (Argyris & Schön, 1996, p. 91; Yukl, Gordon & Taber, 2002, p. 25; Yukl, 2006, pp. 97-98; Yukl, 1994, p. 65.)

Roles clarity and individuals/groups capabilities
Yukl, Gordon & Taber's (2002, pp. 18-25) hierarchical taxonomy of task, relations and change behaviours, highlighted the relevance of roles clarity, individuals and group capabilities on organizational learning. It is worthy to note that they are just part of a group of scholars with keen interest in leadership effectiveness, which have attempted to spot out the types of behaviors that enhance individual and collective performance. An organization has a greater likelihood of prosperity and sustainability when it has individuals with a high level of skills, commitment, and mutual trust (Yukl & Lepsinger, 2005, p. 20). Individual capabilities enhance shared belief in a team. Shared belief is what Yukl (2006, p. 327), referred to as "collective efficacy or potency." The commitment of individuals in a team is partly a function of the shared belief that the team has the capability to successfully carry out its assignment or project and achieving specific targets. A highly confident team is also likely to have a more positive mood (Yukl, 2006, p. 327.) A downward spiral thus occurs when a team has lower collective efficacy, negative effect, and declining performance (Yukl, 2006, p. 328).

Senge (1990, p. 7) identified personal mastery (special level proficiency) as one of the fundamentals for collaborative learning or "an essential cornerstone of the learning organization." Though acknowledging that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, he was also enthusiastic about "the connections between personal learning and organizational learning, in the reciprocal commitments between individual and organization, and in the special spirit of an enterprise made up of learners" (Senge, 1990, p. 8). Senge and Sterman (1994, p. 198), further argued that limited capabilities and cognitive skills of individuals often lead to poor performance and organizational failure rather than the complexity of the system they are required to manage. Wang and Ahmed (2003, p. 9) also expounded on the link between individual capabilities and collective performance by observing that learning begins with individuals, and a learning organization is built on the learning process of individuals in the organization. Wang and Ahmed (2003, p. 15) however, noted that it is the role of the learning organization to put together or incorporate individual learning into collective learning through a series of interactions between individuals in the organization, and interactions between organizations as an entity, and between the organization and its contexts (system thinking).

Effective leadership practices that foster individual and group capabilities require the provision of opportunities for skills development, coaching and advice, and assisting people learn how to improve their skills (Yukl, Gordon & Taber, 2002, p. 25). It also demands the creation and maintenance of a learning culture through collaborative team working, employee empowerment and involvement, facilitation of interaction and strengthening of the knowledge base (Wang & Ahmed, 2003, pp. 10-13).

The performance of a team is not only a function of the motivation and skills of the members. It also relies on how members are organized to use their skills. The design of work roles and delegation of people to them determine how efficiently the team carries out its work. Therefore team performance will be higher when members have the knowledge and skills necessary to do the work and they understand what to do, how to do it, and when it must be done (clear role expectations) especially in complex and difficult tasks. (Yukl, 2006, p. 325.) It also depends on the degree to which the interdependent activities of various members are mutually consistent and coordinated (Yukl, 2006, p. 326). Effectiveness can also be improved through task-oriented behaviors such as clarifying work roles and task objectives by providing direction in

how to do the work, communicating a clear understanding of job responsibilities and task objectives, informing others who need to know about the delegation, and by specifying reporting requirements, deadlines, monitoring operations and employee performance. (Yukl & Lepsinger, 2005, p. 20; Yukl, 2006, pp. 105-107; Yukl 1994, p. 65.)

Monitoring and evaluation

According to Argyris and Schön (1996, p. 28) inquiry or the detection and correction of errors is fundamental to organizational learning. However many individuals and organizations are mesmerized by Model I theory-in-use behaviors that are characterized by defensiveness, conflict-avoidance and self-protection, which prevent errors from unearthing or from being addressed properly (Argyris and Schön, 1996, p. 28). There is a great likelihood that learning from experience will occur when a systematic analysis is made after an important activity is finished, to discover the reasons for success or failure (Yukl, 2006, p. 332). Monitoring and evaluation are also essential in maintaining situational awareness. Situational awareness entails knowledge about external and internal processes that have an effect on a leader's organization or group (Yukl & Lepsinger, 2005, p. 21). It is tricky and hard to analyze the sources of a problem and identify good solutions without a lucid understanding of previous activities and decisions that defined how the organization arrived at that state, the attitudes of people that will be affected by major change, and the political processes that establish how strategic decisions are approved. (Yukl & Lepsinger, 2005, p. 21.)

Yukl (2006, p. 332) employs the term "after-activity review" to connote the process of collectively evaluating or analyzing the processes and corresponding outcomes of a team activity. Members of the team need to examine the following: what was done well in the activity; what can be improved the next time a similar activity is conducted; their initial plans and objectives for the activity, the procedures used to carry out the activity; problems encountered in doing the activity; key decisions that were made, and the outcomes so that the group can plan to apply what has been learned to improve future performance. (Yukl, 2006, p. 332.) Yukl (2006, p. 333) further advised that evaluations should be objectively carried out and should focus on improving future performance rather than criticizing or blaming individuals for failures or errors. In fact "no blame" is one of the laws of the fifth discipline (Senge, 1990, p. 67). As group

members and leaders we should avoid blaming outside circumstances (government, changes in the marketplace, press, competitions, partners etc) for our problems. Systems thinking demonstrates to us that there is no outside or someone else, that you and the source of your problems are part of a single system, and the cure or solution lies in your relationship with your "enemy" .(Senge, 1990, p. 67.)

Checking on the progress and quality of the work that is being done or has been done, and evaluating individual and team performance in relation to change objectives is therefore very crucial in high performing teams and successful change efforts (see e.g. Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 105; Yukl, Gordon & Taber, 2002. P. 25). To gain regular information about relevant events and trends, it is very important for leaders to develop a broad network of contacts both inside and outside the organization that can provide information that is neither available from formal communications nor from regular information systems. Even when the organization has a good information system, leaders can still improve on their awareness of organizational processes and problems by visiting facilities, observing operations firsthand, and meeting with employees, customers, and suppliers. (Yukl & Lepsinger, 2005, p. 21.)

Mutual trust and cohesiveness

Good and well managed teams might fail in attaining targets if there is a high degree of lack of cooperation and mutual trust among members. Cooperation is particularly indispensable when the mission requires members to share information, resources, assist each other, and operate together in close proximity for a long period of time in stressful or challenging conditions. Nonexistence of trust and cohesiveness is more likely to be a problem in newly formed teams (Yukl. 2006, p. 327). Collaboration is more likely when members identify with the team, value their membership in it, and are intrinsically inspired and motivated to support it (Yukl, 2006, p. 327).

Resources and political support

Strategic and effective leadership plans for required resources. Organizational performance is also a function of obtaining required information, resources and political support needed for implementation or execution of work. Appropriate resources may include budgetary funds, tools and equipment, supplies and materials, and facilities (Yukl, 2006, p. 327).

3.2   Capacity and skills development

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2006, p. 3), capacity is the ability of individuals, institutions and societies to perform functions, solve problems, set goals and achieve those goals in a sustainable way. The UNDP (2008, p. 4) further defines capacity development as "the process through which individuals, organizations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain their capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time". The simple logic here is that capacity development entails the process of building skills and their subsequent use, management and retention, and resides within individuals, organizational level and enabling environment (UNDP, 2008, p. 5). One can rightly assume that skills development is an integral component of the broader concept of capacity development. Individuals are bestowed with a blend of capacities that enables them to perform either at home; at work or the society as a whole. These capacities can be acquired either through formal training and education or through learning by doing and experience (UNDP, 2008.p. 6).

In the report on the Skills Development Strategy for Economic and Employment Growth in South Africa (Department of labour, 2001, p. 1), "skill" is defined "as applied competence". "Applied competence" is an overstretched term which encloses the following types of competence: practical competence, which is our demonstrated ability to perform a set of tasks; foundational competence, which is the ability to understand our deeds and those of others and why; and reflexive skills, which connotes an individual's ability to integrate or connect their performance with an understanding of the performance of others so that she or he can learn from her actions and be able to adapt to changes and unanticipated state of affairs. Johanson and Adams (2004, p. 2) used the term Skills development to generally refer to the outcome of the learning process.

Giving the chance for common citizens to take part in and influence decision-making processes most importantly at local level is a core component of good governance (Canada Corps, 2005, p. 2). The World Bank (1995, p. 10) observed that participation is "a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them". In my opinion, cross-organizational collaborative leadership in skills development especially

in rural communities of South could be one way of doing so. Johnson (2001, p. 529) asserted that the practice of democratic ideals like participatory governance and empowerment has portrayed some positive results in strengthening the livelihoods of poor people in rural areas.

3.3   Skills development and relevance to rural communities

The economic potential of rural Africa and the future welfare of its residents crucially depend on the infusion of marketable skills through innovative informal and formal training for all age groups and education levels, but especially children and youth (Bryceson, 1999, pp. 185-186). Human capital development is a process that enhances the knowledge and skills of an individual, and his productive capacity at home, community or work place. Skills, therefore represent the attainment and mastery of knowledge and processes used to earn a living, which may be obtained either formally or informally through higher education and training (tertiary, technical and vocational), and on the job training through apprenticeship and practice. (Johanson & Adams, 2004, p. 15.)

Education and training are great investments for individuals, employers, and the economy. Skilled manpower is more readily able to adapt existing knowledge and processes. Investing in people's skills and productivity reduces poverty by raising incomes and improves the lives of economically marginalized or vulnerable groups. Development of human capital does not only translate to higher worker productivity but also facilitates the absorption of workers into the economy, as well as improves their ability to change jobs or sectors (job mobility). It also enhances efficiency in the labour market. Skills development has also become more important and difficult as wars and health issues like HIV/AIDS in Africa deplete scarce human capital and increase the demand to replenish skills lost across a broad spectrum of occupational fields. Skills are therefore relevant in increasing incomes and sustainable livelihoods for the poor and economic growth. (Johanson & Adams, 2004, pp. 15-17.)

An educated population therefore remains the essential foundation for attaining a majority of other Millennium Development Goals (MDG) since literate and skilled individuals are better placed to acquire useful and decent formal employment, generate

employment opportunities for themselves and other people, which can further translate into a reduction in income disparities, unemployment, want, and an increase in the population's general standard of living. (Gakusi, 2010, p. 219; Republic of South Africa, 2010, p. 41.) Moreover, education provides a concrete foundation for lifelong learning and acquiring skills, which are ever increasing fundamental ingredients of a dynamic knowledge-based society. It is of specific importance to vulnerable groups like women because it provides them with required means and ability to occupy leadership positions and broadens their scope of participating in making decisions that affect their lives. Furthermore it enables women to make more strategic choices around employment, sexual and reproductive health and childcare. (Republic of South Africa, 2010, p. 41.)

Indeed one can make a proposition that skills development humanly contributes to the security of marginalized individuals and disadvantaged communities. Since the dissemination of the concept of human security by the United Nations (UN), South Africa has been amongst the countries that are very fascinated about the new model and have been able to mirror human security ideals in state activities (Ferreira & Henk, 2009, p. 501). Human security, which emphasizes on the extensive well-being of people, has since the publication of the development report of 1993 become a benchmark for the extensive definitions of security emerging throughout the universe (UNDP 1994, pp. 22-24). According to the UN, security should focus on people and must consist of the essential elements of freedom from fear and freedom from want. Apart from protection from physical violence, human security includes safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease, rigorous economic deprivation, political repression and sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life (UNDP, 1994, p. 3). Willet (2001, p. 6) concluded that human security "embraces the idea that each human being or community has the right to a certain quality of life, and anything that enhances the quality of life; for example, economic growth, improved access to resources, or social or political empowerment, are enhancement of human security. Conversely, anything that erodes a person's or community's quality of life erodes their basic right to security." A skilled and empowered rural South Africa can therefore foster human security through self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods.

NGOs and development practitioners are increasingly focusing their attention on strategies which build upon local knowledge, skills and resources so as to enhance self-reliance in rural dwellers and sustainable development of communities (Binns & Nel,

1999, p. 389; Nikkhah & Redzuan, 2010, p. 85). Capacity building and self-reliance are some of the ways that communities could be assisted to become empowered and eventually attain sustainable development (Nikkhah & Redzuan, 2010, p. 85). The concept of self-reliance or local development initiatives encourages individuals and communities to confront the fundamental reality of poverty by taking control of their own destiny (Binns & Nel, 1999, p. 390; Murdoch, 2000, p. 412).

Marginalized people who form a greater proportion of the world's population, at any given time, will not have access to so-called global phenomena (globalization). However ideas or concepts like *Self-reliance* (Local Economic Development) which emphasizes on local control, reliance on local skills and initiative seems to be part of the few realistic development ways available to the rural poor who are seemingly abandoned by the Western-dominated global economy. (Binns & Nel, 1999, p. 390.) Through skills development, communities develop capacities (abilities, skill and knowledge) of mobilizing resources, planning and evaluating community projects and solving problems, so as to gain mastery and control of their lives (Nikkhah & Redzuan, 2010, p. 85). Hence as a component of the process of surviving, inhabitants of the world's poorest societies are becoming increasingly reliant on indigenous technical knowledge, production systems and livelihoods (Binns & Nel, 1999, p. 390). Tangible benefits such as improved social and economic conditions are accrued when rural dwellers engage in *self-reliance* initiatives that stimulate, create and maintain business activity and employment (see Binns & Nel, 1999, p. 392; Nel & McQuaid, 2002, pp. 60-62). It appears such initiatives are attainable only if local people have relevant and appropriate skills and relevant support from authorities of their local areas. There is therefore much logic to observe that through skills development rural communities become empowered and self-reliant since their potentials are developed and they rely on their local resources. Thus capacity building is a form of the sate and NGOs approach to development that builds independence and sustainable communities (Nikkhah & Redzuan, 2010, p. 8).

The relevance of skills development to rural dwellers and communities can also be observed or spotted through the lens of rural *income diversification*. Many analysts see income diversification and livelihoods as a vital coping strategy for the rural poor. Rural income diversification discourages rural exodus and adds a new and more immediate dimension to rural life and household welfare as rural dwellers actively

become part of the occupational change in place with far-reaching effects on the *social cohesion* of rural households and the political balance of local communities and nationstates (see Bryceson, 1999, pp. 171-175). According to Bryceson (1999, p. 172), rural income diversification is an expansion of rural dwellers' income sources away from own farm labour and is characterized by the following dimensions: change in labour form from peasant household labour to wage labour, individual self-employment, and other income transfer (pensions, rent), increased substitution of the tendency for subsistence-based activities and increasing replacement of agricultural work with non-agricultural activities. The rationale here is that rural income diversification through skills development opportunities reduces overdependence on peasant farming as the sole income generating means and reduces the vulnerability of rural households to agricultural production failures.

The concept of *partnership* is indispensable in developing capacities and empowering rural communities, and is a core component of the Local Economic Development theories. Nair and Campbell (2008, pp. 45-53) focused their work on a project between marginalized communities and support agencies, aimed at building partnerships to facilitate local responses to HIV/AIDS in a remote rural community in South Africa. Developing the skills of rural dwellers was the focal point of such a project. According to Nair & Campbell (2008, p. 45), the Entabeni project, which is a form of partnership that involves local communities and support agencies from public, private & NGO sectors, has been successful in its objective of training volunteer health workers in home-based care, peer education, project management and procedures for gaining access to grants and services, with the overall aim of empowering local volunteers to lead HIV prevention and AIDS care, and increase the responsiveness of public services to local needs. Trained through uncoordinated inputs from different stakeholders (NGOs, missionaries and government) local health volunteers provide the only assistance available to many with AIDS illness. (Nair & Campbell, 2008, p. 46.)

