

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the research methodology. The measuring instrument was discussed and an indication was given of the method of statistical analysis. Chapter 4 investigates the inherent meaning of the research data obtained from the empirical study.

Learnership perspectives, as the focal point of this study, have to be evaluated against critical elements, such as organisational culture, size, skills development, training needs and long term objectives, and not only against relevant legislative platforms.

The interpretation of the research findings against the above-mentioned background is based on the belief that organisations will only embrace learnerships if the climate of the organisation is receptive towards this means of training, and not necessarily merely because of external legislative forces.

4.2 RESPONSE RATE OF SURVEY

In this study, 150 questionnaires were distributed and 51 respondents replied.

Hussey and Hussey (1997:164) clarify questionnaire non-response bias as being of two types:

- questionnaire non-response, whereby the questionnaires are not returned at all

- item non-response, where some of the questions in the questionnaire have not been answered.

Of the 150 questionnaires distributed, 51 completed questionnaires were returned, while 99 respondents (66 percent) failed to respond. This renders a response rate of 34 percent (Figure 15).

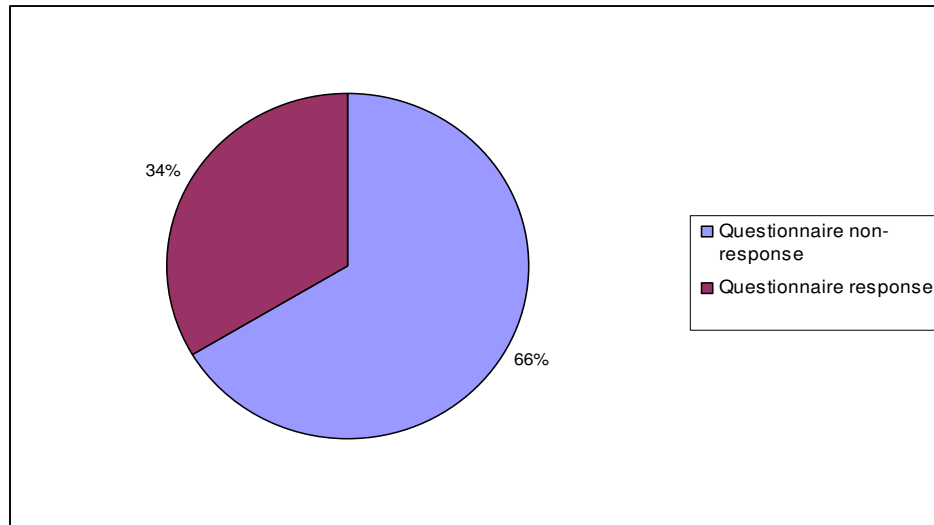


Figure 15: Percentage participation in survey

The Division of Instructional Innovation and Assessment (DIIA) at the University of Texas (2008:1) is of the view that response rates are more important when the study's purpose is to measure effects or make generalisations to a larger population and less important if the purpose is to gain insight. The DIIA further states that a response rate of between 30 and 40 percent is average for questionnaires completed electronically (University of Texas, 2008:2).

Gillham (2000: 48) agrees and states that if the response rate is less than 30 percent the value and validity of the method and results are in question.

Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that a satisfactory response rate should be at least 30 percent. In this study, this target was met with a response rate of 34 percent.

The questionnaire responses can be divided in two main categories, as indicated in Table 18:

Table 18: Responses received in two main categories

<i>Questionnaires received from organisations within the Sedibeng district municipal area</i>	36
<i>Questionnaires received from organisations outside the Sedibeng district municipal area</i>	15
Total	51

As indicated in Table 18, 36 questionnaires were received from Vanderbijlpark, Vereeniging and Meyerton, which are situated within the Sedibeng district municipal area and 15 questionnaires were received from organisations outside the Sedibeng district municipal area.

One of the major reasons that contributed to the submission of questionnaires by organisations outside the Sedibeng district municipal area was that various local organisations have head offices situated elsewhere. These head offices usually assist with skills development and learnership-related issues.

Owing to the seemingly low response rate, the decision was taken to incorporate all completed questionnaires received, rather than discriminating against organisations outside Sedibeng district municipal area, non-MERSETA organisations or organisations without learnerships.

The responses to questions B21 and B22 in Section B were thus included in the breakdown of the response rate in order to allow for more interesting statistical analysis (refer to Appendix B).

Question B21 in Section B investigates the different response groups and elaborated on organisations falling under the MERSETA. Figure 16 indicates the applicable response frequencies (*f*) and percentages (%).

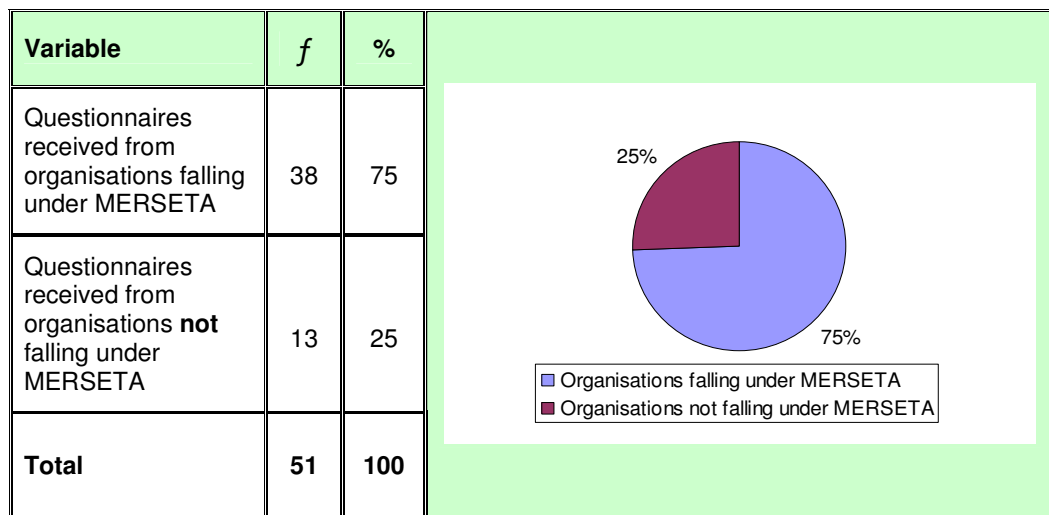


Figure 16: MERSETA and non-MERSETA organisations

Only 13 of the 51 responding organisations incorporated in this study do not fall under the MERSETA. The assumption was made that the effect of responses received from the 13 non-MERSETA organisations would not have a significant impact on the results. This is supported by correlations discussed later on in this chapter under Section 4.5.2.

Question B22 in Section B is directed at determining if organisations have implemented learnerships in their organisations. Figure 17 provides a statistical analysis for the total group in this regard.

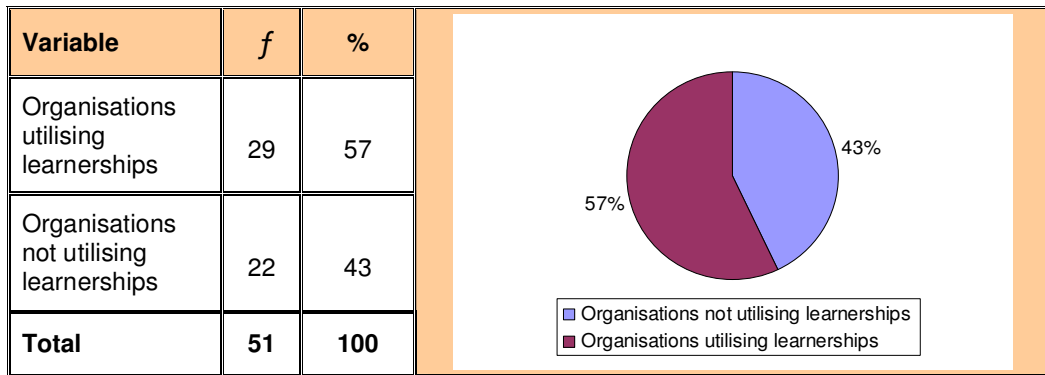


Figure 17: Utilisation or non-utilisation of learnerships

Although 22 of the total group of 51 responding organisations revealed that they do not implement learnerships currently, most of these organisations declared that their previous attempts to implement learnerships were unsuccessful. This gives an indication that these organisations do possess the relevant experience relating to learnerships and their contributions could therefore add value to this research project.

From the 29 questionnaires received from the MERSETA organisations falling within the Sedibeng district municipal area, 18 indicated the implementation of learnerships (Figure 18).

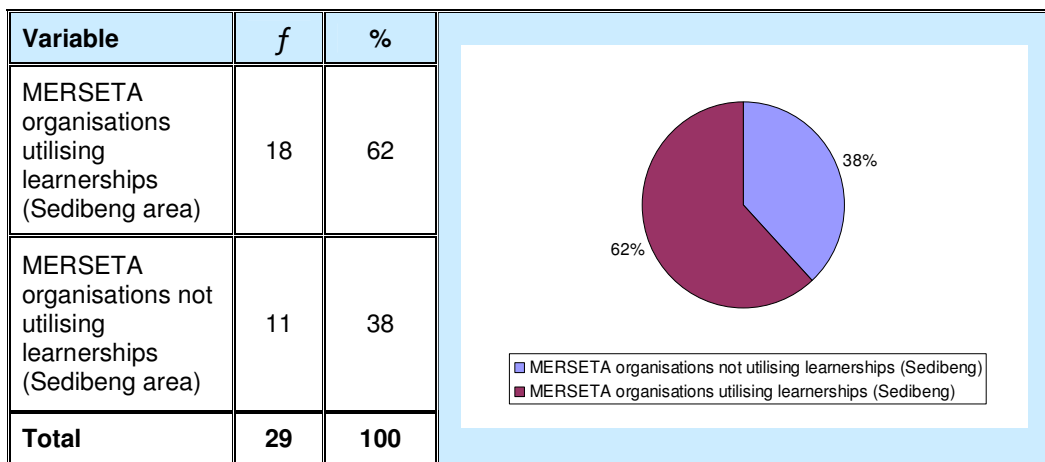


Figure 18: MERSETA organisations utilising learnerships (in Sedibeng)

Further analysis of the results shows that almost two-thirds of the surveyed organisations from Vanderbijlpark, Vereeniging and Meyerton are actively utilising learnerships. This experience of active involvement with learnership implementation confirmed that the feedback from the respondents was credible, and increased the validity of the research findings.

4.3 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

In order to achieve the empirical objective of the research, the results were analysed and presented as they appear in the different sections of the questionnaire (refer to Appendix B).

According to Hussey and Hussey (1997:189), a useful first step in the analysis of quantitative data is to examine the frequency distribution for each variable to establish the numerical value, which represents the total number of responses for a variable under study. Frequency distribution was undertaken throughout the analysis of the questionnaire findings.

The majority of fixed design research is exclusively quantitative and the degree of pre-specification of design analyses means that the major task in data analysis is confirmatory; that is, it seeks to establish whether predictions have been confirmed by the data. Such *confirmatory data analysis* (CDA) is the mainstream approach in statistical analysis (Robson, 2002:399) and was utilised in the analysis of the questionnaires in this study.

Robson (2002:399-400) further elaborates that there is an influential modern approach to quantitative analysis known as *exploratory data analysis* (EDA), which takes an informal pictorial approach to data in order to regularise the very common process whereby researchers make inferences about relationships between variables. Thus, this method does not preclude additional exploration.

This research was not only limited to confirmation of data but also envisaged to search for variables and correlations of data.

According to Fink (1995:53), the results of statistical analyses are descriptions, relationships, comparisons and predictions. These are the most common types of analyses done for surveys, as will be seen in the rest of Chapter 4 of this research study.