Studies have also indicated that participation and skills development does not only create *human capital* and *livelihoods* but also generate *social capital*. For instance, Nel & McQuaid (2002, p. 71) examined how LED, forged by knowledgeable, experienced and highly interested community leaders and social entrepreneurs in Stutterheim, South Africa evolved through respective phases. According to Nel & McQuaid (2002, p. 71), these entrepreneurs and community leaders together with inhabitants of Stutterheim

community created new and inventive ways of linking formerly antagonistic groups and bringing them together to promote the development of the township and its economy through an organization called Stutterheim Development Foundation (SDF). In doing so they made a significant improvement in the social capital (network of links and relationships) of the township.

3.4   Collaboration between NGOs and education leaders

NGOs have attracted increased attention among scholars and development practitioners and are now increasingly important representatives and actors in the developments process of developing countries by playing a pivotal role as a partner in key areas like capacity building. Conversely, there is an ongoing notion that the NGOs represent a viable alternative to government as channels of development assistance specially in developing states. (Nikkhah & Redzuan, 2010, p. 85.) Most NGOs perceive themselves as catalysts for change and cooperate with the education sector in identifying problems, design of programmes and implementation of interventions with the aim of strengthening capacity of the country (Ulleberg, 2009, p. 20). Despite the existence of doubts and mistrust at the initial point of partnership between NGOs and government, the state is becoming increasingly open to NGO participation in public sector planning and management. This has resulted in increased forging of partnerships and emergence of different modalities and levels of capacity development. (Ulleberg, 2009, p. 23.)

There is growing acknowledgement that planning processes that have the involvement of many stakeholders can facilitate ownership of common issues and can forge partnerships that contribute to the achievement of goals (Hall & Thomas, 2005, p. 70). State-civil society partnership is broadly defined as "a gross-sectoral interaction whose purpose is to achieve convergent objectives through the combined efforts of both sets of actors but where the respective roles and responsibilities of both actors involved remain distinct. The essential rationale is that these interactions generate synergistic effects: that is more/and or better outcomes are attained than if the partners acted independently" (Brinkerhoff, 1998, p. 2). As partners, NGOs and educational leaders play specific and unique roles which are mutually beneficial in skills development.

3.4.1 Unique roles of NGOs

As actors in development, NGOs have become key service providers in countries where the government alone cannot accomplish its traditional role as the main provider of services. In the education sector, many NGOs have transformed beyond gap-filling projects into capacity building activities. NGOs have therefore reacted accordingly with the paradigm shift in development discourse towards developing skills and tools for strengthening society. Their strongest wish is to remain important stakeholders in development and to impart their wide-ranging knowledge in the education sector. This involvement changes the ways in which NGOs operate and thus complement traditional service provision with capacity building activities. (Ulleberg, 2009, p. 8.)

In South Africa NGOs are recognized as key stakeholders in skills development (Mandisa, 2005, p. 7). As stakeholders in skills development, NGOs have certain unique roles that they can better perform than government agencies which make them mutually important partners in skills development. NGOs have the capacity to innovate and adapt more quickly than national governments. Therefore, vis-à-vis skills development their actions can be of great benefit to the nation as a whole and in rural communities in particular if they scale up their activities and impart their knowledge and techniques at the government level. (Ulleberg, 2009, p. 9.) Their action is often described as small scale, flexible, dynamic, adaptive, local, efficient and innovative. All these abilities make them complementary to state action. Since the state's capacity and structure impedes the flexibility necessary to try new education approaches it cannot compete with NGOs' ability and desire to innovate. (Sequeira, Modesto & Maddox, 2007, p. 44.)

Moreover, NGOs are also perceived as being more flexible and dynamic than donor agencies and international organizations because of their ability and willingness to adapt easily to the specific political, economic and social contexts of a particular country (Sequeira, Modesto & Maddox, 2007, p. 44; Ulleberg, 2009, p. 12). According to Nikkhah & Redzuan (2010, pp. 85-89), they are good at reaching and mobilizing the poor and remote communities, they help empower poor people to gain control of their lives, and they work with and strengthen local institutions, they carry out projects at lower costs and more efficiently than the government agencies and they promote sustainable community development through service delivery such as relief, welfare, basic skills educational provision and public policy advocacy and watchdog. In relation

to advocacy, Aisha (2004, p. 5) observed that beyond political and policy concerns, civil society organizations also perform a much broader communicative function, providing the vehicle through which artistic, spiritual, cultural, ethnic, occupational and recreational feelings find expression.

3.4.2 Unique roles of the education sector

Educational leaders have an important role to play in skills development. Governments have to see into it that they are involved in the planning, financing, production, delivery and evaluation of public services. Moreover, they have to creatively and innovatively deal with change and initiate policies, programmes, and projects that will contribute in dealing with societal problems in order to attain a fruitful and sustainable future. (Musyoka & Mbeva, 2005, p. 39.)

The government must act transparently so that citizens are given the room to get access to information and the chance to be involved in holding the government accountable for the outcomes of the products and also to make sure that they actively participate in the process of creating an enabling environment that fosters governance. (Ayee, 2002, p. 29.) By implication, educational leaders in charge of skills development and vocational training and continuing education are instrumental in ushering a conducive and enabling climate for collaboration (see DHET, 2010). Moreover, the government can also act as a catalyst to the change process by bringing together multiple stakeholder groups in decision making and also facilitate the process of governance through stimulating action on complex, interconnected problems by collaborating with the civil society and the private sector. (De Beer, Stewart, Mokgupi & Moloi, 2007, p. 10.) The education sector therefore has a broad spectrum of unique responsibilities to play in order to ensure partnership and promote progressive governance, especially in the light of building and reinforcing skills.

According to Johanson and Adams (2004, p. 5), the state can be proactive in roles such as developing policies, setting standards, investing in training materials and instructors, funding training so as to meet equity goals and fill strategic skills shortages, carrying out skills training in priority areas in which non-governmental providers are unwilling to invest, improving public information about the training system, and carrying out evaluations of training. Fox, Ward and Howard (2002), after a baseline study, summed up a report that identified and categorized the unique roles of the public

sector in promoting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The main responsibility of the education sector is to provide an enabling environment for collaboration in skills development. According to Fox et al (2002, pp. 1-7), the public sector has played a range of roles in providing an enabling environment, which include but not limited to the following four key roles: *mandating, facilitating, partnering* and *endorsing.*

The term *mandating* means that governments at different levels play the role of defining minimum standards for business performance rooted within the legal framework, like establishing values or requirements for leaders of organizations to take particular factors into consideration when making decisions, and applying the best available techniques in the implementation.

In relation to their "*facilitating*" role, governments enable or incentivize organizations to engage with the CSR agenda. The government plays a catalytic, secondary, or supporting role that stimulates the engagement of stakeholders. As a facilitator, the public sector provides funding for research, lead campaigns, lead information collation and dissemination, training or raising awareness. It can also develop and support appropriate management tools and mechanisms like benchmarks and guidelines for company management systems or reporting, and can stimulate pro-CSR markets by creating fiscal incentives.

The idea of *partnering* or *partnership* is centrally embedded in the CSR agenda. "Strategic partnerships can bring the complementary skills and inputs of the public sector, the private sector, and civil society in tackling complex social and environmental problems". In their partnership role, government agencies may act as participants or facilitators.

In relation to *endorsing*, endorsement can manifest in different ways such as through policy documents, the demonstration of public sector management practices or direct recognition of efforts of individual organizations through awards. However, there is always a thin line between these key roles. According to Fox et al (2002, p. 7) in addition to those principal roles indicated above, the public sector also performs the unique roles of setting and ensuring compliance with minimum standards (quality assurance and accreditation) and issuing certifications.

Inspired by the principal objective of building skills and empowering the community, NGO interventions are known for involving local stakeholders, being adaptive to the local context, rendering education and developing capacity. In the field

of education, their knowledge in the area of education implementation and management add more value to their significance as actors. Moreover, notwithstanding the complexity and vagueness of the education sector, and capacity development and governance respectively, cooperating with the government through tangible actions gives real content to the concept of capacity development. It is therefore logical to postulate that the government and NGOs influence each other mutually. (Ulleberg, 2009, p. 17.)

3.4.3 Possible areas/modes and benefits of collaboration

NGOs are one of those actors outside the government that participate in the development enterprise in general, and specifically in the education sector, by contributing to reaching the Education for All (EFA) goals, Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and related international policy objectives (Ulleberg, 2009, p. 14). In relation to collaboration, a shift in policy trends to decentralization of tasks, authority, policy planning and implementation come into play (see Clayton, 1998: 21). The Africa Governance Forum recognizes the importance of forging government-NGO partnerships at the local level in order to strengthen local governments through decentralization (UNDP, 2007, p. 16). The formalization of non-formal education provided by NGOs has blurred the boundaries between educational activities of the state and NGOs, drawn NGOs closer to the government and thus underscore the ever increasing complexity and relevance of NGO-government relations (Miwa, 2003, p. 247). NGOs have been described as vital sources of capacity that can be given a free role to complement and improve the effectiveness of the public sector. Furthermore, they can be employed both in implementing capacity development plans and monitoring the results of plans implemented by the government (OECD, 2006, p. 29).

The relevance of collaboration between the civil society and government in education has been clearly noted by the Dakar Framework of Action which explicitly underscores the role of the state as central in the provision of basic education and recommends the need for improved involvement of the civil society in education programmes through engagement and participation in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies for educational development. (UNESCO, 2000, p. 8.) The EFA agenda which demands governments to expand on access and quality education has created a pool of opportunities for NGOs to be involved in education and training

since the government does not have enough capacity required to attain EFA goals in time (Ulleberg, 2009, p. 15). Governments have broadly accepted the important role of NGOs, especially concerning service provision to the socially excluded and are aware that their national and international education goals cannot be reached without the active participation of NGOs (Ulleberg, 2009, p. 20). Collaboration therefore enhances goal attainment in education and training.

In addition to pure service provision, NGO participation in skills development is interpreted or observed as a way of amplifying the legitimacy of public and social policy thereby improving upward accountability by augmenting the chances of reaching internationally set policy goals, and downward accountability by ensuring civil society representation at local level. NGOs also have the experience of cooperating with local government officials by carrying out project updates for the government, informing the ministry about their activities and participating in local meetings. (Ulleberg, 2009, p. 23.)

NGOs are an important element in the policy formulation process (Ulleberg, 2009, p. 16). While playing the watchdog role through budget tracking, watching over the use of resources and monitoring government compliance with set goals or values NGOs also act as policy partners, which make them insiders or outsiders in relations with government when making efforts to influence policy, norms and practices in skills development. NGOs can therefore effectively contribute to capacity development when invited by government to offer advice and to participate in the policy dialogue and the drafting of policy plans. Consultations between the government and NGOs help to develop government capacities on policy issues. (Ulleberg, 2009, p. 30.) One may perceive that improvement in policy may translate into better skills development strategies and practices. The NGOs' role in capacity building has therefore expanded from resource mobilization and local education management to participation in defining education and assessing quality and processes through institutionalized and systemic involvement in local governance with the overall aim of building the capacity of schools and communities (see Ulleberg, 2009, pp. 28-29; UNESCO, 2001, pp. 13-14; USAID, 2002, p. 52).

The World Bank (WB) reiterates that engagements between the state and NGOs have a meaningful and concrete impact on the demand and supply part of development, and fostering both government and civil society capacity. A number of WB operations have proven that state-civil society engagements contribute to well targeted, more

effective, and sustainable projects. Collaboration also benefits NGOs themselves since it can strengthen their organizational capacities. Moreover, it favours social control of state programs by communities and aggrandizement of participatory democracy. (Siri, 2002, p. 4.) Wood (2007, p. 3) also claims that sharing common goals as partners also enhances the capacity of the state, while acknowledging the social functions, political role and independence of NGOs. Collaboration between NGOs and the government can improve the education sector by staying away from the duplication of activities, by mainstreaming successful NGO experiences and innovative approaches, and by finding ways to fit non-formal education into the formal education structure (MacAbbey, 2007, p. 3). Furthermore, and as earlier indicated, collaboration generates mutual benefits for both NGOs and the state because "the anchoring of NGO interventions within government institutions while mainstreaming is critical to future sustainability of NGO activities and the development and sustainability of a coherent and functioning public educational system" (Jagannathan,1999, p. 44).

3.5 Possible challenges and solutions to collaboration and skills development

In the previous chapter the study broadly expounded on leadership that influences learning. At this point the researcher aims at relating literature that focuses on collaboration within the context of NGOs and the education sector. At this stage it is also worthwhile to have a comprehension of the challenges that confront collaboration and skills development, and various ways to circumvent those obstacles.

3.5.1 Challenges and solutions to collaboration

Mutual resentment and lack of trust remain important obstacles to cooperation (Ulleberg 2009, p. 23). USAID (2002, p. 62) carried out empirical studies on partnerships in education between NGOs and governments and highlighted the complexity, and mutual suspicion that exists in NGO - state relationships that hamper collaboration. According to USAID, some governments see NGOs' interventions as some sort of trespassing and offensive to the legitimacy of the government. Conversely, NGOs treat the government as a limitation to be ignored or avoided so as to meet their self-appointed moral mandate.

Governments generally react positively to NGO involvement in education provision, but less so when it comes to capacity development activities that might be considered too 'political' or 'extensive' and that could endanger the governmental monopoly of the education sector. UNESCO (2003, p. 3), expressed the opinion that disagreements related to issues of capacity arise specifically when NGOs embark in projects that exceed pure education provision (training, coaching teachers and developing curricula and learning materials). Mistrust, antagonism (us vs. them) and the fight for legitimacy remain common problems affecting NGO - state relations in most African states. Unless they become partners with government, and not competitors, capacity-building initiatives will continue to be stunted. (Ulleberg, 2009, P. 8.)

Apart from their general estrangement from the state, NGOs continue to suffer from a lack of resources (Ulleberg, 2009, p. 8). There are allegations or arguments that the failure of governments to meet donors' objectives has partly generated an increment in international support for NGOs. Thus, such cynicism has resulted in preference for funding institutions in NGOs. (Degnbol-Martinussen & Engberg-Pedersen, 1999, p. 157 & Mayhew, 2005, p. 728.) However, relying predominantly on this sort of funding either from state or external donors has forced critics to accuse NGOs of compromising their autonomy. According to Nelson (2006, p. 709), governments and donors have substantial influence on strategic choices, political orientation and programmatic practices of NGOs. Moreover, some observers have also noted that NGOs rapidly collapse when there is no external funding. In his account on the historical evolution of NGOs in South Africa, Julie (2009, p. 16) noted how NGOs were encouraged to develop income generating strategies that will keep them financially sustainable and thus mitigate the effects of developing funding crisis. Having good financial strategies—cost constraint, income generating projects, diversification of services etc. that makes provision for a backup enables NGOs to cope during funding gaps (Julie, 2006, p. 142). Inspired by the desire to meet the challenges of sustainability, NGOs started to establish networks and forums, which led to the formation of South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO). Such Networking amongst NGOs was also encouraged by donors since it reduces the cost of administrative expenses and management of funding contracts (Julie, 2009, p. 16).

The lack of adequate capacities, communication and access to information are also points of concern. Though projects serve immediate, short-term goals, such

projects are void of sustainable, long-term economic, social and institutional development. Problems like the duplication of tasks which has at times been a direct consequence of the lack of dialogue, lack of adequate capacities from both NGOs and government to engage properly in education and training provision, and lack of sustainability associated with NGO actions. (Ulleberg, 2009, p. 22.) The capacity development approach views the lack of government capacity to be more of an obstacle than the state itself. Capacity development implies placing the state in a leading role, assisting in developing its capacities, and endorsing governmental and social ownership of the development process. (Ulleberg, 2009, pp. 14, 18.)

Practicing *strategic partnership* is the key to effective collaboration. However, as Lendrum (2003, p. 6) argued, terms such as strategic partnering, partnerships and alliances are in themselves very irrelevant. What is vital or significant are the fundamental principles, concepts, practices, attitudes, mindsets, and behaviors that define and make them work. Therefore the kinds of words (e.g. collaboration, strategic partnerships, partnering relationships, community networks etc) used to describe these forms of relationships do not really matter. Lendrum (2003, p. 7) broadly defined strategic partnership as "the cooperative development of successful, long-term, strategic relationships, based on mutual trust, world class/best practice, sustainable competitive advantage and benefits for all the partners; relationships which have a further separate and positive impact outside the partnership/alliance." The need to improve our understanding of the term and its true embodiment invites a further dissection of key words in the definition: *Cooperative development*—it is a "cooperative, collaborative, continuous and breakthrough improvement, trustworthy, 'development' based on the shared vision and common goals/objectives for which individuals and joint teams hold themselves mutually accountable, as opposed to confrontational, adversarial 'development'" ; *Successful* –as measured against accepted key performance indicators; *Long-term*—minimum five years and no exact maximum terms since numbers become increasingly less important as the true nature of the relationship becomes clear; *Strategic*—as relationships are critical to the well-being of the partner organizations and there is a high level of interdependence amongst partners on the success or failure of the relationship; *Mutual trust* —"simply without trust the partnership or alliance will not work". There is the need for unconditional trust based on accepted rules of engagement, competence and character; *World class/best practice*—as jointly

benchmarked by partners in relation to best practice; *Mutual benefit for all partners*— a mutually beneficial, win/win relationship with sharing of both the risks and the benefits; and *Separate and positive impact*—such a relationship yields rewards for the partner organizations that exceed the partnership itself, e.g. genuine strategic partnerships become role models, points of reference and excellence.(Lendrum, 2003, pp. 7-11.)

According to Lendrum (2003, pp. 144-149) strategic partnerships become motivational and prevail when fear is removed, departmental barriers are broken, ownership is developed, commitment has been gained, people are empowered, there is leadership, conflict has been resolved, hidden agendas have been removed, trust developed, information and communication improved, the cost has been reduced and values added.

3.5.2 Challenges and solutions to skills development

Many scholarly works seem to indicate that poor rural education, HIV/AIDS and other social issues, access, quality and market relevance of programmes are some of the core challenges that hamper skills development initiatives in rural South Africa. This subchapter expounds on possible challenges and solutions to skills development.

Rural education

Just like in any other part of the globe, employers in Africa want to recruit trainable workers. To employers, it doesn't matter much if a prospective employee does not already have vocational skills. A small number of specialized skills needed in most entry-level jobs can be learned after employment. What recruiters or employers need most are the basic academic skills taught in general education at the primary and secondary levels such as the ability to communicate, calculate, follow directions, solve problems, learn on the job, and work in teams. This is a clear indication of why basic education is so important to the development of professional or career skills. (Johanson & Adams, 2004, p. 86.) Many employers in Africa cherish employing people with little previous training and place them through on-the-job training programmes since the pool of unskilled workers is so abundant that they can easily choose employees that they can train. A solid educational base is a top requirement for efficient skills formation. Acquiring occupational skills is not a once off exercise or a project that is done at a go. Early investment in basic education and vocational skills helps introduce the individual

into the job market. Fundamental education enables individuals to become learners in their entire lives, specialize, and update themselves in accordance with economic openings and change in technology. (Johanson & Adams, p. 86.) This in a way explains the indispensability of basic education especially as the most cost-effective use of public resource and enhancing skills development. However, Johanson and Adams (2004, p. 87) argued that many primary and secondary schools in Sub-Saharan Africa poorly teach the basic skills and provide exceedingly useless information void of local context.

In spite of the fact that investment in human capital development has proven to generate the best dividend especially in early years of schooling, most African states tend to invest the lowest in early years and thus pay heavily for ineffective remedial actions in later years (Marope, 2010, p. 14). Marope further observed that Early Child Care and Development (ECCD) makes possible a structure of systemic investment in the beginning years of life, which if well conceived involves a complete set of policies, strategies and programmes that aim to make easy the holistic development of children right from birth. Worldwide experience indicates that a poor start in education puts at risk a country's human capital development efforts and other efforts, whose success is mutually dependent on well developed human capital or skills. Effective ECCD programmes have proven to considerably reduce the impact of structural poverty in children's quality of life by improving their ability and readiness to learn at later stages. (Marope, 2010, p.15.)

However, for a majority of rural children in Africa, the physical environment where learning takes place is not safe and not stimulating. A small number of community based preschools in rural areas "had books, play materials, writing materials, furniture or outside play equipment". Certain structures are poorly built and are not safe for children and teachers. (Marope, 2010, p. 19.) Taking into cognizance the issue of quality basic education in a broader African context, Gakusi (2010, p. 219), postulated that quality problems vary with the country and the level of education of the country in question. However, the following reasons are frequently cited for poor quality basic education: low completion rates, unqualified, inexperienced and less motivated teachers, inadequate teaching materials, poor supervision and accountability systems, inadequate study time due to teacher's attrition and absenteeism, illness, family obligations and

political disruptions, and inappropriate curricula, shortage of resources, improper distribution and misuse of resources within the education sector. (Gakusi, 2010, p. 219.)

Problems of access to and quality of rural basic education in South Africa have compounded the challenges of skills development in rural South Africa. According to Gardiner (2008, p. 7) the constitution, Schools Act and numerous education policy documents of South Africa underscore the need for all the country's learners to have equal access to quality teaching and learning opportunities. However, many schools especially in rural areas face serious challenges such as the lack of facilities and services with a corresponding negative influence on the quality of education available to learners. Notwithstanding the fact that it is Africa's most industrialized nation with greatly superior resources, South Africa's children are habitually underachieving in education (Bloch, 2009, p. 17). Post-apartheid education provisioning is still at an appalling state, and the worst affected groups of learners are those in historically disadvantaged rural communities of South Africa. Such a situation reinforces social and economic marginalization of the rural poor (Bloch, 2009, pp. 58-59).

Despite significant progress made by South Africa in addressing the huge educational disparities and inequities that were inherited from the apartheid regime, the quality of education still remains worrisome, and major socio-economic obstacles also contribute to continuous retardation of progress on the provision of quality education (Republic of South Africa, 2010, p. 49). While acknowledging the substantial improvement in policy and practice, Motala and Dieltiens (2010, p. 2-3) also observe that educational access in South Africa is still poor in attendance and quality, and inefficient in outcomes. Many children have been excluded or are at the risk of being excluded from basic education. In their opinion, such exclusion occurs in the form of but not limited to out-of-school children, repetition and drop-out, poor quality teaching and learning, which is triggered by poverty, uninviting schools, limited household support and negative perceptions—little economic reward for staying in school.

In response to the insecure state of the South African public education system, the Education Roadmap was deployed to stimulate educational policymakers and practitioners to action, get the required support for schools, get teachers and learners involved in the teaching-learning process, and eventually produce a functioning and good quality system of education (CREATE, 2009, p. 1). Successive research aimed at improving quality especially in schools in rural communities of South Africa confirmed

the need to develop extended visions of access that combines physical access with sufficient learning facilities, enrolment and progression at the right age, improved levels of achievement, improved health and nutritional status of children, higher levels of time on task, and better targeting of pro-poor subsidies (CREATE, 2009, p. 2). Arendse (2011, pp. 356-357) suggested a radical review of laws and policies governing schools funding. Seroto (2012, p. 83) also recommended that the government of South Africa needs to rethink and reconsider its strategies on reconstructing and developing rural communities, and more importantly, to augment its involvement in the provision of resources to learners in rural schools. Furthermore, the state's rural development strategies should comprise the provision of technical and vocational education and training for rural communities, take note of the diversity of rural communities, and should reflect more extensive moves to maximize growth and poverty reduction (Seroto, 2012, p. 83).

HIV/AIDS and other social issues

With specific reference to Swaziland, Marope (2010, p. 7) sees HIV/AIDs as a serious deterrent to human capital development. HIV/AIDS depletes scarce human capital and increases the need to replace skills lost across a broad spectrum of occupations (Johanson & Adams, 2004, P.1). According to Johanson and Adams (2004, p. 4) the position of the labour force in Sub-Saharan Africa is shaped by wars, diseases and the need for economic reforms. For Johanson and Adams, the influence of HIV/AIDS alone on skills development is overwhelming because it curtails productivity while propelling the cost of labour, and makes the work force to become deskilled and at the same time reduces incentives for investing in skills. As part of the solutions to the effect of HIV/AIDS, Marope (2010, p. xxvii, 20) suggested the need to Strengthen responsiveness to HIV/AIDS by mainstreaming life skills, health and nutrition across programmes at all levels so as to instill knowledge about this plague at all ages especially in an early age and to hopefully instill behavior modifying habits.

Access, quality and market relevance of programmes

The lack of appropriate infrastructure especially in rural areas wherein the situation is acute has been spotted as one of the major hindrances of access to skills development programs and quality of training (Gakusi, 2010, p. 216). There is still a lack of basic

infrastructure such as roads, water and electricity supply in many rural areas. This circumstance ingrains issues of persistent poverty and narrows the potential of communities to sustain economic growth, rural livelihoods and social development. Efforts by the state to extend free basic services to all are slowest to reach rural areas, and access to government services such as education and health care are the weakest in rural areas. (African National Congress, 2007, p. 24.)

State-sponsored training systems play an important role in all countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, however, these institutions are continuously lacking in assessments of the relevance of training to economic and social needs, their effectiveness in delivering skills, and their costs and efficiency (Johanson & Adams, 2004, p. 4). For instance, in the case of Swaziland, Marope (2010, p. 75) observed that skills development programmes are supply driven, and all too often programmes are offered based on the availability of workshops and instructors rather than on demand. Again, with specific reference to Malawi, research has proven that strictly limited support is offered to enhance trainees' experience of higher education in relation to market demands. Thus, there is a mismatch between programmes and trainees preparation for the labour market. Learners entering training programmes for which they have little motivation can be a direct consequence of the lack of proper guidance and appropriate training programs (Hall & Thomas, 2005, p. 75).

The existence of weak state capacity to regulate providers, and weak market institutions for conducting surveys and monitoring labor force activity make analysis and policy development difficult in most African countries. Thus, training is always affected by poor quality and is void of connection with market needs. There is therefore the challenge of determining how to reform these institutions and make them more responsive to markets and more effective in the use of resources. (Johanson & Adams, 2004, p. 4.)

Training needs to have the direct applicability to employment through appropriate mechanisms and incentives that connect training and employment, since the poor can hardly afford long periods of training before seeing the reward. Focusing on the evaluation of competencies achieved with training is important to quality assurance since monitoring and evaluation of training, and performance of training institutions can provide ample information to set, enforce and improve standards. (Johanson & Adams, 2004, p. 6, 8.) Encouraging trainers to respond to markets for skills development in

informal economies wherein a lot of disadvantaged people are employed can add meaning to skills development and reduce poverty (Johanson & Adams, 2004, p.11). Furthermore, to be effective in skills development, there must be a dynamic labour market observatory with the capacity to generate high-quality research. This therefore requires high quality researchers in training institutions or under contract (Johanson and Adams, 2004, p. 58). As far as the issue surrounding qualifications, qualification holders and the labour market is concerned, Hall and Thomas (2005, p. 75) also supported the need for enhanced dialogue between the higher education training providers and employers particularly in terms of the kind of qualifications offered and influencing the legitimate expectations of both employers and training institutions.

4   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The chapter gives attention to the research design and methods that were employed in this study. The focal point is the phenomenological research methods and procedures that were deployed in collecting and analyzing data.

4.1   Research design

The interest of this study was to investigate how Non-governmental organizations and educational Leaders collaborate, its impact on skills development, the challenges involved, and possible ways of improving skills development initiatives in rural South Africa. With a problem at hand, and translated into thoughtfully formulated research questions, there was the need to plan on how the study would be carried out. Consequently, it needed an appropriate research design. This is in conjunction with Yin's (2009, p. 26) observation that any form of empirical study has either a clear or implicit research design. In simple terms, Yin (2009, p. 26) further defined a research design as "the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and ultimately to its conclusion". Mouton (2001, p. 55) described a research design by using the analogy of building a house, which starts with an approved house plan. According to Mouton (2001, p. 56), a research design has three distinctive features: a research design begins or starts with the problem or research question, focuses on the end product (results aimed at) and the kind of evidence required to adequately address the research question (logic of research).

Since through literature related to the study, for example, the National Skills Development Stategies, the state of rural education and skills, various rural development projects implemented in post-apartheid era, Local Economic Development

theories, state - NGOs relations in education and training, and organizational learning, a vivid understanding of the research problem has been gained and the objective defined, the research design was guided or influenced by the following research questions: How do NGOs and educational leaders collaborate in building skills? What is the impact of collaboration on skills development and lives of rural dwellers? What are the challenges faced by NGOs and educational leaders in building skills in rural South Africa? How can skills development in rural communities of South Africa be improved?

It was also necessary at this stage of the research process to identify appropriate research methods or techniques for data collection and analysis. Mouton (2001, p. 56) observes that a research methodology is an objective or unbiased research process which involves the kinds of tools, procedures and individuals to be employed as focal points. Mouton (2001, p. 56) further argued that the point of departure is specific tasks at hand, for example, data collection. In addition, and seemingly in a conclusive manner, Yin (2009, p. 2) believes every social science research method has its own implications or repercussions based on the type of research questions, the degree of control that the researcher exerts over real behavioral events, and the focus on existing rather than historical phenomena. Subsequently, the phenomenological research approach was employed in this study.

4.2 Phenomenology in the present study

When the First World War ended in 1918, Europe was completely devastated and ruined. The situation was brilliantly reported by Eagleton (1983, p. 54):

> The social order of European capitalism had been shaken to its roots by the carnage of the war and its turbulent aftermath. The ideologies on which that order had customarily depended, the cultural values by which it ruled, were also in deep turmoil. Science seemed to have dwindled to a sterile positivism, a myopic obsession with the categorizing of facts; philosophy appeared torn between such a positivism on the one hand, and an indefensible subjectivism on the other; forms of relativism and irrationalism were rampant, and art reflected this bewildering loss of bearings.

Within the framework of such an ideological crisis or calamity, a great German philosopher called Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), "sought to develop a new philosophical method which would lend absolute certainty to a disintegrating civilization" (Eagleton, 1983, p. 54, Wertz, 2005, p.167). Vandenberg (1997, p. 11) sees

Husserl as "the fountainhead of phenomenology in the twentieth century", even though the genesis of phenomenology can be mapped out as far back as Kant and Hegel. Eagleton (1983, p. 54) observed that Husserl was against the conviction that objects in the external world exist independently and that the information about objects is reliable. He disputed that individuals can be certain about how things appear in, or present themselves to, their consciousness. In order to get to the point of certainty, anything outside immediate experience must be overlooked (bracketed), and in this way the external world is condensed or scaled down to the contents of individual consciousness (Wertz, 2005, p. 167). As a result realities are treated as untainted 'phenomena' and the only absolute data from where to begin. Husserl named his philosophical method 'phenomenology', the science of pure 'phenomena' (Eagleton, 1983, p. 55).