Results are presented using graphs and tables, followed by a relevant discussion. A summary on correlations, findings and the like, appear after the focus specific discussion in each section - company background, organisational perspectives, learnerships, the MERSETA, and skills development and training requirements.

4.4 RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS: SECTION A – COMPANY BACKGROUND

In order to elaborate on the background of the organisations, Section A of the questionnaire (Questions A1 to A6) captured the demographic information of the organisations, including main organisational focus, ownership, type of organisation and size and position of the respondent within the organisations.

The results, which are descriptive in nature, are indicated by means of frequency tables and pie charts.

4.4.1 Demographic location of organisations

This section of the study focused on organisations that operate in the industrial areas of Vanderbijlpark, Vereeniging and Meyerton, within the Sedibeng district municipal area. Figure 19 indicates the frequency response of organisations in the different demographic areas.

In accordance with the statistics below, a good indication was given that the frequency responses received were not only concentrated in one of the three areas in the Sedibeng district municipal area, but in all three areas.

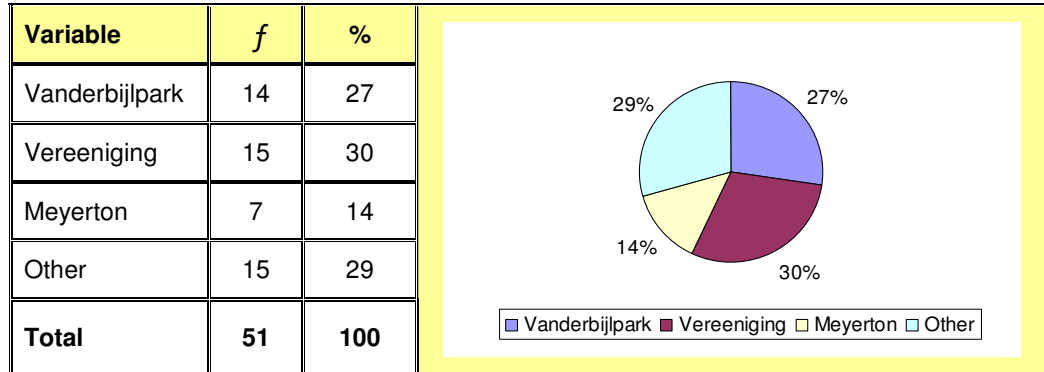


Figure 19: Demographic location of organisations

Under ‘other’, 15 of the organisations within Sedibeng district municipal area whose head offices are located elsewhere in South Africa were included.

4.4.2 The main focus of the organisations

The study focused on the manufacturing, engineering and metal industries. Figure 20, indicates the different focus areas.

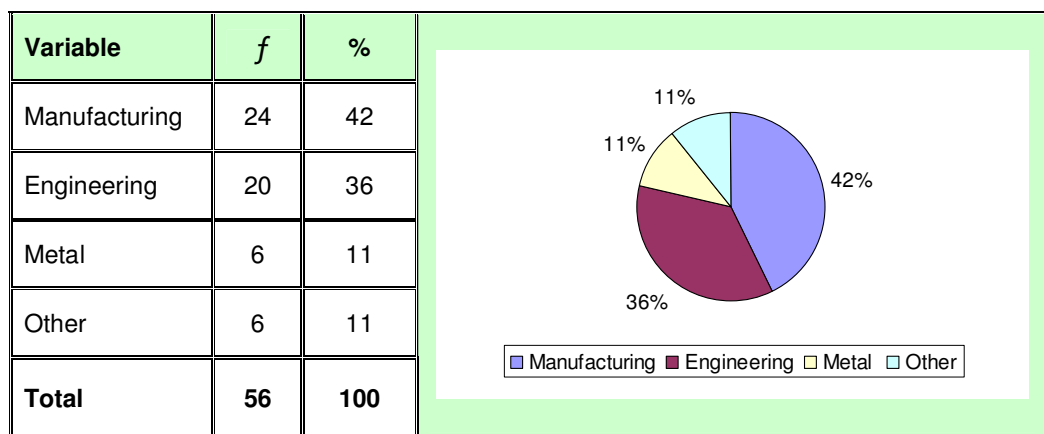


Figure 20: Focus area of the organisations

Of these organisations, six were analysed under ‘other’ and two fell under the MERSETA, but focused on training. The rest do not fall under the MERSETA and are involved in the production of chemical products, nuclear, mining and the selling/maintaining of earthmoving equipment.

Note: Two of the organisations indicated that they conduct business in all of the three focus areas, while one organisation conducts business in the manufacturing and engineering field.

Again the frequency of responses was distributed in all the applicable areas indicated in Question A2.

The statistics also indicate that the majority of responses were obtained from organisations in the manufacturing and engineering field.

4.4.3 Ownership of the organisations

Originally, Question A3 was incorporated to establish whether differences in perceptions of learnerships between international ownership, international joint ventures and South African owned organisations could be determined.

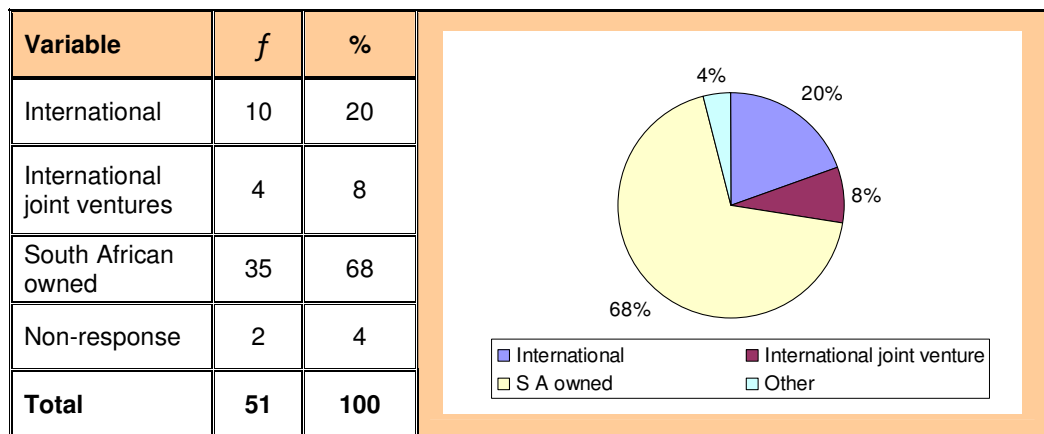


Figure 21: Ownership of the organisations

However, as indicated in Figure 21, 68 percent of the responses were obtained from South African owned organisations, which can be viewed as representative of the national business environment.

The researcher was unable to determine whether statistically significant differences in perceptions exist between these groups.

4.4.4 Type of organisation

The types of organisations that responded can be viewed in Figure 22.

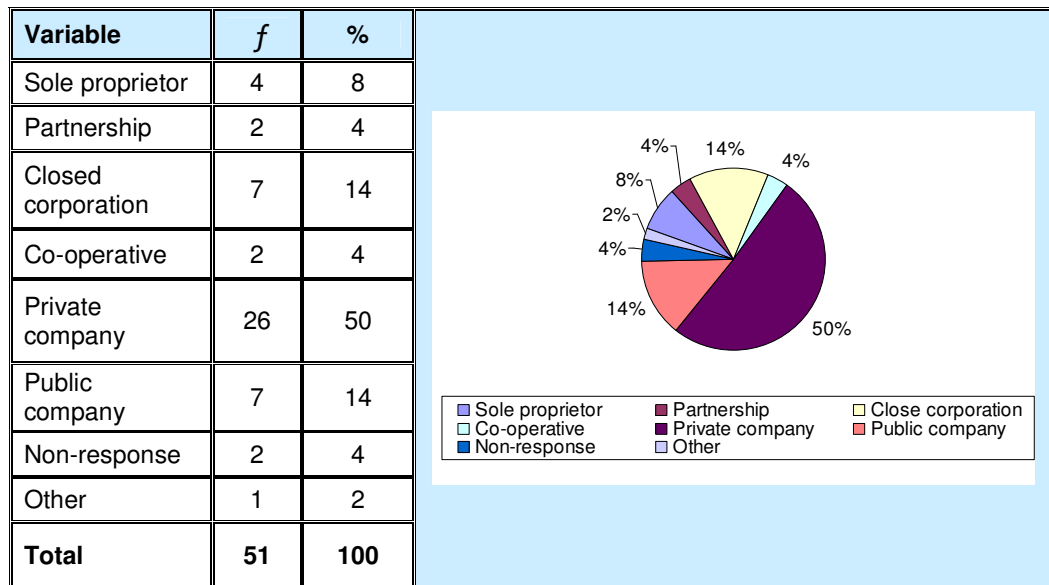


Figure 22: Types of organisations

From the statistical analysis, it was apparent that the majority of the organisations that replied were private companies.

Of the responses, the one organisation indicated under 'other' was a State-owned organisation.

4.4.5 Number of employees employed by the organisations

It is preferable that different sizes of organisations be presented in statistics to contribute to the reliability and validity of the study. Again, all responses received were taken into consideration.

Response on the size of the organisations surveyed can be viewed in Figure 23.

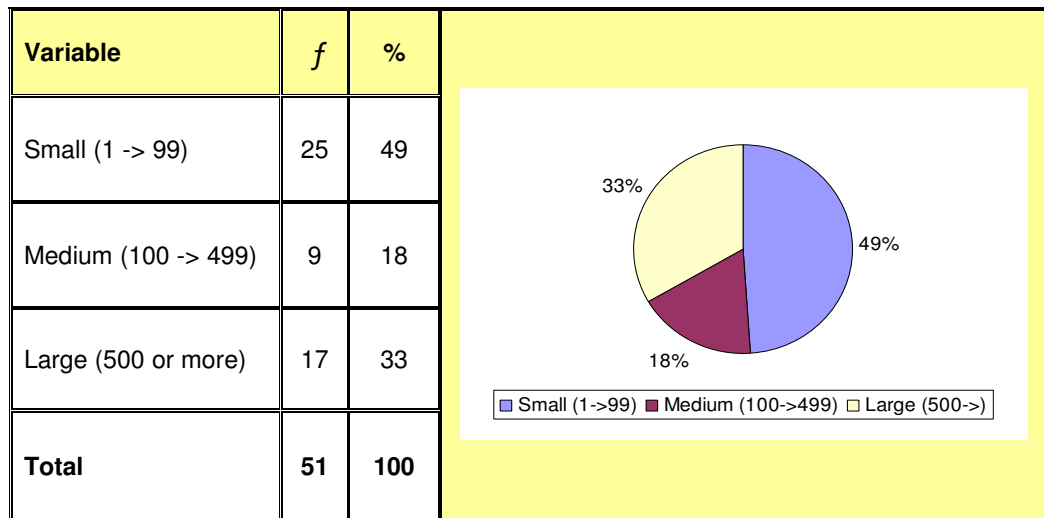


Figure 23: Size of the organisations surveyed

The above analysis indicated a varied response, which incorporates all sizes of organisations.

4.4.6 Position in the organisation

Although all the respondents have knowledge pertaining to learnerships, they hold positions at various levels within their organisations. This offers sufficient coverage of the views of persons from a range of positions and a spread of experience within organisations (Figure 24).

Under 'other', 14 persons are represented. These included the positions of officer, marketing manager, wage administrator, engineering training consultant, owner, chief executive officer, financial director, buyer, assistant product manager, personnel officer, manager technical training and human resources development coordinator.