According to Wertz (2005, p.168) Husserl's phenomenology is based on the methodological principle that scientific knowledge starts with a clean and unbiased description of its subject matter (epoche). The epoche of the natural attitude is "a methodological abstention used to suspend or put out of play our "naïve" belief in the existence of what presents itself in the life-world in order to focus instead on its subjective manners of appearance – the lived through meanings and the subjective performances that subtend human situations" (Wertz, 2005, p. 168). This does not mean that what presents itself in the human life does not exist. This existence and validity of human situations are bracketed so as to move from naïve, straight forward encounters to reflection on how the life-world presents itself, which is, to its constitutive meanings and subjective performances. This epoche allows the researcher to recollect his experiences and to emphatically enter and reflect on the life-world of participants in order to apprehend the meanings of the world as they are given according to the participants' points of view. The researcher therefore has to observe a great degree of bracketing both during data collection and data analysis. Husserl further established the intuition of essence, which is a term used to descriptively delineate the invariant features and clarify the meaning and structure of a subject matter. (Wertz, 2005, p. 168.) The life-world is a central theme (Wertz, 2005, p.169). "The life-world manifests itself as a structural whole that is socially shared and yet apprehended by individuals through their own perspectives (Wertz, p. 169). Phenomenologists therefore pay attention to bracketing (bias-free), lived experiences of participants and personal meanings, and essential themes (essence) when studying a given phenomenon.

The quest for a suitable research design that would prevent or restrict my own biases of any form and the opportunity to understand the phenomena under investigation (Collaboration and its impact on skills development) from the perspectives of the participants (NGOs and educational leaders) involved was vital. This judgment has been vividly and expertly highlighted by phenomenologists and other researchers that have used the phenomenological approach. Eagleton (1983, p. 56) and Moustakas (1994, p. 26) employed the motto 'back to the things themselves!" to champion the opinion that this method has a fundamental aim of returning things to the concrete. This study is also geared at having a "grasp of the real nature of things" (Van Manen 1990, p, 77). Welman and Kruger (1999, p. 189) concurred that "the phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of the people involved". Lester (1999, p. 1) aptly expounded that phenomenological methods are associated with and are deeply rooted in the paradigm of individual knowledge and subjectivity, and hold with high esteem the importance of individual perspective and interpretation. This makes the approach "very powerful for understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions and cutting through the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom", with the purpose of illuminating the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation (Lester, 1999, p. 1) .

This choice was further motivated by the conviction that an understanding of collaboration and its impact on skills development in rural South Africa, from the perspectives and common or shared experiences (life-world) of partners engaged in Workplace Skills Development (WSD) will deepen the scope of understanding of the partnership between NGOs and educational leaders, the impact of the phenomenon on skills development, challenges involved and possible best practices. This premise has been highlighted by Moustakas (1994, p. 26), and has been brilliantly captured by Creswell (2007, p. 62) when he observed that knowing some common experiences of several individuals can be very indispensable for groups which include (but are not limited to) educators, health personnel and policy makers to develop a deeper understanding of the characteristics of a phenomenon in order to develop policies and practices. Investigating a phenomenon, which Moustakas (1994, p. 26) labeled, an

"object" of human experience, by using the phenomenological paradigm, rendered these objectives more realistic.

4.3   Data collection process

The study used in-depth unstructured or open-ended interviews as one of the varieties of methods used in collecting data in phenomenological research (see Creswell, 2003, p. 189; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 23; Groenewald, 2004, pp. 11-12; Lester 1999, p. 2; Sandelowski, 2000, p. 338; Van Manen, 1990; Wertz, 2005). This technique was deemed necessary because, as earlier mentioned, I was keen on collecting data related to collaboration and skills development based on the perspectives of the participants involved. In-depth unstructured interviews were therefore my primary data collecting tool. This technique permitted objectivity from the perspective of the subject (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, p. 33). Interviews provided an interactive way of obtaining data. Face-to-face interviews enabled a personal contact with participants and enhanced the understanding of participants' viewpoint, which was deemed very relevant to the study. Creswell (2003. p. 206) and Patton (2002, p. 4), aptly expounded that, interview offers the researcher the opportunity to capture the experiences, knowledge, opinions and feelings of participants. Babbie and Mouton (2001, p. 28) concurred and further explained that through this mode "the researcher tries to see through the eyes of the participant – standing in their shoes".

Since I have already gained valuable knowledge about my area of interest through related literature and theories, coupled with my background in education and development, I could easily define my position epistemologically, in relation to the phenomenon being investigated. In this regard the selection of participants for this study was restricted to individuals that have experienced collaboration or are collaborating in Workplace Skills Development (WSD) especially in the context of rural South Africa. Kruger (1988, p. 150) captured this as "looking for those who have had experiences necessary for the phenomena to be researched". Within the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS), which is under the auspices of the Department of Higher Education and Training, based on my judgment and rationale of the study, I purposely selected two Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs). Participants from these SETAs have

great experiences and occupy various managerial and leadership positions of responsibilities in WSD.

Considering the fact that participants who have had experience in this domain of study would be the most relevant, a similar approach was utilized to select two Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) involved in Education and Training. Participants selected have experienced various forms of collaboration and hold different positions of responsibility relating to skills development. This led to the selection of seven participants selected from four institutions/organizations mentioned above, with varied managerial and leadership posts of responsibility (research, policy, planning and implementation) in skills development.

To further overcome the problem of bias and validity, and better comprehend the collaboration between NGOs and educational leaders, its impact on skills development in rural South Africa, the challenges involved and possible best practices, triangulation was used (see Cox and Hassard, 2005, pp. 110-111) to contradict or validate data to verify if it yields similar findings by introducing the third kind of respondents. Subsequently, two respondents from the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform were included. These respondents have had experiences working with rural communities. As a result nine participants purposely selected from five Organizations (state and education NGOs) participated in the study. Respondents from the NGO and education sectors therefore had the following common characteristics: occupy leadership positions in their respective organizations and are all involved in education and training, have had experiences working with rural communities, and are all involved in skills development either at policy development/planning or implementation level. Moreover, the third category of participants (from the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform) that was also purposely triangulated into the study, have a unique characteristic in that they do not function under education and training, and focus mainly on rural development with skills development as part of their broad rural development projects. Participants in this study permitted the researcher to use the names of their institutions and even mention their real names (participants) in this report.

Wertz (2005, p. 171) argued that the issue of the number of participants sufficient for a study "can only be answered properly by considering the nature of the research problem and the potential yield of finding". I made internet searches to get the physical addresses, emails and telephone contacts of the organizations involved, which were

used to establish preliminary communication by emails and phone calls with participants that are in charge of skills development in the various organizations (education sector & NGOs). I finally traveled to South Africa for data collection. Before leaving Finland, I obtained the following documents from the Institute of Educational Leadership: a letter of acknowledgement clearly stating me as a fulltime Master's degree student at the Institute (signed by the director of the institute, my first and second supervisors); a research permit request letter that indicated the purpose of the study and the need for access to relevant information, and informed consent. These documents were presented to interviewees during my first physical contact with them, and appropriate dates for interviews were agreed upon.

Prior to every individual interview session, the respondents were reminded of the informed consent and the purpose of the study. They were also aware of the fact that an audio recorder which was always at the centre of the table was being used during the interviews. Notes were also taken simultaneously in all the interview sessions. The interview questions were unstructured or open-ended (see Creswell 2003; Creswell 2007, p. 61; Lester 1999, p. 2 & Sandelowski, 2000, p. 338) and were aimed at obtaining relevant answers from respondents based on their perspectives about the phenomenon under investigation. Based on this conviction, most of the questions started with "What" and "How" (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 337; Groenewald, 2004, p. 12). For instance the following questions were frequently asked: How do you collaborate or what is your role as a partner? What is the impact of collaboration on skills development? What are the challenges and how can you improve on collaboration and skills development? During the interviews, biases were restricted by deliberately suppressing any information that I have had prior to the interviews so as to understand things from the perspectives of the interviewees, and to "grasp the real nature of things" (Eagleton, 1983, p. 56; Lester 1999, p. 2 ; Moustakas, 1994, p. 26; Van Manen 1990, p. 77; Welman & Kruger, 1999, p .189). Bracketing (Wertz, 2005, p.168; Creswell 2007, p.62) was therefore observed by suspending or overlooking information that had been obtained prior to any interview. Furthermore, a good interview is not limited to just asking questions. During interviews, observable behaviors (like facial expressions), descriptions of subjects' meanings, reasons and intentions were duly considered (see Babbie & Mouton, 2001, p. 33; Patton 2002, p. 5).

The main data collecting and storage device used during interviews was a digital voice recorder. At the end of every interview, the recorded messages were played repeatedly to check for clarity of the voice of participants and to verify if the right information had been recorded. The recorded information was uploaded onto my computer in an MP3 format and saved with each file name being that of the organization concerned, and participants labeled P1 or P2 (that is organization's name & participant1 or 2). This made it easier to find and listen to the recorded interviews as much as possible with the use of a computer headphone. It was noticed that repeated listening ensured familiarization with the voices of participants, their experiences, specific, and overall meanings of the recorded messages. Interview sessions lasted for at least one hour and at most two hours thirty minutes. Moreover, at the end of each interview, a file for field notes (jotted down during the interview) and additional hard copy documents that were given to me by participants was created. Though this information was not used during the data analysis, it somewhat contributed to deepening the researcher's comprehension of events. The following hard copy documents were obtained from participants of respective Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs) that took part in the study: Sector Skills Plan 2013-2014 update (Draft Version 4, 2012) and Sector Skills Plan 2011-2016, a Video CD on HIV/AIDS awareness, practical training guides/programs for learnerships and apprenticeships, and newsletters on skills development. These were the secondary sources of data. Recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and the transcriptions were subsequently the primary source of data (see e.g. Creswell, 2003, p. 189).

4.4   Data analysis

By reflecting on the abundant existing literature, one could rightly observe that there are many ways of analyzing qualitative research data. The thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that uses a web-like network as an organizing rule and representational way, and clearly defines the procedures that may be followed in progressing from raw data (text) to interpretation (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 388). In this method, the researcher begins with identifying codes in the text and proceeds with grouping these codes into categories then generating organizing themes from these

categories and finally establishes global themes. These codes, categories, organizing themes and global themes are then represented in the form of web-like maps known as thematic networks (see Attride-Stirling, 2001, pp. 388-400).

The methods of analyzing data vary with types of data. For instance, focus group data can be analyzed in three main ways: Focus group analysis (includes, constant comparison analysis, classical content analysis, keywords-in-context analysis and discourse analysis), conversational analysis and micro-interlocutor analysis (see Onwuegbuzie, Dickson, Leech & Zoran 2009, pp. 5-15). The qualitative analysis of the content and phenomenological methods, are also some of the many ways of analyzing data in qualitative research (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278).

The qualitative content analysis has been observed as one of the many research methods used in text data analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). It has been defined by different researchers in varied ways : "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278), Mayring (2000, p .2) captured this mode of data analysis as "an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by step models, without rash quantification" and Patton (2002, p. 453) defines it as "any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings".

These definitions illustrate the dynamism of qualitative content analysis, and how it attaches importance to the integrated view of speech/texts and their specific contexts. It is data-driven and goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examining meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text. However, these themes or codes are generated from the data themselves (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 338).

In this study a phenomenological analytical method, which has been observed as being comparable or similar to qualitative content analysis, because it is text-driven and allows themes to generate or emerge from the transcribed data was used. Identifying main themes in the text is common in analyzing phenomenological data. The main focus here was to go through a process whereby one takes the interview transcripts that have been carefully brought together and generate meaningful units or themes from

them. It was also of interest to identify the nature of collaboration and challenges involved as experienced by participants and as it is reflected in the interview transcripts produced in this study. As observed by Van Manen (1990, p. 78), to conduct human science research is to be involved in the crafting of a text so as to grasp the structure of denotation in terms of meaningful units or themes. Reflecting on lived experience then becomes reflectively analyzing the structural or thematic aspects of that experience.

The analytical process

One of the challenges of phenomenological research is that it generates a huge quantity of data, which has to be analyzed. Furthermore, analysis is inevitably messy, as data do not tend to fall into neat categories (Lester, 1999, p. 2). In this study, nine participants were more than enough to attain data saturation. The interview transcripts which were compiled summed up to 83 pages. Conscious of the challenges indicated above, much effort was placed in familiarizing with participants' perspectives. Hence, this explains why each interview was repeatedly listened to, prior to and during every transcription. This made it easy to familiarize with the voices of all the participants. In the process of listening, note was taken of specific meanings of their voice levels, interests and perspectives, smiles, laughter, pauses, and their holistic meanings. Van Manen (1990, p. 93) suggests three processes for isolating thematic statements: "the holistic or sententious approach; the selective or highlighting approach; and the detailed or line-by line approach. Each approach guides a different view of the text in relation to the degree of specificity of the lens of examination. The first approach is more global, seeking overall meaning of the text. The second approach focuses on phrases or sentences that stand out in the text. The third approach is a close examination of the text sentence by sentence. ". For instance, with the aid of my research questions, I could have from the transcripts, the holistic images of how the participants experienced collaboration (modes, benefits and challenges).

This study uses individual themes from transcribed data as the unit for analysis. Themes were identified from particular words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or entire transcript. The primary concern was to identify expressions by respondents of any idea that represents a theme or issue relevant to the research questions. Babbie (2011, p. 73) observed that the unit of analysis is the "what or whom" that is being studied, and the most typical of units of analysis are individuals or people. The analysis began by

reading through individual participants' interview transcriptions. This was a "preparatory operation" aimed at getting immersed in the data and to grasp the participants' expressions and meanings (Wertz 2005, p. 172). Guided or assisted by the research questions, I repeatedly went through each interview transcript, highlighting important statements, sentences, quotes or phrases that provided an understanding of how respondents experienced collaboration in relation to skills development especially in rural South Africa. Creswell (2007, p. 61) highlighted the significance of this step in phenomenological data analysis, and echoed the term "horizonalization" used by Moustakas (1994, p. 90). Bracketing was also observed at this phase as the researcher deliberately suspended personal views or preconceptions and concentrated on respondents' transcripts. By considering literal content, how often a meaning was mentioned and also how it was stated (took note of para-linguistic cues like laughter, smiles, pauses), the list of relevant meanings was carefully extracted, scrutinized and any clearly redundant units were eliminated (see Moustakas, 1994, p. 90 & Wertz, 2005, p. 172).

The next step was to identify key themes taking into consideration the list of non-redundant units of meaning, with the main focus at this stage on grouping or clustering units of meaning to form themes. Key themes like research, facilitation, implementation and monitoring, policy development and planning, mutualism sustainable NGOs and skills develplanning etc which indicated how the participants experienced collaboration emerged from the data. For the sake of remaining true to the phenomenon, bracketing was further observed. In order to extract the essence of meaning of units within the holistic context, all the units of meaning were thoroughly examined. By reading between the lines both explicit meanings and implicit dimensions of participants' perspectives could be grasped. A phenomenological researcher according to Wertz (2005, p. 172) "continually moves from part to part and from part to whole in order to grasp the structural organization and interdependence of parts that make up the lived experience. A distinctively phenomenological characteristic of analysis is that the researcher attempts to grasp the essence of the individual's life experience through imaginative variation".

While considering the general and unique themes of all the interviews a composite summary presenting the fundamental nature of collaboration and challenges involved in relation to skills development especially in the rural context could be established. These

amalgamated themes presented the fundamental nature of the phenomenon called "essence" or "essential, invariant structure" (Moustakus, 1994 & Creswell, 2007, p. 62). Wertz (2005, p. 173) observes or sees it as "grasping general structures". This was done by identifying the themes that are regular or common in most or all of the interviews as well as the individual differences or disparities, and in a prudent manner to avoid clustering common themes especially when there is an existence of significant variations. This analysis led to the findings which have been used to write the next chapter.

5   RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter focuses on the presentation and discussion of the results that emerged from the data analyzed. It is a logical and comprehensive description and discussion of Non-governmental organizations and educational leaders' perceptions about collaboration, not forgetting its impact on skills development, hindrances, and best practices to improve on cross-organizational collaboration and skills development in rural South Africa as manifested in the analysis of the transcribed data.

All participants permitted the use of their names and the names of their respective organizations in this study. However, sporadic use of the names of their organizations was preferred. Consequently, the following labels were given to the three categories of respondents that participated in the study: Leaders from the department of higher education and training where labeled as Sector Education Training Authorities one, two and three (i.e. SETA1, SETA2 & SETA3), those from Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) received the label NGO1, NGO2, NGO3 and NGO4 respectively, and then, respondents from the Department of Rural Development were labeled DRD1 and DRD2 respectively. Henceforth, information and direct quotations that emanated from the data are referenced by using the label of the corresponding participant that provided the information or viewpoint. Guided by the research questions, the results or findings are reported and discussed under the following main headings: Modes of collaboration, impact of collaboration on skills development and rural dwellers/communities, challenges on collaboration and skills development, and suggestions on strengthening and improving collaboration and skills development (see appendices for summary).

5.1 Modes of collaboration

Results from the data analyzed indicated that NGOs and educational leaders have been collaborating in developing skills in rural communities. All seven respondents from the NGO and the education sectors agreed that they concentrate on developing skills that are needed by various agriculture and education and training constituencies. This was also confirmed by the two respondents from the Department of Rural Development and land reform that were triangulated into the study. It therefore connotes that all the nine participants from NGOs, SETAs and the Department of Rural Development noticed or experienced some form of collaboration between NGOs and SETAs. Though the main interest of this study is about collaboration between NGOs and the education sector, one of the two participants (DRD1) from the Department of Rural Development also noted that some NGOs also collaborate with their department (rural development) in providing practical training to rural land owners and farmers.

After the data analysis, it was easy to comprehend that SETAs do not work with individuals in developing skills. They engage and collaborate with groups like Community-based Oragnizations and NGOs. This is indeed in congruence for example with Ulleberg's (2009, p. 14), Miwa's (2003, p. 247), OECD's (2006, p. 29) and UNESCO's (2000, p. 8), recognition of the need for, and forms of collaboration between state institutions and NGOs. The research participants from both the education and NGO sectors indicated that they experienced collaboration in different ways through research, policy development and planning, facilitation, implementation of programmes, monitoring and evaluation. These modes of collaboration correlate with the various ways of engagement identified by some development practitioners (see e.g. Fox et al, 2002, pp. 1-7; OECD, 2006, p. 29; Ulleberg, 2009, p. 16 & UNESCO, 2000, p. 8). Even though all participants said they collaborated through the modes mentioned above, those from the NGO sector indicated that the nature of engagement varies with the NGOs. For instance, while indicating that they seldom take part in other modes of collaboration NGO1 and NGO2 from the same organization indicated that implementation of training programmes was their main area of collaboration while NGO3 and NGO4 from another organization considered research and policy development as the principal area in which they collaborate with the education sector:

> There are cases where we have to respond to tenders. But there are also cases where we self-initiate work and then you know in most cases we focus on research and policy, and bring in government to see through some of our activities or ideas. So you find that, you know, we are working together (NGO4).

Research

Respondents from both the NGO and education sectors portrayed some awareness of the relevance of research or inquiry in skills development and other organizational objectives, which in a very limited degree are reminiscent of Argyris and Schön's (1996, pp. 6-15), and Johanson and Adams' (2004, p. 58) thoughts about research and high performing teams. According to the seven participants from both sectors that are considered in the study, collaboration in research is aimed at formulating various Sector Skills Plans (SSPs) or updating existing SSPs, which are comprehensive policy or working documents that provide ample guidance in planning and implementation of skills development programmes. In their opinion, they work together through research, by collaboratively identifying the skills types (scarce and critical skills) that are needed in communities (supply side), determine the number of the NGOs that are operating as training providers and/or policy based or research based organizations, and their functional states, the number of qualified practitioners or trainers, and prioritize funding. In a nutshell, unlike Argyris and Schön (1996), and Johanson and Adams (2004), the findings indicated that research collaboration is narrowed down to identifying items that will be included in SSPs so that appropriate policy and funding could be allocated by the state for implementation.

Though all the leaders of the education and NGO sectors agreed that they collaborated in research, they were also of the opinion that their roles in this mode of collaboration varied.

> Our current role is to identify the skills that the NGO sector needs for the next five years. So we have to prepare reports, collect information and put them to the department of higher education and training which they will consider when preparing a five year skills development plan (NGO2).

> For instance we collaborated with Education Training and Development Practice (ETDP) SETA in carrying out research, through which we identified skills needed, training providers and made recommendations for SSPs (NGO1).

> We were involved in research with ETDP- SETA but we focus on the SSP update on research organizations (NGO3).

Policy development and planning

The results also showed a considerable connotation or association between collaboration in research and policy development and planning. According to the respondents, collaboration manifested in policy inputs from stakeholders, designing of programmes, registration of programmes with South Africa Qualification Authority (SAQA), quality assurance and allocation of resources. All the NGOs emphasized that by participating in research that results in information which could be used to formulate and update SSPs, and designing certain qualification programmes implies they too contribute in policy development and planning. However, the education sector has a different role to play in relation to this area of collaboration. For instance, while recognizing the responsibility of the Department of Social Development in ensuring that NGOs are funded, SETA1 explained that their department also collaborates with NGOs as one of its subsectors by providing funding. SETA1 further mentioned that while both NGOs and SETA design programmes, the education sector makes sure programmes are registered with SAQA and are quality assured.

> Because we bring in ideas and information trough research it also means that we contribute in policy formulation and implementation (NGO1).

> …So, we also do research to understand how they (NGOs) do and then we allocate funding. At our level which we call workplace kind of level, stakeholders design their own programmes and they must take them to SAQA for registration, and we quality assure the programmes after registration before they are implemented. So we do have programmes that NGOs have helped us to actually develop, like we got a qualification on community development. That particular qualification was actually developed using inputs from NGOs (SETA1).

Facilitation

All seven participants from the NGO and education sector that took part in the study were of the viewpoint that the education sector plays a key role in creating an environment that enables collaboration and skills development. Their perceptions were analogous to what Fox et al (2002, pp. 1-7) postulated as the role of the state. The respondents from the SETAs explained that facilitation connotes the process of creating an enabling environment for implementation to occur. It involves capacitating service providers (NGOs) with required human capital and facilities, registration and issuing of licenses that qualify NGOs as accredited practitioners or trainers, and providing funding needed for NGOs to implement programmes.

> We empower NGOs and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) through personnel training, for example in Adult Basic Education Training (ABET) and Early Childhood Education. We also encourage NGOs to train other NGOs practitioners… We say to SANGOCO we have this money to give to sixty NGOs so help us find trainers…So we help them to be ready to operate.

Implementation and monitoring

The respondents viewed implementation as the actual process of executing programmes or carrying out training. The delivery of programmes is carried out by accredited NGOs and Community-based Organizations (CBOs) which according to participants are called service providers for different constituencies. This is consistent with Ulleberg's (2009, p. 8) thoughts that NGOs, as partners, have become key service providers especially in the education sector where many NGOs have transformed beyond gap-filling activities to capacity building activities. In this instant, NGO1 and NGO2 (from the same organization) said their principal activity in implementation as a mode of collaboration is to carry out training. SETA1 and other respondents from a research based organization (NGO3 and NGO4) concurred. DRD1 also noticed the part played by NGOs as implementers of training projects.

> We approach specific NGOs to assist us in training groups of rural farmers with specific types of skills or commodity. We have organized many meetings wherein we invited NGOs to explain to farmers how to prepare financial statements, balance sheets, income statements and cash flows (DRD1).

Monitoring and evaluation of training were also perceived by informants as other forms of collaboration. According to SETA1, NGO1 and NGO2, training providers are responsible for monitoring of training. However, findings also indicated that monitoring and evaluation seem to be words that respondents are aware of, but have not fully translated into practical terms. Monitoring seems to be restricted to making sure training takes place, with little or no zeal on examining how and how well it occurred, which broadly narrows or contradicts Yukl's (2006, p. 332) notion of "after activity review".

> We disburse money to NGOs/CBOs to deliver programmes. But on the side of SANGOCO, SANGOCO must then recruit the right people to come into the programmes; they must also monitor the training. During the training, they must ensure that the training happens (SETA1).

> At SANGOCO, if for example there is a project in Early Childhood development, we look at NGOs that deal with training in that area and delegate the role to them and facilitate. There need to be some checks and balances so we make sure we monitor the specific training. We make sure we provide training organizations with model guides that will ensure that we have an impact (NGO2) concurred.

5.2   Impact and challenges of collaboration

The impact of collaboration is twofold. The NGOs and educational leaders displayed the perception that collaboration between them has mutually-bonded double effects. According to the participants, collaboration has a direct impact on skills development projects with far-reaching positive ramifications on trained rural dwellers and communities.

5.2.1   Impact on skills development

The research results indicated five main impacts of collaboration on Work Place Skills (WPS) development which included the following: Mutualism or complementary effect, sustainable NGOs and skills development initiatives, improving policy and implementation, efficacy in skills development, and creating a culture of common goal attainment.

Mutualism or complementary effect

According to the seven participants from the NGO and education sector mentioned in the study, since both sectors exhibit exclusively unique roles, mutualism creates a symbiotic relationship that is mutually beneficial to both NGOs and educational leaders and thus enhances skills development projects. SETA1 insinuated that the NGO sector is a unique sector in South Africa because it cuts across four departments of government (health, basic education, social development and higher education and training). Furthermore, SETAs rely on NGOs dealing with education and training ventures to reach the rural masses. Informants from the NGO sector also brought to light those roles that they can perform better than the state such as localizing and identifying the exact needs of rural communities, efficiency in implementing training programmes at low cost, ability to act as watch dog and voice of the masses, flexibility and other unique roles also acknowledged by Nikkhah and Redzuan (2010, pp. 85-89), Aisha (2004, p. 5), and Sequeira, Modesto and Maddox (2007, p. 44) as sources of strength for the NGO sector. For instance, one of the participants from the NGO sector said:

> NGOs are innovative, ground breakers and a bridge between state institutions and people at the grassroots (NGO4).

Like Johanson and Adams (2004, p.5), Fox et al (2002, pp. 1-7) and Ayee (2002, p. 29), the respondents viewed facilitation (creating enabling environment), which according to them involves the provision of funding, accreditations, empowering NGOs' practitioners, registration and quality assurance of programmes and certification as a unique role that is manifested by educational leaders and predominates within the education and training department. *We facilitate to ensure that projects are well implemented,* SETA1 observed. The seven respondents from the education and NGO sectors perceived collaboration as an enhancer of skills development projects because it generates a complementary effect since it compensates what both sectors are lacking. This is at par with Brinkerhoff's (1998, p. 2), Jagannathan's (1999, p. 44) and Ulleberg's (2009, p. 17) judgment on the complimentary and mutual benefits of combined efforts or team work.

> I think it is joining of expertise. We can't do everything alone. Our capacity is quite limited. We only do like a dot of many things that need to be done. I have to think of the NGO sector as more of a place where innovations happen. But if you need to take things to scale, we need to work with the government because they got the capacity to actually take things to scale. Working with ETDP for example, we provide research support, other may be conceptual kind of support but then they are the people with money, with the expertise to actually run the programmes. Things get better when we work as a team (NGO4).

Sustainable NGOs and skills development initiatives

Informants from the education and NGO sectors were of the opinion that the sustainability and continuous existence of NGOs has a direct repercussion on skills development projects and goals attainment. Participants therefore viewed sustainability of especially NGOs and continuity in skills development ventures as part and parcel of the hallmarks of collaboration. According to them, the provision of funds, facilities, and training of practitioners help to sustain NGOs and skills development projects. Nonetheless, respondents from both sectors also acknowledged that NGOs' activities help to up state capacities in attaining skills development endeavors in rural communities because of the NGOs' unique role as a sub-hair of the government or adjoins to rural masses. Their perceptions are somewhat comparable to the UNESCO's (2001, pp. 13-14), Wood's (2007, p. 3), Ulleberg's (2009, pp. 28-29) and MacAbbey's (2007, p. 3) conviction that collaboration enhances the capacities and sustainability of partner organizations, and capacity development initiatives. For instance, SETA1 claimed that their institution identifies and provides the necessary support for NGOs

that carry out education and training in rural communities in a manner that fosters their continuous existence and skills development.

> Now we do look at small organizations in the rural areas that have actually started education and training ventures or initiatives e.g. Early Childhood. We go there and ensure that we train a practitioner to be able to have the skills to train the children and we also train the owner of that particular centre to be able to manage the finances and to be able to be a good leader so that the centre can grow. That is where the issue of sustainability comes in. We want to train you to make sure that, you make sure that your business is sustainable and there is continuity in the business. But we are looking at organizations that are mainly operating within education and training space (SETA1)

Improvement of policy and implementation

The findings in this study further indicated that the participants from both sectors were very comfortable in pointing out that collaboration in research and need assessments create awareness and a better understanding of the state of skills, which subsequently contribute to formulating, developing and improving policies and plans, through the creation and updates of Sector Skills Plans (SSPs) of respective SETAs. Their views were in a way or somewhat congruent with Argyris and Schön's (1996, pp. 6-15) stand on the relevance of inquiry (especially model 1 theory-in-use), and Ulleberg's (2009, p. 30) thinking about the significance of consultations and collaboration between the NGOs and the government in improving policy. According to the respondents from both sectors, collaboration also creates an environment that ensures that projects are well implemented.

> Our work through research and the recommendations that we make informs the government on the way they develop policies, the kind of policies they develop or the way they begin to work (NGO4).

> The main purpose of research is actually to influence policy especially at national level. However, it also helps us to identify those scarce and critical skills in the NGO sector so that we can be able to say we are prioritizing and funding these particular programmes because research has shown that that is where the need is. So through research we are able to identify skills, plan for those skills and also put policies in place to be able to interact with NGOs (SETA1).

Efficacy in skills development

The view that collaboration has a positive repercussion on the efficacy of skills development since it enhances productivity and quality was expressed by these leaders. In their perspectives it improves the quality of the workforce since the NGOs and training practitioners are capacitated with the required skills to implement programmes. This therefore means that capacitating NGOs with the required manpower, resources

and other forms of support accrued from collaboration does not only translate into the number of rural people trained but also in terms of the quality of training implemented. Their perceptions also relate to Siri's (2002, p. 4) notion that collaboration does not only bolster the capacities of partner organizations, it also contributes to well targeted, more effective, and sustainable projects.

> We will have the capacity to train people with specific skills and the service delivery in the country will be met (NGO2).
>
> People will be well trained and more projects can be completed in time (SETA1).