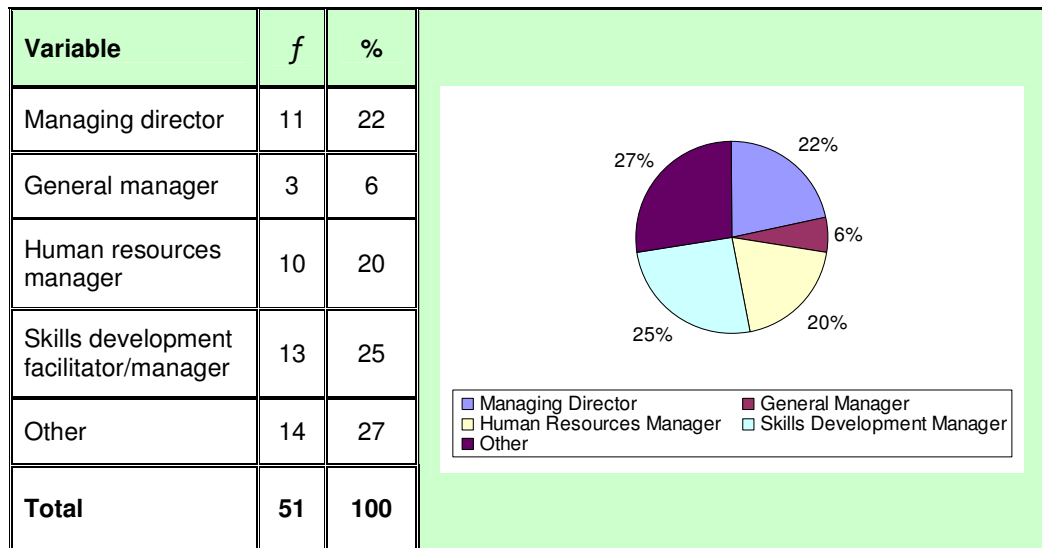


Figure 24: Position of respondents in organisations

The above indicates that smaller and medium size organisations do not always create positions only for training, development and/or learnerships, but combine this function with other positions.

4.4.7 Summary of results of Section A: Company background

The results of the statistical analyses of Section A indicate relevant frequency descriptions and comparisons.

In conclusion, the central tendency uncovered in Section A of the questionnaire is that a wide range of data was received, thus the data indicated very few limiting aspects.

4.5 RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS: SECTION B – ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVES REGARDING LEARNERSHIPS

The questions in Section B of the questionnaire (refer to Appendix B) aim to determine:

- the extent to which the existing conditions and structures within the organisation are supportive of the implementation of learnerships within the organisation
- the organisations' view of whether they have the necessary structures (internal/external training providers) to engage in learnerships
- the existence of barriers and challenges to learnerships within organisations.

In this section, the quantitative analysis employs a format of stating the phase to be interpreted and frequency tables indicate the actual perspectives of respondents. This was followed by an interpretation of the results.

The items within Section B were checked for *skewness*. The results indicated that the normality assumptions were not violated.

The *Cronbach alpha coefficient test* was also used to determine the internal consistency of the 20 items of Section B. This was found to be 0.78 and therefore Section B can be viewed as a reliable instrument.

The *Mann-Whitney U test* was used to conduct comparisons between different groups. Initially, comparisons of organisations within Sedibeng district municipal area and organisations outside Sedibeng district municipal area were done to establish if any variances and/or correlations exist. No significant differences were obtained.

The focus then moved on to a comparison of groups under the MERSETA and groups not under the MERSETA. Again, no significant differences were established.

The next level was then looked at, which includes organisations with learnerships and organisations without learnerships. Here, the findings indicate significant differences. (The significant differences can be viewed in the last columns of Table 21).

For future reference, the *full group* incorporating the 51 respondents will be referred to as Group 1.

Group 2, which incorporates all organisations *with learnerships*, indicated as A, C, E and G in Figure 25 has 22 respondents.

The group incorporating all organisations *without learnerships*, indicated as B, D, F and H in Figure 25, will be referred to as Group 3 and has 29 respondents.

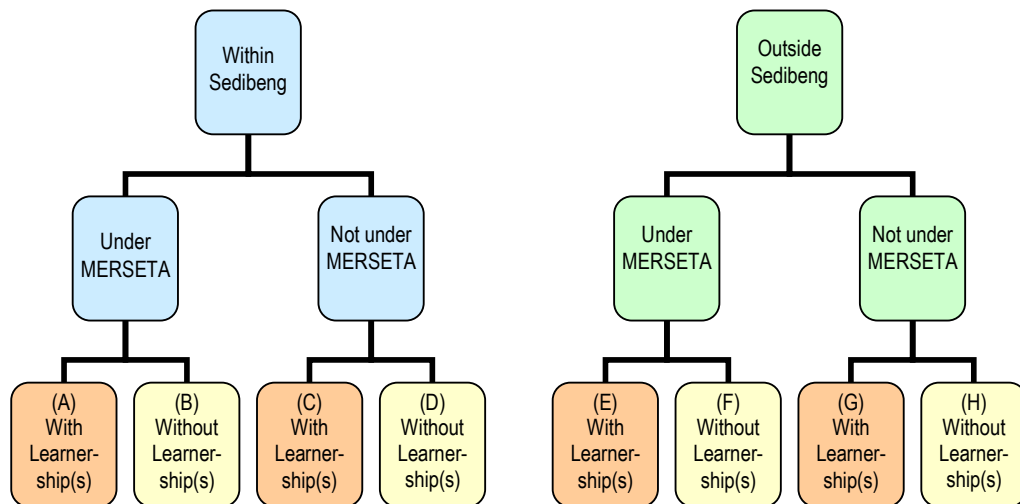


Figure 25: Breakdown of respondent organisations

Table 19 provides an overview of the sub-groups depicted in Figure 25.

Sub-group	Represent organisations	No. of responses
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • within Sedibeng area • falling under the MERSETA • with learnerships 	18
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • within Sedibeng area • falling under the MERSETA • without learnerships 	11
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • within Sedibeng area • <i>not</i> falling under the MERSETA • with learnerships 	1
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • within Sedibeng area • <i>not</i> falling under the MERSETA • without learnerships 	6
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outside Sedibeng area • falling under the MERSETA • with learnerships 	6
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outside Sedibeng area • falling under the MERSETA • without learnerships 	4
G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outside Sedibeng area • <i>not</i> falling under the MERSETA • with learnerships 	4
H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outside Sedibeng area • <i>not</i> falling under the MERSETA • without learnerships 	1

Table 19: Sub-groups division

Table 19 indicates a spread of responses, with the majority of respondents in sub-group A and B, which falls within the Sedibeng district municipal area and under the MERSETA.

4.5.1 Results for organisations with learnerships (Group 2) and without learnerships (Group 3)

In view of the fact that no significant differences were found between organisations within and outside Sedibeng district municipal area, as well as organisations falling under and not falling under MERSETA, the decision was

taken to focus on results between organisations with learnerships (Group 2) and those without learnerships (Group 3).

Table 20 summarises the frequency response for the above mentioned two groups. Data will be incorporated under perspectives (from questions within Section B of the questionnaire) in the following categories (refer to Appendix B):

- views on learnership implementation
- attitudinal barriers and challenges (including a lack of confidence, a lack of motivation, negative attitudes and group culture)
- structural barriers and challenges (including a lack of learning opportunities and a lack of available work-related training)
- physical barriers and challenges (including financial, administration and time constraints).

The items in Section B were incorporated not only to establish how the respondents feel (views), but also why they feel a certain way (barriers and challenges). Through the answers to these statements, perspectives can be addressed more comprehensively.

The questionnaire also aims to establish whether organisations are responsive or unresponsive towards learnerships as a training system and to ascertain the reason(s) for their responsiveness or unresponsiveness.

These reasons might be concluded from the responses received in relation to the barriers and challenges experienced by organisations.

Table 20: Frequency responses by organisations within Groups 2 and 3

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Non-response
	G2 %	G3 %	G2 %	G3 %	G2 %	G3 %	G 2 %	G3 %	G3 %
Views on learnership implementation									
Previous attempts to execute learnerships were unsuccessful	7	23	28	27	41	14	24	9	27
Learnerships address organisational needs	24	5	55	23	17	41	3	18	14
Learnerships impact on organisational goals	17	9	69	27	10	18	3	27	18
Learnerships are beneficial to employees	14	23	14	32	59	23	14	9	14
Learnerships are beneficial to employers	17	23	34	41	41	18	7	0	18
Management feel that required skills can be obtained through internal on-the-job training, i.e. there is no need for learnerships	17	18	34	50	45	18	3	0	14
Learnerships leads to a recognised qualification	10	14	38	55	52	18	0	0	14
Learnership system achieves what it was intended to achieve (i.e. skills development)	24	50	41	36	28	0	7	0	14
Attitudinal barriers and challenges									
Organisational culture not conducive to learnership implementation	28	50	52	27	21	5	0	0	18
Increased industrial relation issues related to learnership implementation	38	9	55	64	3	14	3	0	14
Learnerships increase productivity levels	41	5	48	32	3	45	7	5	14
Structural barriers and challenges									
Organisation experiences lack of know-how regarding the implementation of learnerships	28	32	48	32	21	9	3	14	14
Roles regarding learnerships are not clear	0	18	55	50	28	9	17	9	14
Responsibilities regarding learnerships are not clear	10	36	34	32	41	18	14	5	9
Sufficient external training providers for learnerships exist	38	9	41	18	14	59	7	0	14
Sufficient internal training providers for learnerships exist	3	5	48	18	38	27	10	36	14
Physical barriers and challenges									
Learnerships are costly to implement	7	0	34	18	48	41	10	27	14
Learnerships cause administrative burdens	3	5	66	27	21	32	10	23	14
Sufficient financial benefits exist within the organisation for the implementation of learnerships	10	5	45	41	41	27	3	0	27
Managers are prepared to commit time/resources to learnership implementation	14	9	48	55	28	23	10	0	14

A few item non-responses were received under Group 3, as indicated in the last column of Table 20. The minimum item non-response was two per question and the maximum six.

According to Robson (2002:400-401), quantitative analysis is virtually synonymous with significance testing. The whole point and purpose of the exercise is to determine statistical significance by answering the question: “Do we have a significant result?” Robson (2002:400-401) further states that no difference between the population means the results are true. Frequency responses of Section B were recorded and significant statistical difference levels are indicated, in Table 21, as:

- *** = <0.01
- ** = <0.05
- * = <0.10

Table 21: Significant differences between Groups 2 and 3

	<i>Significant difference</i>
Views on learnership implementation	
Previous attempts to execute learnerships were unsuccessful	** (0.32)
Learnerships address organisational needs	*** (0.002)
Learnerships impact on organisational goals	*** (0.005)
Learnerships are beneficial to employees	** (0.32)
Management feel that required skills can be obtained through internal on-the-job training (i.e. there is no need for learnerships)	** (0.037)
Learnerships leads to a recognised qualification	*** (0.006)
Learnership system achieves what it was intended to achieve (i.e. skills development)	** (0.038)
Attitudinal barriers and challenges	
Learnerships increase productivity levels	* (0.081)
Structural barriers and challenges	
Responsibilities regarding learnerships are not clear	* (0.077)
Sufficient external training providers for learnerships exist	* (0.054)
Sufficient internal training providers for learnerships exist	* (0.097)
Physical barriers and challenges	
Learnerships are costly to implement	*** (0.004)
Learnerships cause administrative burdens	* (0.063)
Sufficient financial benefits exist within the organisation for the implementation of learnerships	*** (0.003)

Based on the results obtained in Table 20 and 21, the similarities are indicated between Group 2 and Group 3 in the form of percentage responses (Table 22).

For ease of interpretation of similarities, the responses under strongly agree and agree were combined to indicate total agreement, while the strongly disagree and disagree responses were combined to indicate disagreement.

Table 22: Similarities between Groups 2 and 3

	<i>Item response Group 2 (with learnerships) (%)</i>	<i>Item response Group 3 (without learnerships) (%)</i>
Views on learnership implementation		
Learnerships are beneficial to employers	51	64
Attitudinal barriers and challenges		
Organisational culture not conducive to learnership implementation	80	77
Increased industrial relation issues related to learnership implementation	93	73
Structural barriers and challenges		
Organisation experiences lack of know how regarding the implementation of learnerships	76	64
Roles regarding learnerships are not clear	55	68
Physical barriers and challenges		
Managers are prepared to commit time/resources to learnership implementation	62	64

During the analysis of Group 2 and 3, responses were also given by eight respondents who shared explanations regarding their perspectives in Section B. These can be summarised as follows:

- *“Choices reflected are based on experience with customers who had learners trained by us and the pluses and minuses they experience at factory level when implementing these. The major stumbling block is*

poor management buy-in and commitment to make learnerships work.”

- *“During learnerships, tools get damaged and production slows down as learners are not educated properly at their tertiary institutes. Some can’t even write a sentence correctly and don’t have the most basic knowledge like how to measure if something is square.”*

- *“The biggest challenge was the paradigm shift, which was hampered by the apprenticeship culture and perceptions related to that. Learnerships require more involvement than apprenticeships due to the shorter periods for each level as related to an apprenticeship system.*

The implementation, through trial and error due to the different approach compared to learnership against apprenticeship system, went well due to sufficient resources, experience, etc. Smaller companies could find it more challenging.

Created expectations, fuelled by skill shortages, had an enormous negative impact on the learnership system in our industry. As people feels comfortable with the known, they tend to revert back to the apprenticeship way of thinking. This scenario was created by national structures not being able to live up to expectations, e.g. learnership development, implementation and marketing.

Although the roles and responsibilities are clearly identified in well developed policies and procedures, the problem is that these procedures are sometimes not followed.”

- *“Learnerships is just there to say we train people in the shortest time possible, to show some sort of certificate saying the person is qualified to be a artisan. 80 % of these persons don’t even have basic skills to do work as artisans. The cost then for the employer just keeps on*

increasing because of retraining in house. The person's skill level is so low you can not let them work individually or without extensive supervision. Because of the specialised nature of our service all our employees will work with an experienced artisan for up to four years before he will be allowed to do some task on his own."

- *"The respective SETAs make it difficult to successfully implement learnerships as they with hold the necessary funds available."*
- *"It is a waste of time to send the students for a year theoretical, in stead of the previous three 3 months, even if it is only for one subject. No night classes are available."*
- *"The company uses the Apprenticeship system for training Artisans."*
- *"SETAs cause abnormal delays in the payment of monetary benefits and therefore does not make the learnership implementation beneficial."*

4.5.1.1 Correlations between the local MERSETA organisations and the total group

It was decided to establish if the perspectives of the local MERSETA affiliated organisations (n=29), referred to as Group 4, presented in Figure 26, agree or differ from the overall perspectives of Group 1 (the total group of respondents). Item non-responses were not taken into consideration in these statistics.

This correlation, as indicated in Figure 27, aims to bring the results back to the original focus of the study, as described in the general objective: "To determine organisational perspectives of learnerships within certain MERSETA organisations in the Sedibeng municipal district area."

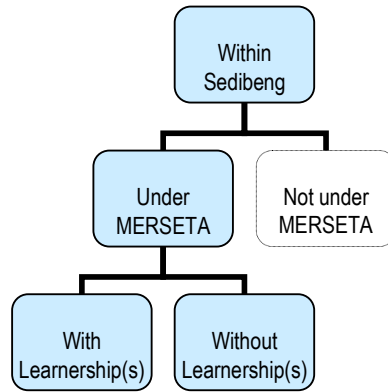


Figure 26: Local MERSETA affiliated organisations (Group 4)

In Figure 27, for ease of interpretation, the responses under strongly agree and agree are combined to indicate total agreement, while the responses under strongly disagree and disagree are combined to indicate disagreement.

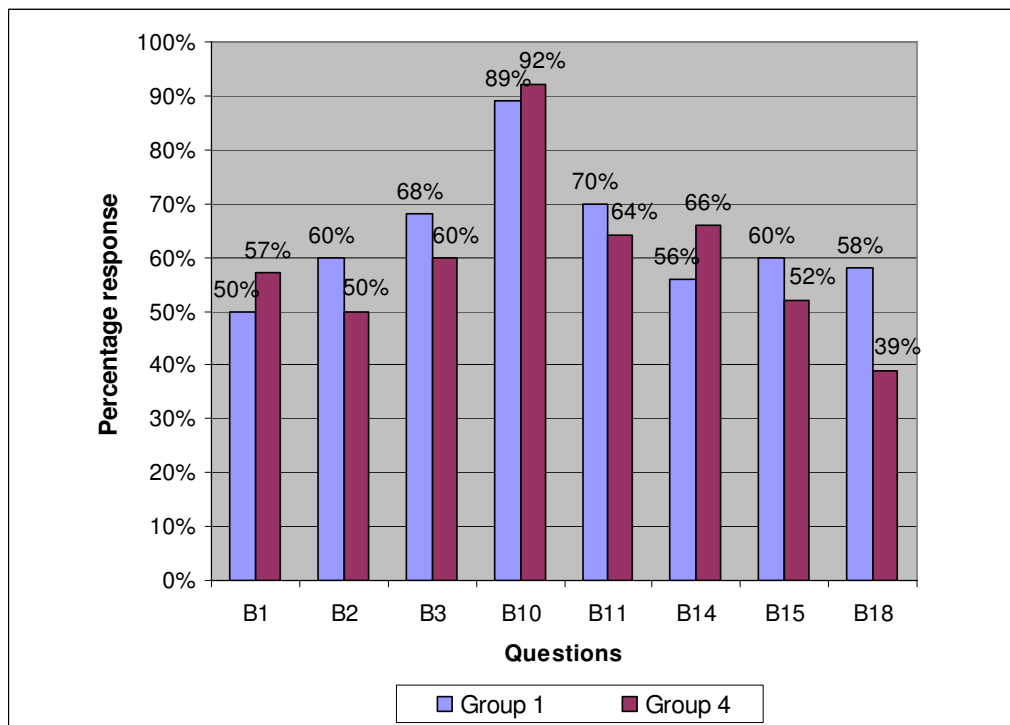


Figure 27: Views towards utilising learnerships (Group 1 versus Group 4)

From the data, it is evident that most of the responses from Group 1 and Group 4 differ marginally by no more than 10 percent. The only difference in results was experienced regarding the question relating to whether the learnership system achieves what it was intended to achieve (B18).

The conclusion can thus be made that the two groups mainly agree on views towards learnership implementation or utilisation.

Figure 28 indicates the correlation between Group 1 and 4 with respect to attitudinal barriers and challenges regarding utilisation of learnerships. These barriers include aspects such as lack of confidence, lack of motivation, negative attitudes and group culture.

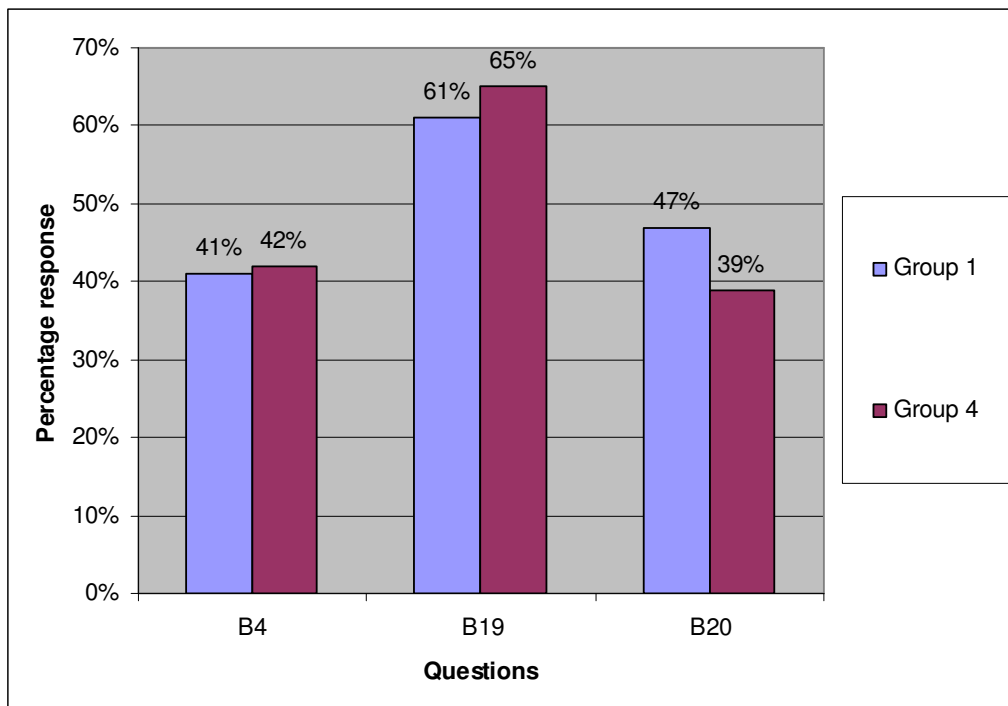


Figure 28: Attitudinal barriers and challenges (Group 1 versus Group 4)

All respondents disagreed with the statement that organisational culture is not always conducive to learnership implementation (B4), as well as that learnerships increase productivity levels (B20).

In both groups, there was more than 60 percent agreement that learnerships increased industrial relation issues (B19).

From the results it was evident that Group 1 and 4 reached consensus on attitudinal barriers and challenges.

Figure 29 indicates the correlation between Group 1 and 4 with respect to structural barriers and challenges regarding utilisation of learnerships. These barriers include aspects such as lack of learning opportunities and lack of available work-related training.

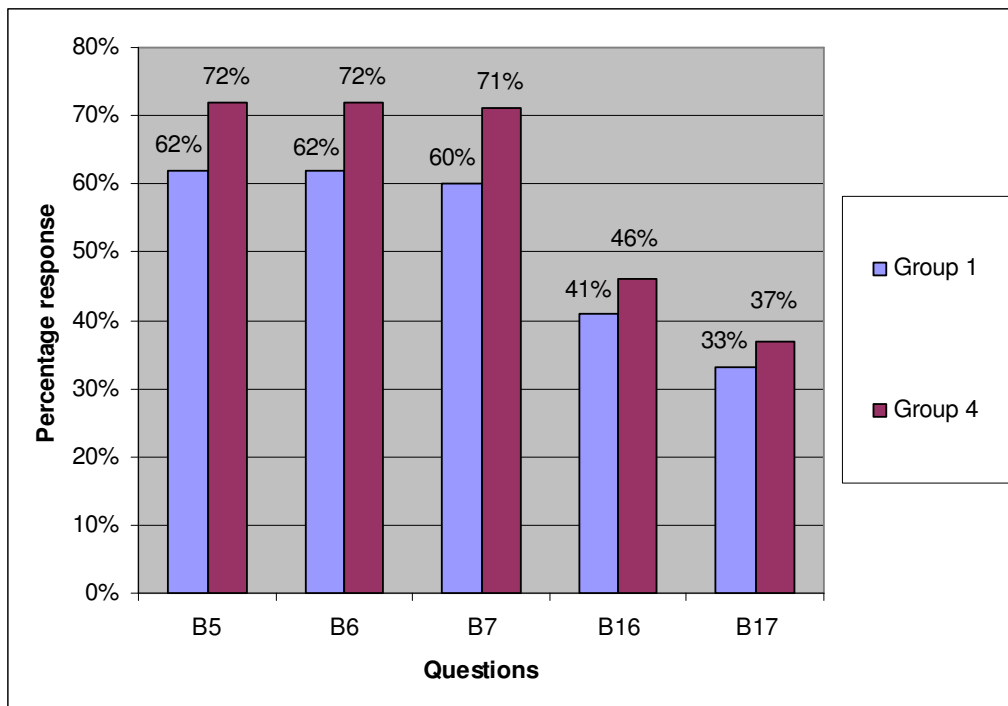


Figure 29: Structural barriers and challenges (Group 1 versus Group 4)

All respondents agreed that organisations lack experience or know-how regarding the implementation of learnerships (B5), and that roles regarding learnerships (B6) and responsibilities regarding learnerships are not clear (B7).