Enhances common goal attainment

The research participants from both the NGO and education sectors recognized the fact that though they engage in different forms of activities, they all share a common goal and value of capacitating rural folks with required skills and improving their livelihood security and standards of living.

> The sharing of ideas, information and expertise increases the chances of succeeding in our common quest (NGO4).

The significance of collaboration as a fundamental enhancer of the probability to attain common goals have also been noted by Hall & Thomas (2005, p. 70), when they argued that involving stakeholders in planning processes can facilitate ownership of common issues and also forge partnerships that contribute to the achievement of goals.

5.2.2 Impact on rural dwellers and communities

It was also identified that well executed skills development projects through cross-organizational collaborative leadership practices has a great propensity to generate positive repercussions in rural communities and their inhabitants. Based on the perspectives of leaders of respective organizations that participated in this study, a spectrum of benefits such as human capital development (skilled manpower), livelihood security, health and social benefits, and accelerated growth and development were spotted.

Human capital development

The issue of human capital development as an impact of skills development projects, ushered by collaborative leadership practices, originated from participants' fundamental

beliefs that rural folks will possess valuable skills and abilities after undergoing training. This result correlates to Johanson and Adams' (2004, p. 15) idea on the relevance of informal and formal training on the knowledge and skills of individuals and their productive capacities both at home and workplace. Though all seven informants from both sectors (coupled with affirmation from DRD1) outlined the impact of collaboration and skills development on human capital of rural dwellers, SETA1 aptly linked it to the acquisition of scarce and critical skills. It was therefore easy to deduce that through skills development new forms of skills are generated and existing skills are improved upon (professional development or on the job training). The respondents further displayed the perception that a successful execution of skills development projects enhances competences and generates skilled workforce in rural communities since people become knowledgeable as they gain valuable scarce and critical skills in, but not limited to, leadership, project management, finance, teaching, farming, land management, and business.

Livelihood security

According to the research participants, when people are empowered with appropriate skills, they become employable. In the vein of the Republic of South Africa (2010, p. 41), Gakusi (2010, p. 219 and Bryceson (1999, pp. 171-175), both sectors' respondents were of the view that skills development generates employability, diversifies rural income, narrows income disparities and improves general standards of living in rural communities. Employability was viewed by respondents as the ability for rural folks to gain employment or create/initiate and manage their own projects that would render them self-employed. The participants therefore portrayed the perception that empowerment is fundamental in fostering livelihoods and sustainable rural communities.

> When we train people they are empowered to find decent work, become their own employers and take care of their basic needs (SETA3).

> It is not only about employment; it is also about pulling resources and reorganizing work. But work in the kind of socially useful labour sense (NGO3).

Social and health benefits

Like Binns and Nel (1999, p. 392), the Republic of South Africa (2010, p. 41) and Nel and McQuaid (2002, pp. 60-62), research participants indicated that skills development

initiatives also generate tangible social returns or benefits such as improved health habits and living conditions/ standards.

> We humans are very dynamic. Ones we get some sort of education or empowerment, we begin to apply them in our domestic ways, in our social part of life and in our working environment as well. There will be lesser vulnerability to diseases, crime and poor hygiene. So the benefits cut across (NGO1).

Furthermore, data analysis also portrayed that informants were of the opinion that training and knowledge acquisition help to boost the self-esteem of rural dwellers as this enables them to have the confidence to explore their communities and embark on meaningful social initiatives. Their thoughts seem to tie up well with Nair and Campbell's (2008, p. 46), and Nel and McQuaid's (2002, p. 71) judgment on the link between skilled rural communities and the production of networks of links and relationships (social capital) in such communities. For example SETA1 said: *Based on the training, it actually creates social cohesion and also improvement in the standard of living in rural communities.*

Accelerates growth and development

Participants' perspectives on the growth and development of rural communities as a positive repercussion of collaborative leadership and skills development ventures is attributed to or is the brainchild of an agglomeration of many factors indicated above, which enhance growth of centers and success in ventures, improve the quality of workforce and standards of living, and propel rural communities to become sustainable and develop. Such extended benefits observed by informants seemingly correlate to the notion of Local Economic Development envisaged by development practitioners since skills acquisition builds a local knowledge base and enables rural people to gain mastery and control of their lives and communities (see e.g. Bryceson, 1999, pp. 185-186; Binns & Nel, 1999, pp. 389-390; Murdoch, 2000, p. 412; Nikkhah & Redzuan, 2010, p. 85-88).

5.2.3 Challenges on collaboration

The findings indicated that participants' viewpoints on the challenges that confront skills development occurred in double fold. The first set of challenges is that which threatens collaboration between NGOs and educational leaders. The research respondents reiterated that issues such as fragmentation within the NGO sector, over-

reliance on funding, weak capacities, policy ambiguity, bureaucracy and inadequate communication threaten collaboration and consequently hamper skills development.

Fragmented NGOs

The issue of disunity amongst NGOs was identified by participants as a worrying factor that affects collaboration. According to SETA1 and SETA2 it would be easier for the education sector to collaborate with the NGO sector if the NGOs have a strong and representative coalition that speaks in one voice and acts for all. They further observed that, at the moment, SANGOCO seems to be the umbrella organization that represents all NGOs in the country. This was confirmed by two informants from one NGO who said they are affiliated to SANGOCO and two other informants from another NGO who claimed their organization does not have any alliance with SANGOCO.

> NGOs are really struggling with collaboration and to make sure that the centre is holding. This is because they got different needs, different agendas and therefore they are unable to speak in one language. But you see they got similar challenges, similar issues, but to put them together and work together is a problem (SETA1).

Considering Julie's (2009, p. 16) claims, SANGOCO was formed as a coalition because NGOs were motivated by the desire to become sustainable, and donors also encouraged such coalition because it guarantees cost effectiveness by reducing the cost of administering and managing funding contracts. One could also infer that the absence of a strong and viable coalition today within the NGO sector betrays such objectives and seriously challenges the NGOs' quest for sustainability. The whole is always greater than the sum of its parts (Senge, 1990, p. 12). The existence of fragmentation within the NGO sector in a way deprives them of organizational learning envisaged by Senge (1990, pp. 6-12) as a product of systemic thinking.

Over-reliance on funding

The respondents attributed the problem of fragmentation within the NGO sector to over-reliance on external funding and lack of a self-sustaining model by many NGOs. The absence of a self-sustaining model within the NGO sector sends a strong signal that the NGOs have ignored Julie's (2006, p. 142) claim that the NGOs were encouraged to develop income generating strategies that would keep them financially sustainable and thus mitigate the effects of developing funding crisis.

> NGOs are so diverse with many needs or objectives and they rely on funding. They try to get different opportunities that can bring in funds. They are not strong in one area. If they get funding, they operate, if there is no funding, they disappear. So there are a lot of challenges that we are finding working with NGOs (SETA1).

> We are not united due to the fact that we look at different sectors. The issue of funding is maybe one of the key factors because NGOs scramble for funds to sustain their specific projects (NGO4)

The issue of over-reliance on funding from the government does not only question their sustainability and ability to fully operate with the state as partners, it also challenges their autonomy and thus correlates with Nelson (2006, p. 709), and other critics' arguments that the NGOs' predominant reliance on funding from external donors compromises their autonomy and has led to a substantial influence on their strategic choices, programmatic practices and political orientation by the government and other donors.

Weak capacity

Findings in this study also portrayed the existence of weak capacities typically within the NGO sector. According to the respondents, most NGOs have weak institutions especially in terms of the capacity of manpower (human capital) and training facilities, which subsequently affect their resourcefulness, sustainability and ability to perform well as partners. For instance, SETA1 is of the view that the capacity of most NGOs is very weak in terms of leadership and management, and relied much on the government to train their personnel. This was also echoed by NGO1 who said: *NGOs are not capacitated enough to manage, for that, it is a fact.* This evidence re-affirms Ulleberg's (2009, p. 8) view that though they are important role players in skills development, the NGOs in most Sub-Saharan African countries continuously suffer from a lack of resources. Since organizational performance demands strategic leadership with appropriate materials and facilities (Yukl, 2006, p. 327), the prevalence of such odds within the NGO sector in South Africa jeopardizes their performances both as partners with the state and as skills development institutions. A reflection on scholarly works that correlated individual capabilities or personal mastery to high performing teams (e.g. Senge, 1990, p. 7; Yukl & Lepsinger, 2005, p. 20; Yukl, 2006, pp. 327-328), arouses curiosity about the NGOs' performance as entities and as part of a network. It could be right to deduce that the lack of such resources deprives them of what Yukl (2006, p. 327)

termed "collective efficacy or potency", which then translates into a downward negative spiral of performance in skills development initiatives.

Policy ambiguity

Policy uncertainty and lack of clarity on the roles of the department of education and training, social development and health in the NGO sector was viewed by informants from both the NGO and education sectors as aspects that also hamper collaboration. Though respondents especially from the SETAs claimed that things have improved when compared to the early years of the post-apartheid regime, they still acknowledged that the problem of a lack of clear role expectations amongst stakeholders still exists. The continuous existence of policy uncertainty and lack of comprehensiveness on what NGOs need to do and how to do it, have negatively affected how the NGOs operate and interact with state departments. SETA1 for example mentioned that while there is a legislature that regulates NGOs on what they are supposed to do, such a legislature does not explain how they can act and engage with various state departments and vice versa. Considering Yukl's (2006, pp. 325-326) assertion that the efficient performance of a team is also a function of how the role expectations of members are clearly spelt out in such a manner that they understand what to do, how to do it and when it should be done, and the degree to which the interdependent activities of members are mutually consistent and coordinated. Therefore, the manifestation of ambiguous roles and policy, as indicated in this study, are counterproductive to collaboration between sectors, and skills development initiatives.

Bureaucracy and inadequate communication

Findings in this study also indicated that issues of bureaucracy and the lack of proper communication between the NGOs and education sectors have a negative effect on collaboration. Participants from the NGO sector believed that things happen at a very slow pace because government departments take too long to respond to their requests, and it is also time and energy consuming for them to get a particular task done because of too much protocol and hierarchy from state institutions. However, one of the participants from the education sector attributed the slow pace at which things happen to the state's desire to be prudent with tax payers' money. Such a viewpoint seems to be one of those defensive routines aimed at protecting individuals and organizations from

embarrassment. Like Ulleberg's (2009, p. 23), informants from both sectors acknowledged that mutual suspicion or antagonism between them is a situation of the past.

> I think we have been more of friends with government. The role we have taken is that of supporting the government. Yes we will critique the progarmmes, we will critique policies, we will critique practices, but it is in view of strengthening capacity, in view of improving the programmes interventions that government is implementing rather than saying you are this and that. So I think it's more about our history also (NGO4)

Though the participants from both sectors pointed out that there is no mistrust between them, their acknowledgement of the existence of administrative bottle necks in government departments seemingly contradicts their judgment, and thus challenges the level of trust that exists between them as partners. For Argyris and Schön (1996, p. 91), withholding important information triggers a feeling of mistrust among individuals. Moreover, while SETA1 claimed that the government provides many opportunities and services for NGOs, SETA1, SETA3 and all the four informants from the NGO sector indicated that inadequate information on access to services and opportunities available for NGOs makes it cumbersome for NGOs to take advantage of such provisions. This finding signified the prevalence of inadequacy in communication and in a way, vindicates why there is ineffective collaboration between partners. Such a result affirms postulations made by scholars and advocates of strategic leadership on the linkage between authentic dialogue and communication, and organizational learning (see e.g. Yukl, 2009, pp. 49-50; Yukl & Lipsinger, 2005, p. 20; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2008, pp. 438-449). For instance, Yukl (1998, p. 459) believes secrecy is the adversary of learning while Kotter and Cohen (2002, p.4) also consider the lack of proper communication as one of the causes of leaders' failure to affect change or learning in their teams or organizations.

5.2.4 Challenges on skills development

The second set of challenges that has been identified exerts a more direct effect on skills development especially in rural communities. According to respondents' perspectives, these challenges emanated from the lack of proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, quality and access to training, applicability and market relevance of skills, rural education, rural exodus, heath issues, and history and culture/stereotypes.

Lack of proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

The research participants from both sectors articulated the general lack of meaningful benchmarks and framework to monitor and evaluate projects/programmes at implementation levels or level of specific constituencies as another weak link to skills development. Such an interesting finding strongly harnesses and affirms Argyris and Schön's (1996, p. 28) conviction that lack of monitoring and evaluation prevents errors from unearthing or from being addressed properly and thus strain learning. NGO3 and NGO4 for instance, added that any attempted evaluations always focus on the number of people trained (supply) rather than the quality of programmes, implementation methods, and the impact on those trained. This is seemingly a replica of model one theory-in-use kind of inquiry that results in single-loop learning (see Argyris & Schön, 1996).

> We have been very weak in that. We only started this year to put together a monitoring and evaluation framework. We have done it on a small scale but it's only this year that we have put together a framework to be able to do monitoring and evaluation where we are then going to measure the impact of these programmes after training (SETA1).

The absence of the kind of monitoring and evaluation practices envisaged by Yukl (2006, p. 332), and Yukl and Lepsinger (2005, p. 21), contribute to forfeit benefits such as learning from experience and situational awareness, that arise from a systematic analysis of an important activity that has taken place to discover why it was a success or a failure and how specific adjustments could be made to enhance performance.

Quality and access to training

Issues such as unemployment and inability of rural people to pay for training, proximity to training centres, limited programmes and qualifications, and the lack of adequate information to rural communities about the availability of programmes were highlighted by informants from both sectors as hindrances to access to training. SETA1 and SETA3 for instance, said rural folks are deprived of access to training because of financial constraints and insufficient information on availability and access to programmes for rural communities. *There is a question of funding and lack of information that is not filtering into our rural communities. Those are barriers to access* (SETA1). NGO1 and NGO4 also claimed that training centres are very far away from rural communities, so, even when they are aware of such trainings, some of them might not have the means to

attend. NGO3 also claimed that limited programmes and certifications were other limitations to access. In a similar vein, Gakusi (2010, p. 216) and the African National Congress (2007, p. 24) recognized the lack of appropriate infrastructure especially in rural areas as a hindrance to both access and quality of education and skills development. The quality of training implemented by some NGOs and private providers was also observed by some respondents as problematic in relation to skills development endeavours.

> You will also find people who take advantage of other people. I mean there are people and NGOs that will just spring up today and take advantage of people's needs and then give them some sort of training which is not accredited (SETA1).

> The issue of quality of provision particularly with many private providers is quite problematic (NGO3).

Applicability and market relevance

The research informants, mostly those from the NGO sector also expressed doubts in the applicability and the relevance of some of the skills that people acquire in the labour market. In their perspective, the designs of some of the programmes are void of local content or context and those trained especially in rural communities have limited opportunities to apply the skills they have acquired. This result correlates with the findings of similar studies carried out in other Sub-Saharan African countries (see e.g. Johanson & Adams, p. 4; Marope, 2010, p. 75; Hall & Thomas, 2005, p. 75) that claimed that skills development programmes are often supply driven rather than demand were the trraining institutions are continuously backward in the assessments of the relevance of training to economic and social needs, and the result is the prevalence of inappropriate training. NGO3 for example said:

> The problem with those programs is kind of like the supply side of issues. It's not necessarily about what skills are needed in rural areas but rather more about what training programs are being delivered. And so I suppose sometimes in theory you might find a mismatch between supply side and the demand side. We are now at NSDS111. Now the problem with NSDS 1 and 11 I think is that they were very much focused on targets. So many people trained. And there were subsector targets. So what is the impact of that? In terms of the targets, you will be saying we met our targets therefore we must have made an impact. But in fact it is not sustainable, yes you train somebody but I think it's going to make absolutely no difference in their lives. Now in a bigger picture is not a positive impact at all but you met a target.