All respondents concur that there were insufficient external (B16) and internal (B17) training providers for learnerships.

From the data it is also clear that the results of Group 4 are in line with those of Group 1 (Figure 29).

Figure 30 illustrates the correlation between Group 1 and 4 with respect to physical barriers and challenges regarding utilisation of learnerships. These barriers include aspects such as finances, administration and time constraints.

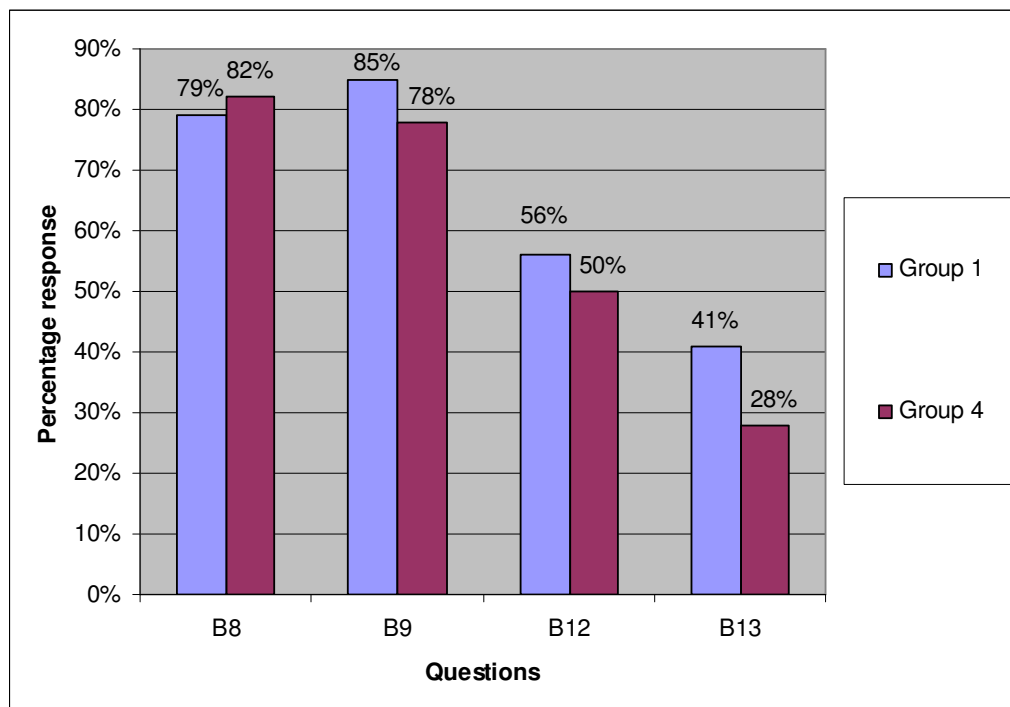


Figure 30: Physical barriers and challenges (Group 1 versus Group 4)

All respondents agreed that learnerships are costly to implement (B8) and cause administrative burdens (B9).

There was a 50-to-56 percent agreement on the fact that sufficient financial benefits exist within the organisation for the implementation of learnerships (B12).

All respondents indicated disagreement on the issue that managers are prepared to commit time/resources to learnership implementation (B13).

The results of Group 4 thus correlate with those sentiments of Group 1.

4.5.2 Summary of results for Section B: Organisational perspectives regarding learnerships

For Section B the Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to establish any significant differences, statistics indicated no skewness and the Cronbach alpha coefficient test was conducted to test for reliability.

Through comparison of organisations with learnerships (Group 2) and organisations without learnerships (Group 3), the following results were obtained. Both groups reported that:

- learnerships are beneficial for employers
- organisational cultures are not conducive to learnership implementation
- there is increased industrial relation issues related to learnership implementation
- organisations experience lack on know-how regarding the implementation of learnerships
- roles regarding learnerships are not clear
- managers are prepared to commit time and/or resources to learnership implementation.

The overall outcome is that learnerships are in fact widely implemented within the MERSETA organisations in the Sedibeng district municipal area, although there clearly still remains a lack of understanding and familiarity with the system.

During the comparison of Group 1 (the total group of respondents) and Group 4 (MERSETA affiliated respondents), the respondents' views were grouped and they did not differ by more than a 10 percent margin.

Both groups reported that:

- previous attempts to execute learnerships were unsuccessful
- learnerships address organisational needs
- learnerships impact on organisational goals
- learnerships are beneficial for employees
- learnerships are beneficial for employers
- management are of the opinion that required skills can be obtained through internal on-the-job training, that there is no need for learnerships
- learnerships lead to a recognised qualification
- learnership system achieves what it was intended to achieve, that is skills development

Regarding the attitudinal, structural and physical barriers and challenges of learnerships, the results of Group 1 and 4 differ by less than 20 percent.

On interpreting and summarising the respondents' perspectives, it emerged that the major impediment to learnership implementation within organisations is the fact that they require a conducive organisational environment, extensive internal resources and a willingness to engage in partnerships with external training providers.

4.6 RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS: SECTION C – LEARNERSHIPS WITHIN THE NQF FRAMEWORK

The respondents were requested to identify at what NQF level their organisation require skills development (refer to Appendix B). The aim of this section was to confirm the demand for learnerships, as well as the level of learnerships needed.

The statistics for Section C were based on the 18 fully-completed questionnaires of the MERSETA organisations within Sedibeng district municipal area that currently implement learnerships, called Group 5 for future reference.

A few respondents indicated more than one NQF level, which was also incorporated. In contrast, non-responses were not indicated.

Figure 31 incorporates the responses towards the learnership skills focus. The data revealed that skills development initiatives are mostly required at NQF levels 2, 3 and 4, which include:

- Grades 10, 11 and 12 schooling certificates and/or
- College and trade certificates, where a broader base of hands-on skills are required.

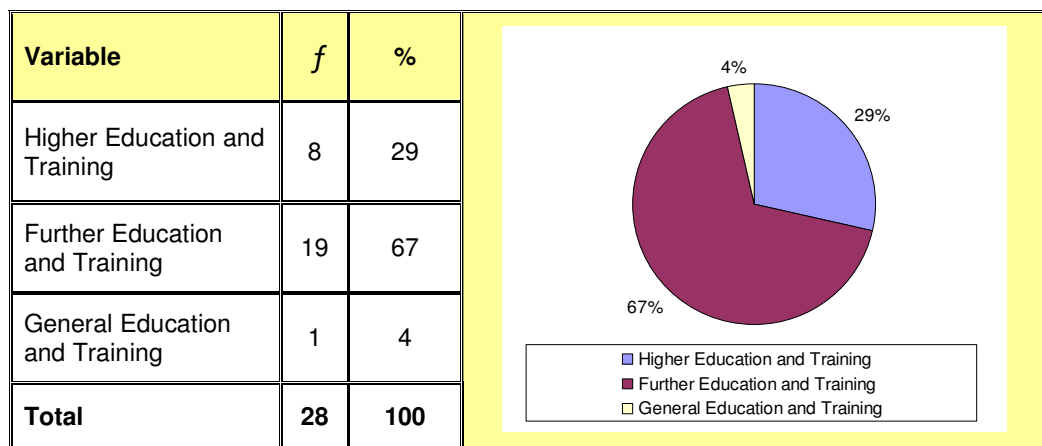


Figure 31: NQF level learnerships required

The findings support Section 2.3.9, where the MERSETA sector skills plan review 2007-2010, acknowledges that the South African legacy of inadequate people development in most sectors and limited human resource skills enhancement inside organisations presents a major challenge for the nation. In particular, the lack of technical skills is keenly felt within the MERSETA (MERSETA, 2007b:66).

Question C2 and C3 enquired about the percentage of time a learner should spend on theoretical and practical or on-the-job training (Figure 32).

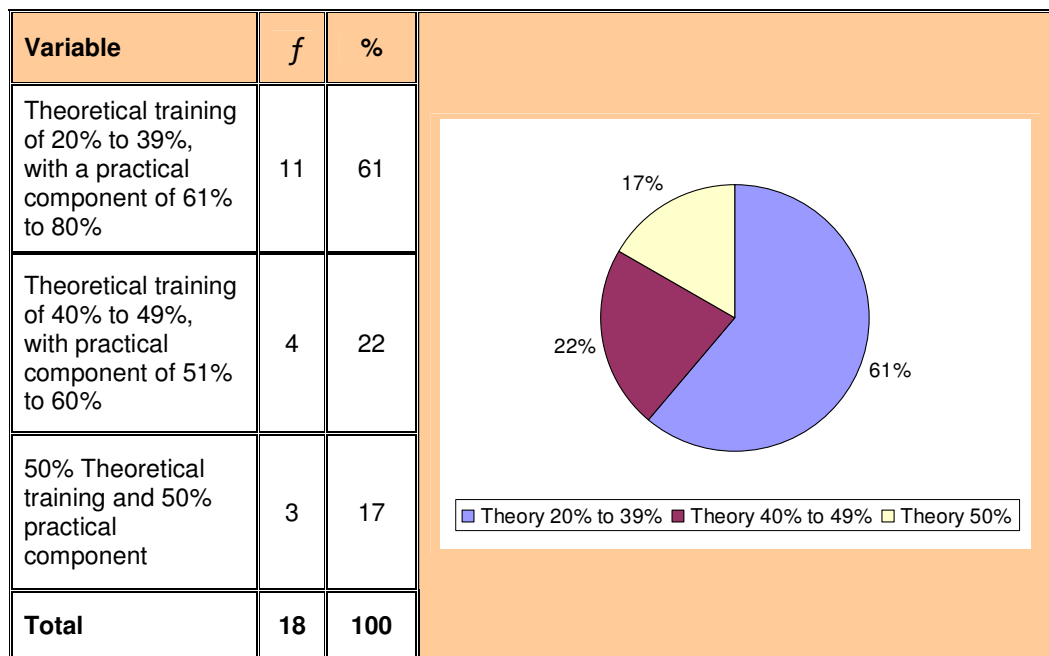


Figure 32: Training component required

From Figure 32, it is evident that the majority of organisations are of the opinion that theoretical training should entail between 20 and 39 percent of a learner's total training time.

This information links directly with Section 2.3.3, where it is indicated that a learnership requires that an accredited training provider evaluates the

structured learning component, recognises this as contributing to the qualification and considers this to be at least 30 percent of the programme (RSA, 1998:16-17).

4.6.1 Summary of results for Section C: Learnerships within the NQF framework

Information retrieved in Section C demonstrated that the opinions of the researched MERSETA organisations are in line with the scarce skills areas experienced in South Africa. Organisations indicated that they support the necessity of structured learning and practical components within learnership programmes.

4.7 RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS: SECTION D: MERSETA

In Section D (refer to Appendix B), the questionnaire sought to establish the relationship between the MERSETA and local organisations registered under the MERSETA, as well to determine areas where organisations report the MERSETA can assist them.