The participants also highlighted that the lack of opportunities in the form of financial assistance or support for people with skills to embark on small scale projects

or businesses in rural communities exacerbate the situation. According to SETA3 for example, it is very disheartening for those who have acquired skills, have land, and really wish to embark on agricultural projects, yet they can't have access to funding from financial institutions. NGO4 also added that the requirements from formal banks especially in the form of collateral are too high for individuals or small businesses, hence, making it really difficult for individuals to start and sustain small businesses in rural areas.

Rural education

The participants strongly viewed very poor quality of schooling in rural areas at primary, secondary and high schools as another significant impediment to skills development. The situation is very grave at the Early Childhood Education level which in most cases is nonexistent in some rural communities. Their perceptions on the negative impact of poor rural education reaffirms Johanson and Adams' (2004, p. 86) and Marope's (2010, pp. 14-15) assumptions on the fundamental relevance of basic education to the development of professional and career skills at later stages in life. Like Marope (2010, p. 19), Johanson and Adams (2004, p. 87), Gakusi (2010, p. 219), Gardiner (2008, p. 7) and Bloch (2009, p. 17), informants perceived poor quality education as a consequence of factors such as the lack of qualified human resources, infrastructure, facilities and study materials. The participants further articulated that the existence of very limited schools especially at high school level meant learners had to travel over long distances for schooling. In *rural areas it is very tough. You have to walk for a long distance to school* (DRD1). Another respondent (NGO1) further explained that the further one goes into the rural areas of Mpumalanga, North West, Northern Cape and Eastern Cape provinces which according to the respondent, are the provinces that are most rural and are really rooted in poverty, the more one witnesses infrastructure challenges. NGO2 also recollected their experience:

> A year ago we assisted Transparency International in a certain research and the report of that study showed clearly that there are even schools that don't have blackboards; you find that students are sitting on the floor and the route to school is very far.

The research informants also perceived the issue of the qualifications of teachers and teachers' attrition as triggers of poor rural education. SETA1 indicated that the quality of schooling is poor because of the lack of qualified teachers especially in

science and mathematics (considered as scarce skills), and some rural schools are at times without teachers for up to about three months because teachers most often do not appreciate the setup. Such rural schools end up employing unqualified and inexperienced high school graduates. *There are instances in rural areas where they are so desperate that once you finish matric (high school), they put you in the class.* Moreover, NGO3 also observed that most of the few teachers in rural areas that seemed qualified, are becoming older, and were trained under a different system *so their qualifications are now recognized as insufficient and need some upgrading or up-skilling.* Regarding Early Childhood Education SETA1 said: *they are in dying need of a lot of support in Early Childhood education* while NGO4 also shared this opinion:

> There is some manifestation of Early Childhood development education in rural communities but it is like a grandmother pulling together a few kids. I don't think they have any education and training in Early Childhood development (NGO4).

According to the informants, poor schooling adversely affects learners' prior learning and readiness to pursue higher training, which translates into dismal performances in skills development programmes.

> If you look at how people at school level start preparing themselves to engage in artisan development or in other tertiary training, I don't think they are properly prepared to engage with. Even if you get a person with grade 12, which is a school leaving level, you will find that the person is still lacking basic skills in mathematics, science, communication, reading, conversation English, etc (SETA3).

Rural exodus

The nformants also considered the rural exodus as a setback to skills development initiatives in rural communities. According to the participants from both sectors, the movement of skilled manpower from rural to urban areas due to the lack of employment opportunities, infrastructure and social amenities make it difficult to maintain people with skills in rural communities. NGO4 viewed the lack of jobs, scarcity of good supplies of water and electricity as push factors. Furthermore, the participants were of the opinion that the location of training centres and other institutions of higher learning meant that more skills development projects tend to take place in urban areas. As a result, those that migrate to urban areas for training do not always return after completion.

> They come to urban areas to study and don't go back. They get used to the good life in urban areas. There is nothing, I mean in some of the rural areas (SETA1).

Health

The informants were also of the opinion that diseases like HIV/AIDS in particular affect skills development because they exert a downward spiral effect on the strength of the workforce.

> HIV/AIDS actually affects skills development a lot, not only in rural areas but also in urban areas. But there are also other diseases which I can't quantify (SETA1).
>
> If people are sick and they are not strong enough, it means there is no workforce. The economy can't develop itself without a strong workforce.

This finding also correlates to the thoughts of Marope (2010, p. 7), in the case of Swaziland, and Johanson and Adams (2004, p. 1), in the case of Sub-Saharan Africa in general, that HIV/AIDs depletes scarce human capital and increases the need to replace skills lost across a broad spectrum of occupations.

History and culture/stereotypes

The analysis also showed that most respondents were of the viewpoint that historical factors, culture or stereotypes hamper the skills development initiatives. According to the research respondents, people's experiences like the kind of education and treatment that they received during the apartheid era generated some sort of beliefs and thus influenced their inspirations and motivation to get involved in certain careers. Motala and Dieltien (2010, pp. 2-3) also took note of the influence of negative perceptions on rural education and training in South Africa when they observed that rural dwellers find staying in school to be of little economic reward. SETA3 highlighted that youths are reluctant to engage in agriculture because of the perception that it is associated with hard labour and *farming or farmers to them are white people, the oppressors. They don't have the knowledge to understand that there are deeper things or meanings.* DRD1 also reiterated that things have changed, the Bantu education, which according to them was *education meant for black people, and was not up to scratch compared to the whites*' still has repercussions on education and skills development in the rural communities since they were deprived of academic disciplines such as medicine, mathematics and science.

> The experience that I can say is that when we were at school, agriculture was meant for punishment. If you are late they will say go and dig there or go and water the whole garden. So you turn not to like the thing. Most of the people don't like to go

for agriculture. Mostly people take agriculture as a retirement thing. When they are active, they don't want to go there and dirty their hands (DRD1).

5.3 Proposed solutions for collaboration and skills development

This section of the report provides answers to research question four, which was aimed at gathering information and understanding the participants' perspectives on the possible ways of improving collaboration and skills development. The data analysis portrayed the following suggestions made by leaders of both the NGO and education sectors on how to enhance collaboration and skills development especially in the rural communities of South Africa.

Strengthen collaboration

According to the research findings reported so far, there is a strong indication that there is indeed the existence of some cross-organizational collaborative leadership practices between both sectors. However, the respondents also acknowledged the need to strengthen collaboration through the following ways:

Though there is some form of collaboration between NGOs, some participants suggested the need for the NGOs to have a strong and vibrant coalition that synchronizes or harmonizes their ideas, agendas and objectives under a common umbrella. According to SETA1, the practice of organizing conferences by the Department of Social Development with the aim of bringing the NGOs together, and the compulsory registration of all NGOs under the Department of Social Development could be some of the ways that the government is trying to encourage a coalition that represents all the NGOs. However, some participants showed some degree of uncertainty, but recognized the fact that it would be less complicated and more realistic for the NGOs to form coalitions under specific constituencies rather than a much broader umbrella.

> What is happening now is an attempt to begin to professionalize the sector (e.g. Early Childhood Development and Adult Education sectors) and may be that will help to unite the segments. So I am not sure actually about the broader umbrella of NGOs, on how it will happen to unite them (SETA2).

The informants also suggested more partnerships and participatory mechanisms wherein both partners have the opportunity for continuous engagement.

> We just need a participatory mechanism…We need constant collaboration. Collaboration involves everything; communication, transport and accessibility, sharing and disseminating, awareness campaign is part of collaboration, at all times. It has to be strengthened. It is supposed to be a partnership (NGO4).

> Before, you are only a service provider and you will do this type of work. Now they are beginning to talk of partnerships and strategic alliances. The language is changing completely. Hopefully the language will translate into practice (NGO3).

The participants further revealed that the NGO sector in particular is very deficient in capacity. Thus, improving capacities especially within the NGO sector will somewhat level the playgrounds for effective collaboration and skills development. NGO1 for example, suggested the need to provide NGOs with the necessary skills and resources that will enable them to lead and manage their mandatory projects effectively. They added that *we need to capacitate them so that they have the confidence to exercise their duties.* These suggestions affirm Yukl, Gordon and Taber's (2002, p. 25), and Wang and Ahmed's (2003, pp. 10-13) postulations that the provision of opportunities for the development of employees' skills, coaching and advice, employees' empowerment, strengthening of the knowledge base and adopting Total Quality Management in organizations are effective leadership practices that foster individual and group capabilities or competences and learning.

In order to strengthen collaboration, research findings further revealed the suggestion that the NGOs also need a self-sustaining model rather than being too dependent on the government and other sources of external funding. For instance, according to two participants from the NGO sector as quoted:

> Right now we just have to only take from donors, consume, and it's gone. We need to start embarking on something (NGO2).

> Funding comes with ties (conditions)…We need to also focus on the business wing so that even when we don't have funding from donors our business will support some of our projects to the communities (NGO1).

Their suggestion of a self-sustaining model is in line with Julie's (2006, p. 142) idea of having good financial strategies like income generating or fund raising projects that will enable them to cope during the periods that they are experiencing funding droughts from donors. Also to improve access to information and communication between the NGOs and sector skills planning institutions (education, social development etc) is vital. The participants expounded that access to information and communication is currently irregular and sometimes dependent on the authority responsible for a given sector or

department. Thus, there is a need for regular access to information, and communication amongst partners at any given time.

> Different responses to different projects and depends with the institution and the people you are dealing with... There is a huge diversity in access to government departments, which depends on how they interpret their beliefs, how they interpret policy and so on (NGO3).

The underlying idea in the respondents' suggestions to some extent harmonize and validate Lendrum's (2003, pp. 144-149) assertion that strategic partnerships become motivational and prevail when fear is removed, departmental barriers are broken, ownership is developed, commitment has been gained, people are empowered, there is leadership, conflict has been resolved, hidden agendas have been removed, trust developed, information and communication improved, the cost has been reduced and value added.

Design and implement proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

The research informants suggested the need for proper and constant monitoring and evaluation mechanisms which will enable them to know whether they are succeeding or doing the right thing. The participants from both the NGO and education sector buttressed this suggestion with the following recommendations: The stakeholders have to make sure there is monitoring and evaluation of whatever programmes are being implemented, but the evaluations should be more about the kind of skills needed in rural areas (demand) rather than solely about training programmes being delivered (supply), new evaluation approaches based on impact with meaning and sustainability should develop measurable and meaningful benchmarks or indicators for monitoring and evaluating projects.

> We need to take a different approach- impact with sustainability; impact with meaning. So it is about quality not necessarily quantity...The capacity to monitor now requires a different approach and way of thinking (NGO3).

Their suggestions tally with remarks made by Yukl and Taber (2002, p. 25), Kotter and Cohen (2002, p. 105), Yukl and Lepsinger (2005, p. 21), and other scholars in change leadership that checking on the progress and quality of the work that is being done or has been done, and evaluating individual and team performance in relation to change objectives is very crucial in high performing teams and successful change efforts. Johanson and Adams (2004, p. 6, 8) also believe that the evaluation of competencies of

graduates is important to quality assurance since monitoring and evaluation of training, and performance of training institutions can provide ample information to set, enforce and improve standards.

Re-assessment of policies and practices

Stakeholders should also engage more in developing and conceptualizing a policy framework that increasingly emphasizes on both quality and quantity. The respondents recommended the need for continuous re-assessment and modification of policies and practices, skills development mechanisms and processes until there is a winning system in place.

> We can fine-tune the skills development mechanism and processes until we have a perfect system (NGO4).

Improve rural education and access to training

According to the respondents, rural education needs more and more attention. The participants strongly suggested the need to improve the quality of schooling particularly at Early Childhood, primary and other basic education levels. In order to improve access and the quality of schooling in rural communities, the informants recommended more Early Childhood Education centres and other institutions with better facilities and qualified educators or practitioners, the creation of favorable conditions that will attract and encourage qualified practitioners to stay in rural schools, and the improvement of access and proximity to schools for learners. These suggestions are in conjunction with CREATE (2009, pp. 1-2), Arendse's (2011, pp. 356-357) and Seroto's (2012, p. 83) orientations on improving access to and quality of education in rural and impoverished communities. For instance, SETA1 had this viewpoint on the government's attempts to ameliorate the situation:

> We have realized that rural education needs a lot of support…That is why right now our government is covered with the rural development strategy to try and make sure that all the NGOs and private business go into rural areas especially to support rural education initiatives…With the rural development strategy we are also forced to take the services to the children like starting from Early Childhood Development into primary education you know. They have also realized that you can not only go there and build schools without bringing and maintaining the human resources.

In respect to improving the availability of information about programmes and access to training opportunities especially for the rural dwellers, the participants mentioned some attempts that have been made and further proposed that more needs to

be done. For instance, SETA1 and SETA3 mentioned that they distribute flyers and brochures, and organize road shows to spread information to rural people about the programmes and services that their respective institutions are offering. NGO3 further suggested the need to improve the flow of information to rural dwellers by increasing access to information through feature phones or the internet. However, NGO1 expressed some reservation that even if rural folks get information about available training programmes, it is often difficult for them to travel to training centers, which are mostly located in urban areas because they can't afford the cost of transportation. NGO1 then suggested that rural people should be provided with both information and funding.

> We really need to improve access. I mean information is power. Yes, what we have found about our rural communities is that all they need is information. That is why… we have started to embark on road shows, to go to the deep deep rural areas to share information with the people so that they can be able to go and get all the services from government (SETA1).

Rural development projects

According to the respondents from both sectors, skills development efforts and the benefits to rural communities could be enhanced by introducing and intensifying a series of rural development projects. Subsequently, the informants recommended the need to strike a balance between skills development and job creation, invest in infrastructure and social amenities, business ventures with support in particular for individuals, cooperatives and small businesses in rural areas. These suggestions indeed correlate with Seroto's (2012, p. 83) assertion that the state's rural development strategies should comprise the provision of technical and vocational education and training for rural communities, take note of the diversity of rural communities, and should reflect more extensive moves to maximize growth and poverty reduction. Here is a panoramic presentation of the research participants' perspectives on the state's plans or strategy for rural development, what has been done and above all, what needs to be done to promote job creation, encourage rural people to stay and enhance growth in rural communities:

> Does skills development drive job creation? How does skills development actually deliver jobs and income for people along the line? We have to consider spending more money on job creation and then supporting that through skills development (NGO3).

> The government believes that if you create infrastructure especially through the Strategic Infrastructure Programme (SIP) or Rural Infrastructure Programme (RIP)

> you will attract businesses and development. Government agencies must make sure they open offices in rural areas, they must take the services to rural area and invest in infrastructure projects like roads, schools, and encourage private businesses and NGOs to go there (SETA1)

> The government is hoping to begin the concept of developing agric villages in rural areas wherein farmers will have everything- clinics, schools, rural shopping malls, so as to try and avoid the issue of migration (DRD1)

Consider local context and market relevance

In order to make training programmes more sellable and applicable especially in the rural context, the research informants recommended the need for both stakeholders to always go to the rural communities and find out from the people what is useful/ necessary, and respond accordingly. Furthermore, the respondents suggested the need to consider and invest more in relevant training programmes that will sustain livelihoods and income generation; and make a distinction between service delivery and self-sustainability.

> We need to look at job creation. I mean that is the key. But I also want to comment in terms of the rural communities that I think we also need and maybe skills development needs to look into the communities and understand what communities are doing and what is useful around them. You know the kind of training that could be useful around them (NGO4).