The data analysed in this section was from Group 5, as described under Section 4.6.

4.7.1 Contact with the MERSETA

Question D1 enquired on the frequency of contact between local organisations and the MERSETA.

Figure 33 incorporates the responses received.

Analysis of data revealed that 39 percent of the organisations have contact with the MERSETA on a quarterly basis, while 17 percent have monthly

contact. Under the two organisations who indicated 'other' (11 percent), the one organisation has daily contact and the other almost daily contact. Approximately three-quarters of the organisations have contact with the MERSETA at least four times per annum or more.

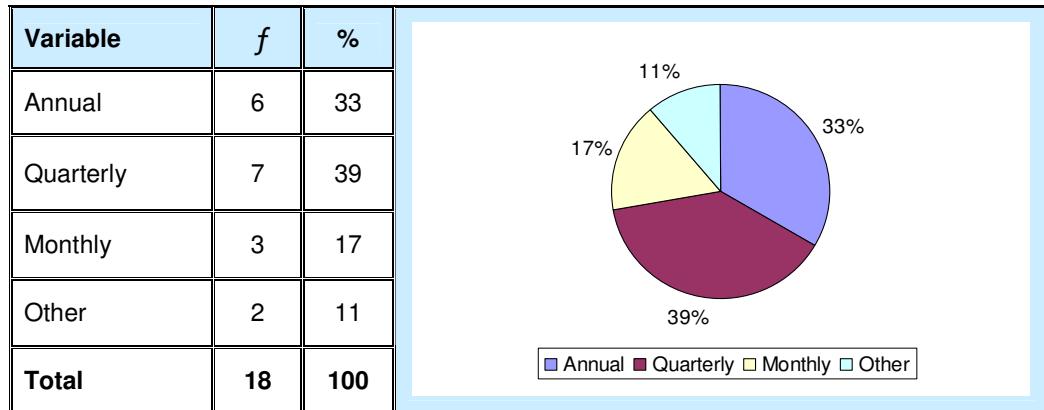


Figure 33: Contact with the MERSETA

Of the organisations, just 33 percent indicated only having annual contact with the MERSETA. No respondents indicated only having contact once or twice since the existence of SETA, or never.

The literature study in Chapter 2 indicated that organisations need to submit their Workplace Skills Plan annually and therefore it was understandable that the statistics indicated that all the organisations have some contact with the MERSETA.

4.7.2 Co-operation between the organisations and MERSETA

Question D2 of this section sought to obtain the degree of co-operation that exists between the responding organisations and the MERSETA.

Figure 34 illustrates the data gathered.

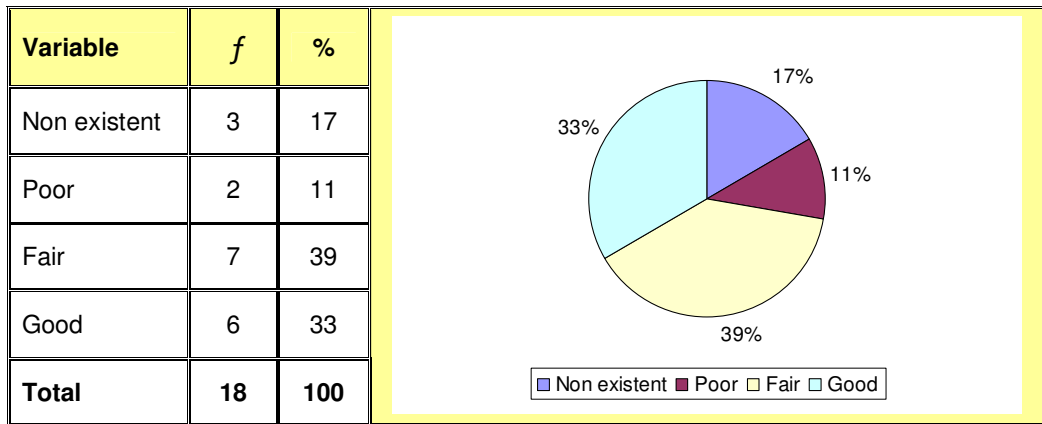


Figure 34: Co-operation between the organisations and MERSETA

The majority of organisations indicated that the relationship was good (33 percent) or fair (39 percent), while the rest indicated non-existent (17 percent) or poor (11 percent) co-operation. No organisation indicated that the co-operation was excellent.

4.7.3 Skills Development areas

Section 2.2.5.4, discussed how the SETAs were established in order to achieve the aims and objectives of the Skills Development Act; that is, skills development.

Therefore, a question regarding whether organisations think that the MERSETA has the ability to assist with skills development in various areas was asked. The findings are illustrated in Figure 35.

Data revealed that respondents report that the MERSETA could assist with all of the skills development areas mentioned under Question D3. This clearly indicates that the expectations for the MERSETA are in line with the Skills Development Act.

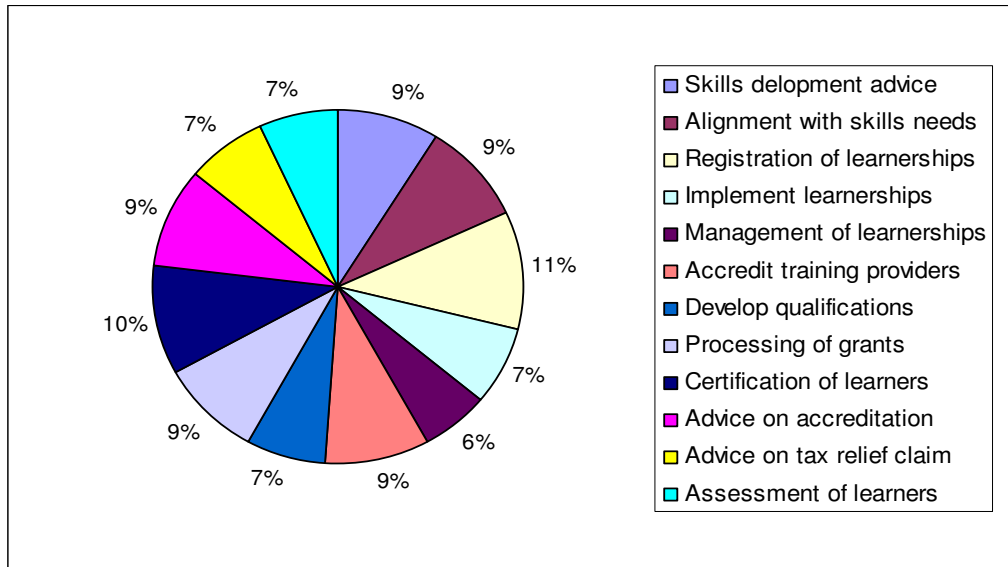


Figure 35: Skills development areas

When asked to comment on how the MERSETA could assist in skills development not listed in Question D3, the respondents replied:

- *“By allocating inspectors and support staff per area”.*
- *“Lack of capacity by the MERSETA clerks, who do not have any idea regarding HRM, HCM, HR etc. Majority of the ‘Skills development’ staff making decisions regarding skills development are ex-teachers, ex-union officials or administrative clerks and do not have the capacity to deal with administrative tasks such as grants processing. Not to even mention HRD or HCM initiatives or interventions. These are the idiots making decisions regarding HRD QA, provider accreditation etc. Thus, number crunching main focus (NSA criteria for performance) and not value-adding, long term, quality Human Capital Development according to industry needs.”*

- *“I feel that the organisation I’m employed in has the necessary knowledge and skills needed at their exposure.”*

These responses indicated a lack of available staff employed by the MERSETA, as well as a lack of knowledgeable staff at MERSETA.

4.7.4 Summary of results for Section D: MERSETA

In conclusion, the results for this section indicated that all responding organisations have annual contact with the MERSETA and that co-operation between the MERSETA and the organisations varied from non-existent to good. Furthermore, the organisations report that the MERSETA could assist with skills development in various areas.

Using Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient, a measure of perfect linear association ($r_s = 1$) could be traced between Question B16 and Question D3-6 of the questionnaire. Section B indicated that sufficient external training providers do not exist. This is in line with the findings in Section D, in which organisations report that the MERSETA could assist with the accreditation of training providers to assist in skills development. This correlation was applicable to the 18 organisations, as specified earlier as Group 5.

4.8 RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS: SECTION E: SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Section E (refer to Appendix B) was included in the questionnaire to evaluate the impact that the introduction of the Skills Development Act, the Skills Development Levies Act and the National Skills Development Strategy had on organisations within the relevant industries. The data was obtained from Group 5.

4.8.1 Skills development facilitator

On Question E1: “Has your organisation appointed a skills development facilitator?” the following results were obtained (Figure 36).

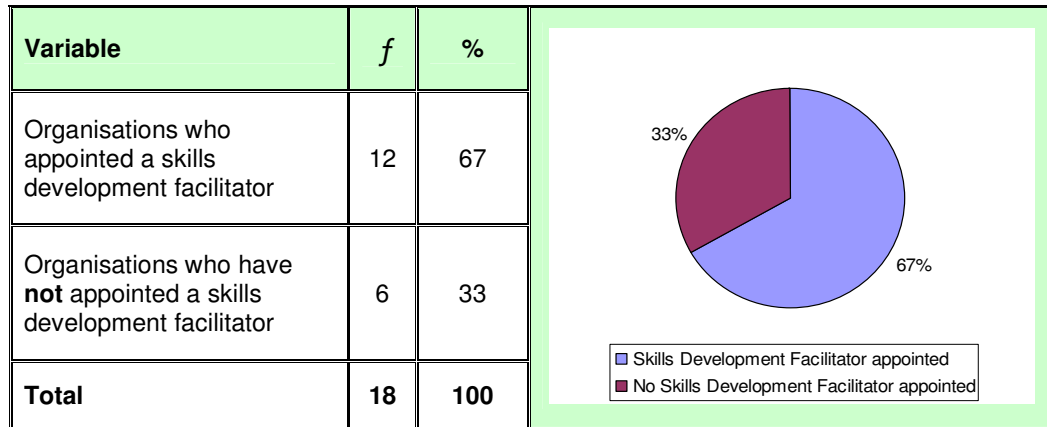


Figure 36: Appointed skills development facilitator

Data indicates that 67 percent of the responding organisations have appointed a skills development facilitator.

It was indicated as early as Question A6 in Section A of the questionnaire that persons with different job titles and positions in the organisations work with skills-development related issues. This clarifies why 33 percent of the organisations do not have a formally appointed skills development facilitator. It is general practice for small- and medium-sized organisations to combine skills development with another position.

4.8.2 Formalised training programmes and training strategies

Questions E2 and E3 requested the respondents to indicate whether their organisation had a formalised training *programme* and/or formalised training *strategies* (Figures 37 and 38).

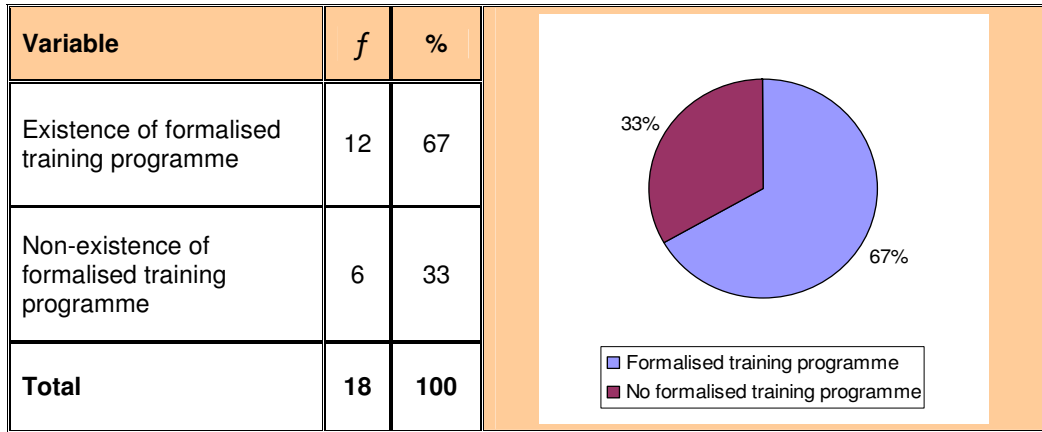


Figure 37: Formalised training programme

Statistics in Figure 37 indicate that 67 percent of the organisations have formal training programmes in place.