Such suggestions link up with Johanson and Adams' (2004, p. 11) argument that encouraging trainers to respond to markets for skills development in informal economies wherein a lot of disadvantaged people are employed can add meaning to skills development and reduce poverty. There is also an underlying aspect that reaffirms Johanson and Adams' (2004, p. 58) logic of having a dynamic labour market observatory made up of high quality researchers in training institutions or under contract with the competence to generate high quality research aimed at reconciling skills development with quality and market relevance.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter marks the culmination point of the study with conclusions and recommendations, based on the results presented and discussed in the previous chapter, with a reflection on the ethical and trustworthiness of the study.

6.1 Conclusion

The study succeeded in adequately unraveling and providing concrete answers to the initial problem, and unearthed other issues that were not envisaged. Evidence shows the various modes that NGOs and educational leaders collaborate with in developing skills, and the positive effects of such cross-organizational collaborative practices on skills development, sustainable livelihoods and other aspects of human security in rural South Africa. Since the phenomenological research approach was used in the study, the results revealed how participants from both sectors are experiencing collaboration in skills development. These variations in experiences manifested through the modes of collaboration such as research, policy development and planning, facilitation, and implementation, with effects on mutualism, sustainability of the NGOs and skills development initiatives, human capital development, livelihood security, social and health benefits, and growth and development of rural communities (Local Economic Development). It is also worthy to note that the leaders of both sectors' experiences of the challenges that hamper collaboration and skills development were revealed through the fragmentation of NGOs, over-reliance on funding, weak capacity, policy ambiguity, inadequate communication, lack of proper monitoring and evaluation, poor rural schooling, access to and quality of training, local context and market relevance of programmes (the applicability of acquired skills), health and social issues.

Though the results strongly indicated the awareness of the leaders from both sectors of the significance of collaboration and skills development, and how things could be done properly (according to their proposed solutions), their lack of resilience and commitment to effective leadership practices that enhance partnership, coupled with other challenges, overwhelmingly deprived them of the dividends that organizations would truly experience if they operated as learning organizations or learning communities and thus hampered skills development endeavours. On the basis of the results of this research, the absence of strategic leadership practices amongst stakeholders greatly hindered collective performance. In addition, issues of poor rural education, infrastructure, HIV/AIDS and other social problems, exacerbated the negative repercussion of lack of strategic leadership on skills development. As illustrated in the model (see fig. 1 on page 90) that originated from the findings of this study, there is ample evidence that the lack of strategic leadership with an embodiment of strategic partnership, poor rural education, social issues and stereotypes were the core challenges of collaboration and skills development.

The road to high collective performance that produces skilled, self-reliant and sustainable rural communities starts with effective leadership practices that encourage and build partnership that provides ample opportunities for mutuality, shared values and common goal attainment. Effective collaboration between the NGO and education sectors therefore demands strategic leadership that involves or is defined by authentic communication and dialogue, high individual and team capabilities, shared values and goals, mutual trust, high quality inquiry that changes values and build organizational culture, policy and role clarity, and proper monitoring and evaluation (see e.g. Lendrum, 2003; Yukl, 2006; Yukl, 2009; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2008; Argyris & 1996). While acknowledging the significance of leadership strategies that enforce team performance, evidence from this study also shows that (see figure 1 on page 90) it is equally important not to ignore the fact that the path to successful and lasting skills development ventures also begins with accessible and quality rural education that improves learners' prior learning and readiness to cope with higher education and training, and a healthy rural workforce.

SUSTAINABLE RURAL COMMUNITIES

Livelihood/Human security

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

COLLABORATION

PRIOR LEARNING & READINESS

HIGHER EDUCATION & TRAINING SECTOR (SETAs)

NGOS (Third) SECTOR

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

Shared goals, communication, policy, planning, Capacities, implementation, monitoring & evaluation

RURAL EDUCATION
Early childhood, primary & Secondary Education

SOCIAL ISSUES

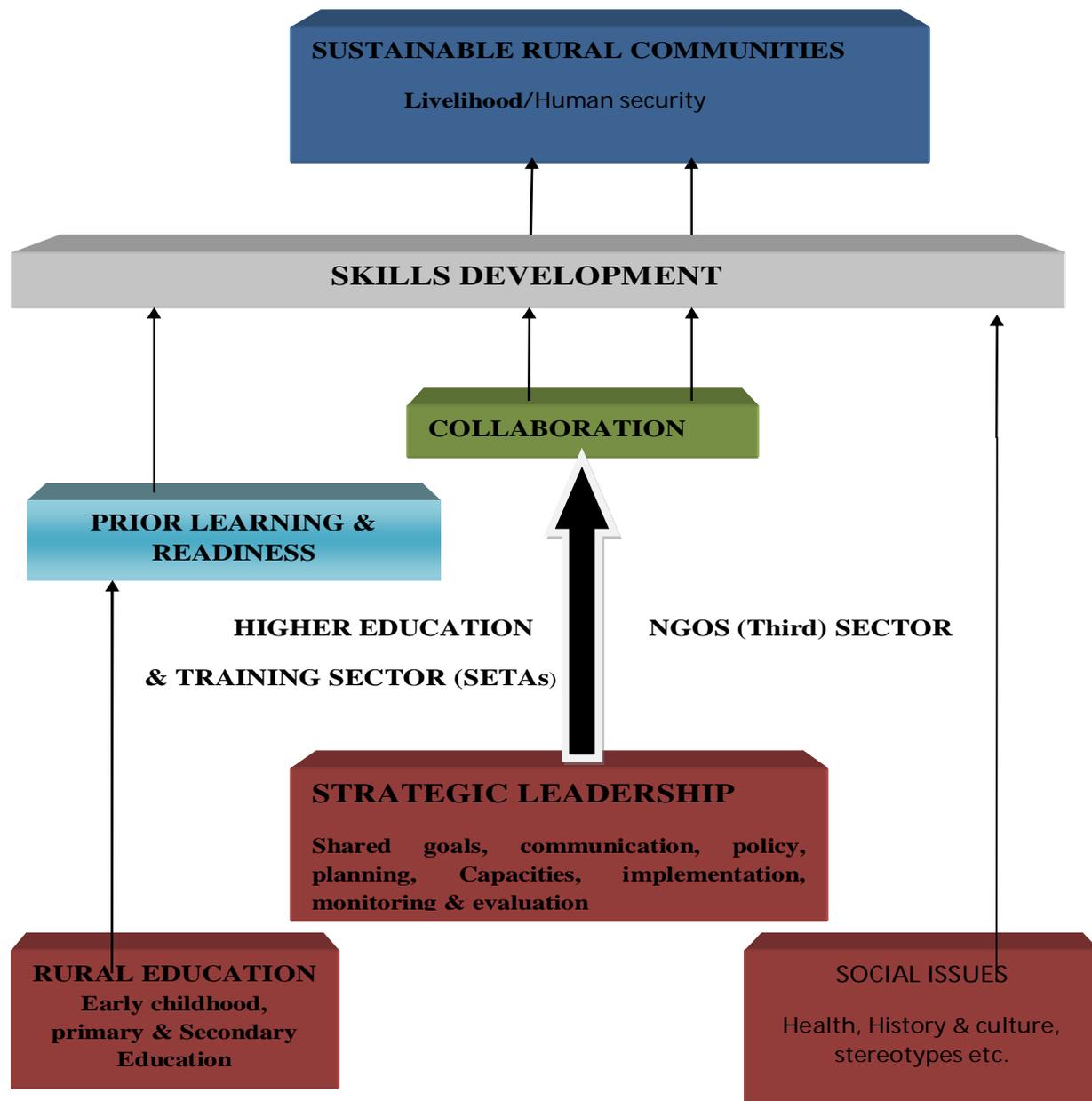Health, History & culture, stereotypes etc.

Figure 1. Key factors influencing collaboration & Skills development

6.2 Recommendations

Many useful possible solutions on improving collaboration between both sectors and skills development recommended by respondents have been presented and discussed in the previous chapter. Though the researcher's primary interest at this point is to bring to

play new suggestions where necessary, it is also well imperative to illuminate some of those already mentioned by the participants.

Leadership that is void of meaningful benchmarks to measure how bad or how well organizational goals have been attained utterly exposes the team to failures in any attempt to bring about transformational change. Monitoring and evaluation methods that provide opportunities to reconsider policies, modes of implementing programmes, the quality and relevance of training etc. have been neglected for far too long. Lack of possibilities to detect and correct errors leave the team with little room to improve on good practices and wholeheartedly allow a repetition of unproductive practices up to a chronic stage where everything seems to deteriorate and nothing works well enough. While considering the need for proper monitoring and evaluation mechanism as a matter of urgency, it is also vital for leaders of both sectors to bear in mind that evaluations are not for apportioning blames on individuals for dismal performances or failures but opportunities for groups to learn and improve (see e.g. Argyris and Schön, 1996, p. 28; Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 105; Senge, 1990, p. 67; Yukl, 2006, pp. 332-333). Such meaningful practices should be done on regular basis and should become the culture or institutionalized values of institutions involved, and the partnering process.

As already mentioned by research participants, I really wish to emphasize that openness through authentic dialogue and communication by using every means possible to provide unlimited access to comprehensive information for both collaborators and trainees does not only delete the frustration that arises from inadequate role clarity but also inspires trust, encourages ownership of projects, and strengthens the spirit of companionship.

The formation of the European Union (EU) and probably other institutions like the African Union (AU) was guided by theories of learning organizations and communities. There is no doubt that member states had their respective national goals or objectives. However, membership in institutions like the EU for example, helps to regulate activities, improve standards and performance. Moreover, the applicability of the concept of learning communities in universities in the world through inter universities research and other forms of collaborations like student exchange programmes, improves learning experiences and quality of learning (see Cross 1998, pp. 4-5; Wenger, 2000, pp. 225-229; Zito & Schout, 2009, p.1104). If all these countries and universities, with numerous individual goals could work in unison under a common

platform, it is therefore naïve to imagine that NGOs in South Africa cannot effectively amalgamate because they are involved in different activities with many individual organizational objectives. Hence, the NGOs need to embrace the challenge of building a strong and vibrant umbrella organization with a system that regulates their activities, sets standards and supports members to succeed. Thinking as part of a huge system or collective is very fundamental (see Argyris & Schön, 1996, pp. 6-15; Senge, 1990, pp. 6-12). It is good that the state through the department of social development is trying to promote the idea. Nevertheless, the NGOs need to plan well, make more sacrifices and be committed to this valuable course.

The issue of NGOs having a self-sustaining model now comes on board. It is actually difficult to be a strong and valuable partner if your roots are not deep enough or you are very susceptible to extinction. Sustainability encompasses financial, manpower and other forms of capacities which according to the results of this study are actually lacking in many NGOs. It would be erroneous to passively consider the NGO sector as an avenue for people with few qualifications, expertise, experience and professionalism, because it impedes their productive capacities and ability to relate well as partners. I visited an NGO in Finland dealing with capacity building and career coaching and I was full of admiration and so overwhelmed by the fact that though the organization receives funding from the state, it has been able to mingle the financial self-sustaining model to good effect by operating numerous Eco centers that act as an additional source of generating funds and places where the newly trained can acquire some work experience. South African NGOs should consider mingling self-sustaining practices in their activities so that they can become financially stable, strong partners and implementers of quality programmes.

It is also noticeable that the nature of research or inquiry carried out by both partners is aimed at updating Sector Skills Plans by identifying the number of people that need to be trained with scarce or critical skills, which in a way, merely translates to single-loop learning at the expense of other relevant issues like quality of training and whether such skills would be readily absorbed in the labour market. Any meaningful inquiry should be carried out in such a manner that the results would transform the fundamental values of individuals and the organization, so as to adapt well with the external environment. Such inquiries that translate into double-loop learning and organizational culture also require the expertise of high quality researchers, and

facilities (see e.g. Argyris & Schön, 1996, pp. 20-21; Johanson and Adams, 2004, p. 58; Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 6; Schein, 2004, p. 17; Spiro, 2011, pp.73-74).

Based on the findings of this study and other studies that have focused on rural South Africa (e.g. ANC, 2007; Arendse, 2011; Bloch, 2009; CREATE, 2009; Gakusi, 2010; Gardiner, 2008 & Seroto, 2012), it seems issues such as poor education, inadequate employment opportunities, infrastructure and social amenities in rural communities are not new revelations, yet the situation remains worrisome. The rural folks need accessible and quality basic education, training centers that are at close proximity, opportunities to find jobs or financial support to establish small/informal businesses that will render them self-employed, infrastructure and social amenities that will always motivate them to stay in their communities. As indicated in the findings, without ignoring attempts made by the state and other stakeholders thus far in promoting growth and development of rural communities, there is a stronger need for stakeholders to become more proactive and walk the talk if they want to make the dream of a skilled and sustainable rural South Africa a reality.

Education on health and other social issues should also be encouraged at homes. Parental involvement can be very instrumental in inculcating good health habits and discouraging negative perceptions amongst rural folks about education and the acquisition of certain career skills, especially in agriculture.

This research focused on cross-organizational collaborative leadership and skills development (human capacity development). A similar study on improving institutional capacities will be very fascinating.

6.3 Validity, trustworthiness and ethical consideration

Credibility, sincerity and ethics are three of the eight key makers or criteria of quality in qualitative research explored, examined and recommended by Tracy (2010, pp. 839-848). The phenomenological method, characterized by a self-reflection of the researcher's subjective values, biases, and inclination enhanced honesty in this study. I deliberately bracketed myself during the interviews, the transcription of the interviews and the data analysis so as to understand the issues from the perspectives of the participants and the phenomena under investigation, thus, investigating the participant's

lived experience rather than as I conceptualize it, and balancing the research context by considering thr parts and the whole (see Van Manen, 1990, pp. 30-31). A clear, concrete and detailed description of the research process, the reasons for using the phenomenological design, the challenges involved and how these challenges were resolved further contributed to the trustworthiness. Moreover, the researcher's knowledge of the subject, and the use of triangulation further enhanced the credibility and strength of this study (see Tracy, 2010, pp. 841-842).

Procedural ethics were observed as letters of informed consent, acknowledgement, research request and interest were presented to the participants and access was granted. Prior to any interview, the participants were reminded of the purpose of the research, issues of anonymity, confidentiality and non-malevolence, and the right to withdraw as a participant at any time (see Tracy, 2010, p. 846; McCauley, 2003, pp. 96-98).

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Modes and impact of Collaboration between sectors

Modes of Collaboration	➢ Research ➢ Policy development and planning ➢ Facilitation ➢ Implementation and monitoring .
Impact on skills development	Mutualism or complementary effect Sustainable NGOs and Skills development Improves policy and implementation Efficacy in Skills development Enhances common goal attainment Human capital development Livelihood security
Impact on rural dwellers **And communities**	Social and health benefits Accelerates growth and development

Appendix 2 : Challenges and possible solutions

Challenges on Collaboration	➢ Fragmented NGOs
	➢ Over-reliance on funding
	➢ Weak Capacity
	➢ Policy ambiguity
	➢ Bureaucracy and inadequate communication
Challenges on skills development	• Lack of proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
	• Access and quality of training
	• Applicability and market relevance
	• Rural education
	• Rural exodus
	• Health
	• History and culture/ stereotypes
Proposed Solutions	➢ Strengthen collaboration
	➢ Design and implement proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
	➢ Reassessment of policies and practices
	➢ Improve rural education and access to training
	➢ Rural development projects
	➢ Consider local context and market relevance