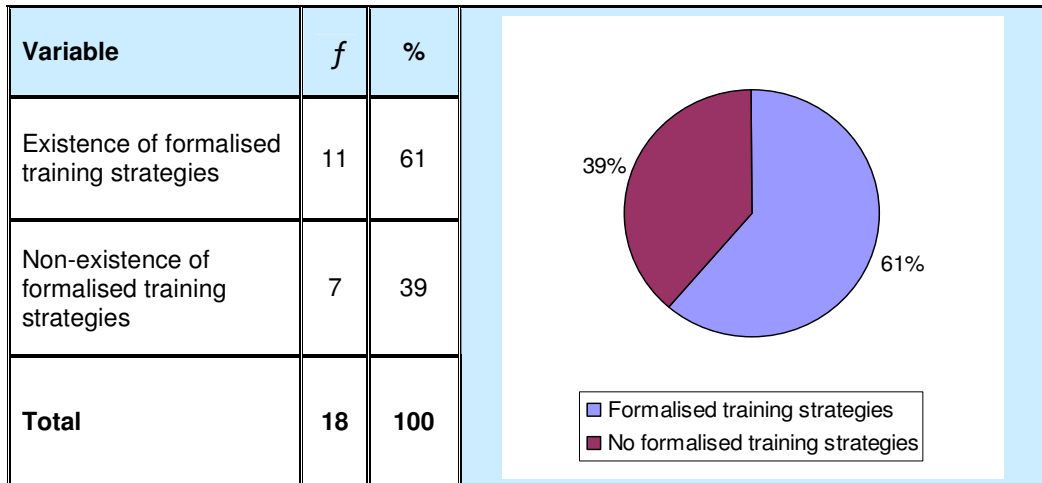


Figure 38: Formalised training strategies

Data in Figure 38 indicate that 61 percent of the organisations have a formal training strategy in place.

A correlation between the information of Questions E1, E2 and E3 was established. More than 60 percent of the respondents reported that they

appointed a skills development facilitator, had a formalised training programme and implemented a formalised training strategy in their work environment.

4.8.3 Training budget

This question was included to determine if the organisations had a training budget.

Figure 39 indicates that 61 percent of the organisations have a training budget.

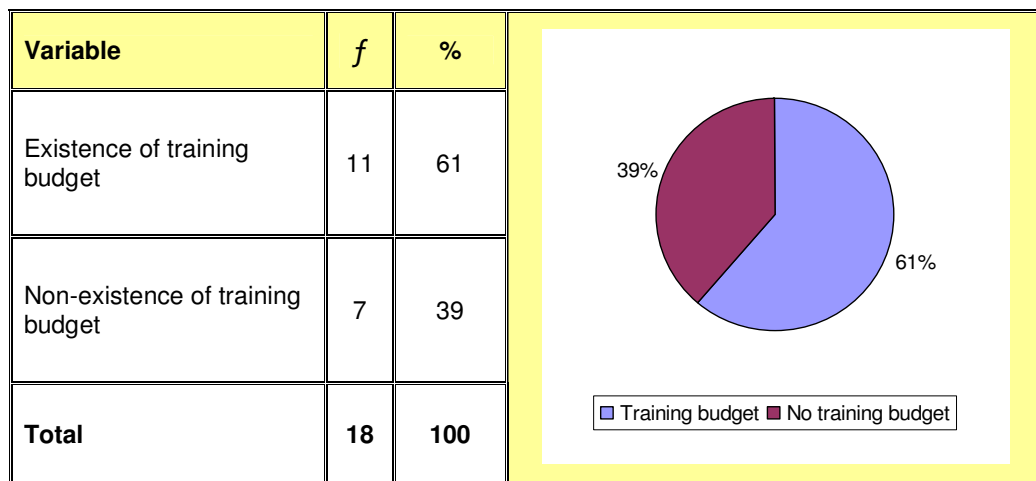


Figure 39: Existence of training budget

The above information supports the data obtained in Questions E1, E2 and E3.

4.8.4 Active implementation of skills development programmes

The first part of Question E5 requested respondents to indicate whether their organisations actively implement skills development programmes (Figure 40).

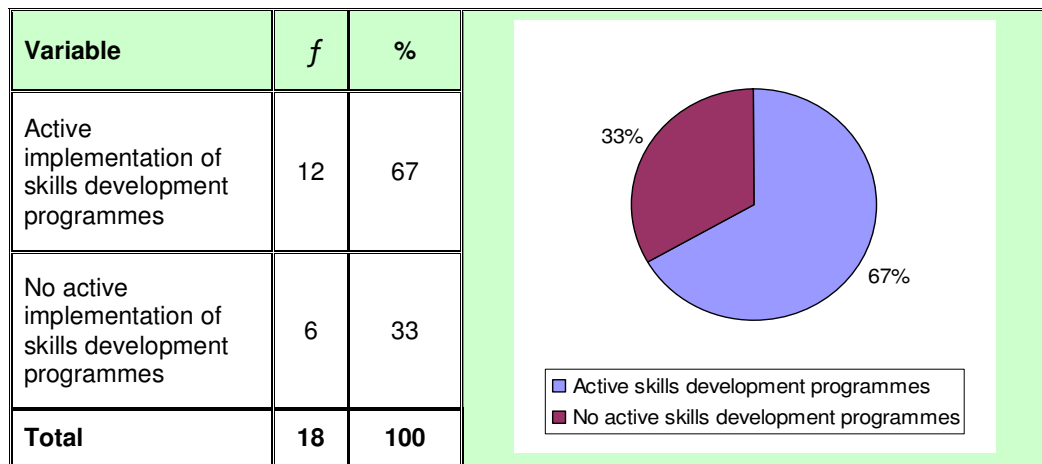


Figure 40: Active implementation of skills development programmes

Figure 40 indicates that 67 percent of the organisations actively implement skills development programmes. This correlates with information in Section E (Questions E1, E2, E3 and E4).

The second part of Question E5 provided certain skills development programmes from which the respondents had to choose the relevant option or options. Figure 41 indicates the different skills development programmes implemented by responding organisations.

According to the responses received, most of the organisations focus on the active implementation of skills development programmes for:

- technical job-related skills (18%)
- health and safety (16%)
- HIV awareness (13%)
- engineering skills (12%)
- management skills (11%)

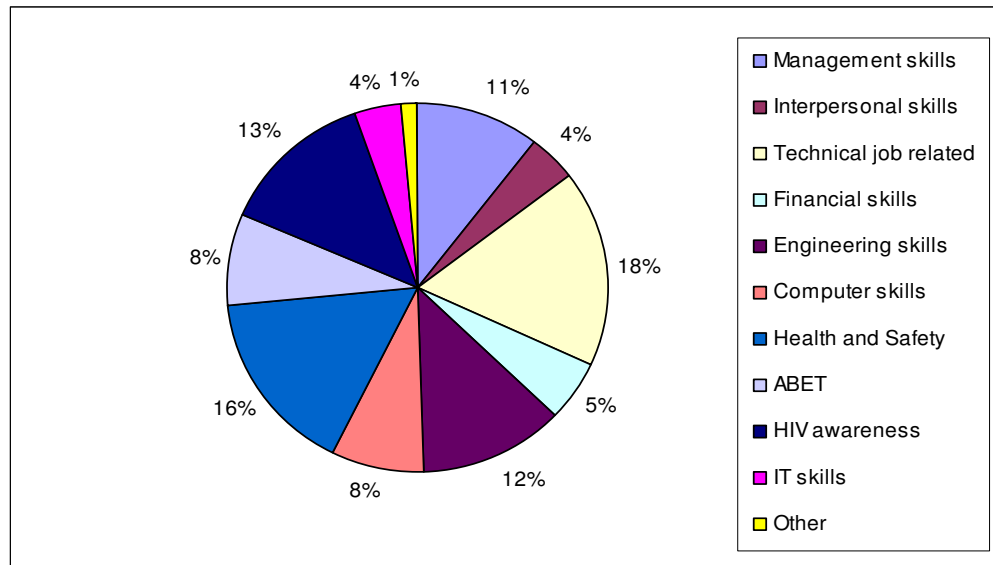


Figure 41: Types of skills development programmes

Data indicated that fewer organisations implemented skills development programmes for:

- computer skills (8%)
- ABET training (8%)
- financial skills (5%)
- IT skills (4%)
- interpersonal skills (4%)

One organisation indicated under 'other' that their organisation implemented all the skills development programme options displayed.

International comparisons indicated that South Africa is lacking in engineers and that a critical shortage of key skills in various technical-related areas exist (Nel *et al.*, 2004:418; RSA, 2006:16). The indication being that an increased focus is needed on technical related skills development programmes. This is in line with the findings that in the MERSETA alone, 79 percent of the total number of scarce skills identified through the MERSETA's "Scarce and Critical Skills

Project 2007” falls within the occupational major Group 3 category: Technicians and Trades workers (MERSETA, 2007a:73).

Data in Figure 41 indicate that organisations within the MERSETA focus on scarce and critical skills, as identified in their sector’s skills plan (MERSETA, 2006a:2).

4.8.5 Human capital development, profitability and government input in training and development

Question E6 enquired whether the respondents are of the opinion that their organisations place sufficient emphasis on the development of human capital. Question E7 sought to confirm whether skills development is essential for the ongoing profitability of organisations. Question E8 asked if government input in training and development is seen as essential in organisations (Figure 42).

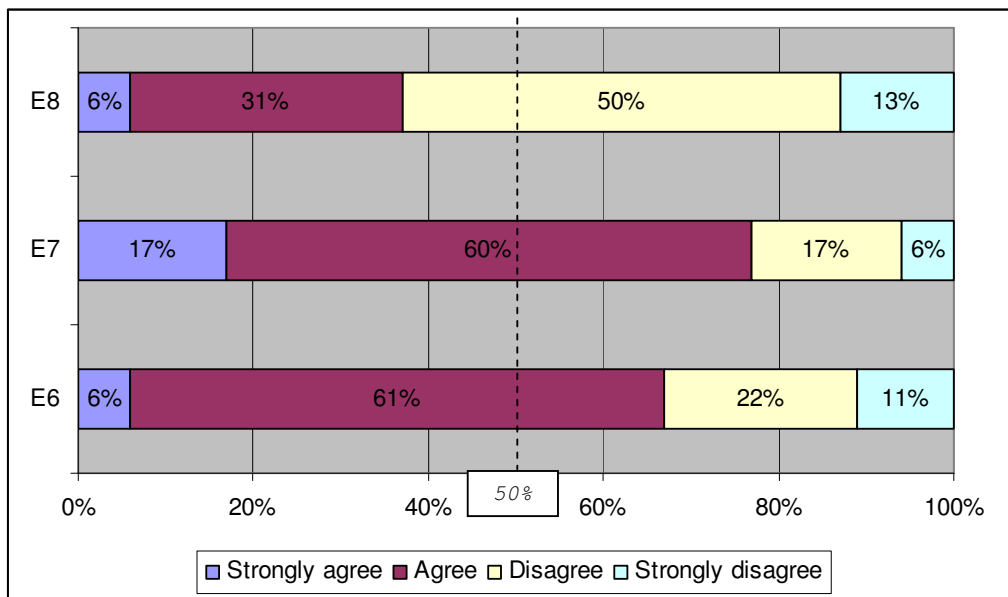


Figure 42: Human capital development, profitability and government input in training and development

67 Percent of respondents report that their organisation place sufficient emphases on the development of human capital (E6), while 77 percent report that skills development is essential for ongoing profitability of organisations (E7).

In contrast, 63 percent of respondents indicate that input from government into training and development is not essential in organisations (E8).

4.8.6 Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

The first part of Question E9 focused on the recognition of prior learning (RPL) within organisations. A focus on RPL within organisations usually assists learners to climb the learnership ladder faster.

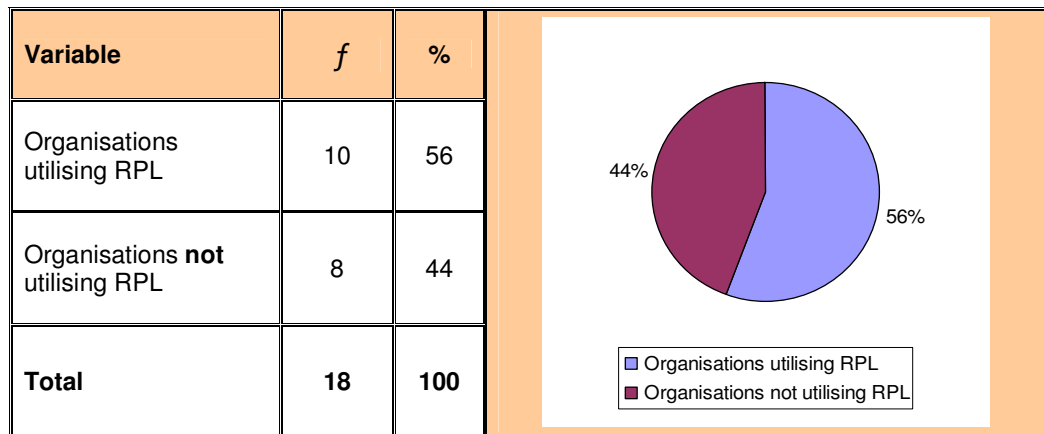


Figure 43: RPL utilisation

The data in Figure 43 indicates that more than half of the organisations (56 percent) do afford their employees the opportunity for RPL. This can also be seen as a favourable effort towards human capital development within any organisation.

The 10 (ten) organisations which indicated that RPL was utilised were then asked about the *channels* and *methods* used (Figure 44 and 45).

Information in Figure 44 indicated that 70 percent of the respondents make use of assessors or moderators to conduct the RPL process, while 30 percent utilise their skills development office.

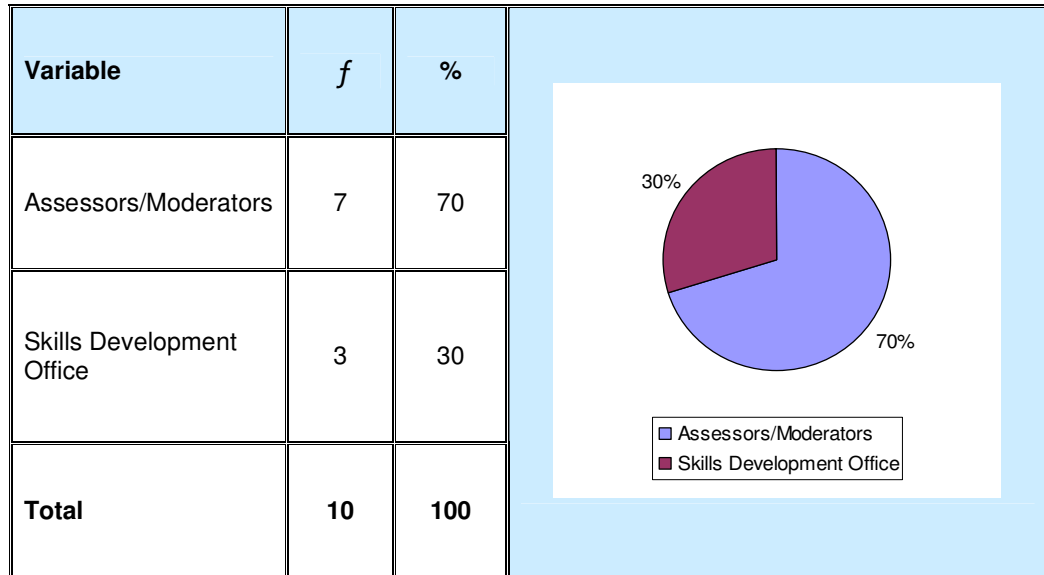


Figure 44: Channels of RPL

No responses were received for RPL committee and assessment by the HR Manager, under channels of RPL, and therefore they are not reported.

Most organisations indicated that more than one option or method is used to evaluate a staff member with regards to recognition of prior learning (Figure 45).

The above data was incorporated into the statistics, increasing the response from 10 to 25 respondents.

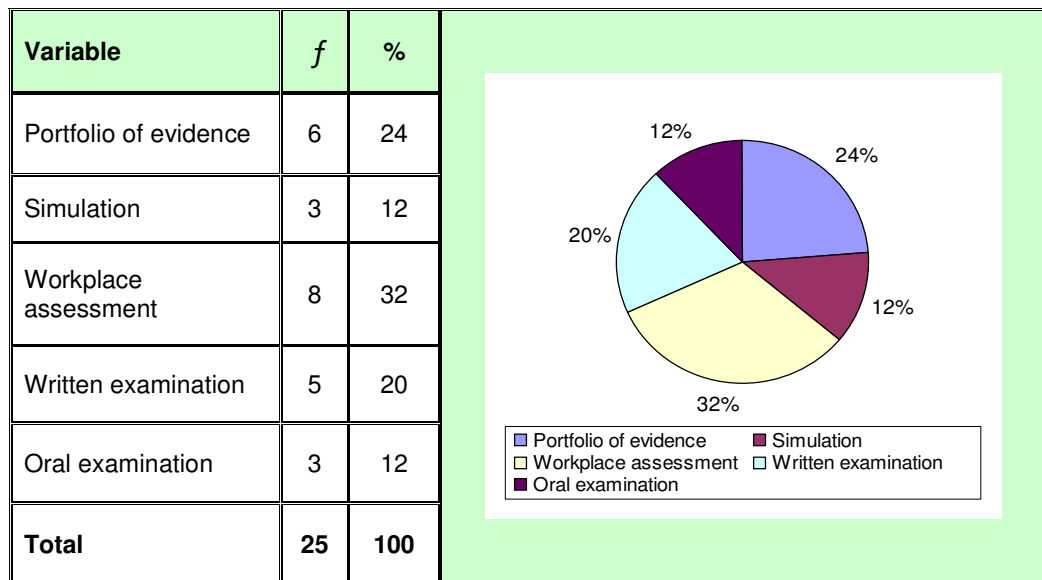


Figure 45: Methods of RPL

The feedback received shows the usage of a variety of methods to recognise prior learning. Workplace assessment (32%), portfolio of evidence (24%) and written examinations (20%) appear to be the most favourable methods used, while simulation (12%) and oral examinations (12%) follow closely.

4.8.7 Potential constraints to the training and upliftment of employees

In Question E10, a Likert scale was employed to establish agreement or disagreement on potential constraints related to the training and upliftment of employees.

The results can be viewed in Figure 46.

Respondents strongly agreed (44%) that the risk of losing skilled persons (E10-2), as well as the existence of time limitations (33%) (E10-6), may be potential constraints affecting the training and upliftment of employees within organisations.

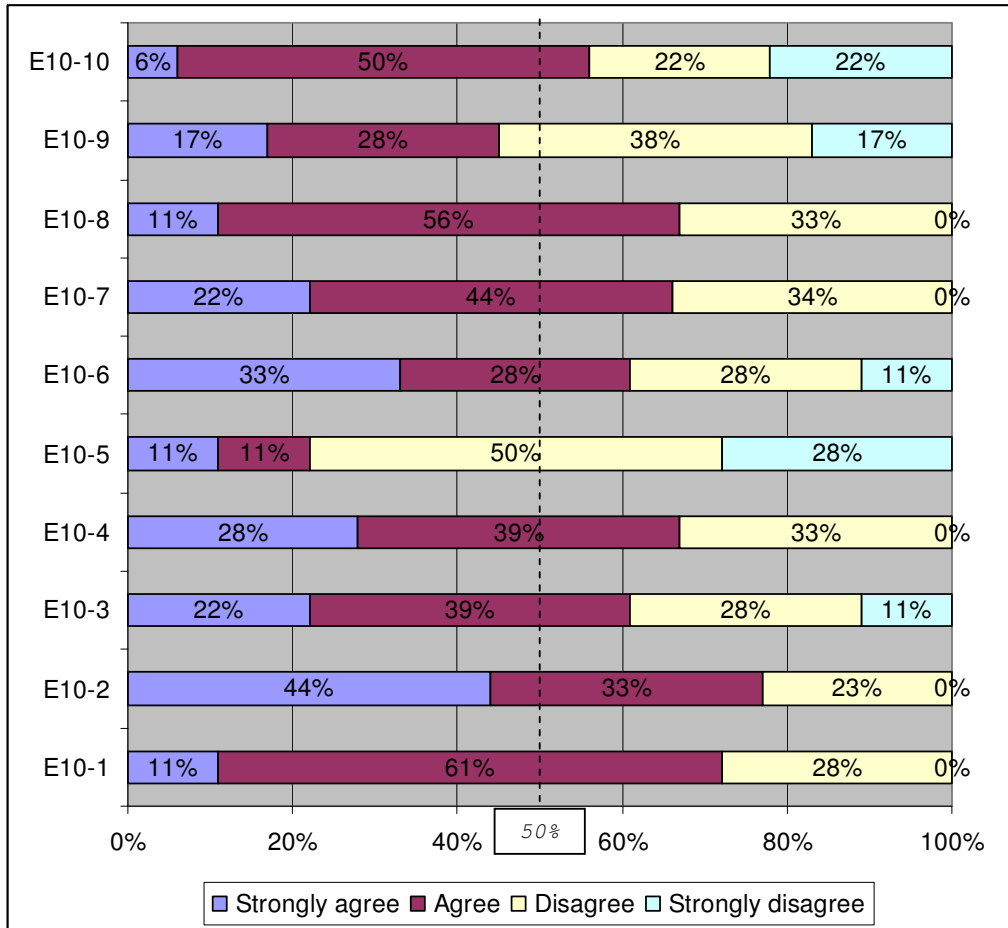


Figure 46: Potential constraints

Agreement was reached on the following factors:

- E10-1: cost of training (61%)
- E10-8: unavailability of manager to supply training (56%)
- E10-10: lack of numeracy and/or literacy skills (50%)
- E10-7: lack of financial support (44%)
- E10-3: lack of efficient service providers (39%)
- E10-4: production pressures (39%)

Disagreement was observed on:

- E10-5: no need for further training (50%).
- E10-9: support from management (38%)

4.8.7.1 Correlations under Section B and E (potential constraints)

Through *Spearman's rank correlation coefficient*, certain interesting positive linear associations ($r_s = 1$) were discovered with regards to barriers and constraints under Question E10 of Section E and Section B with relation to Group 5:

- In Question E10, it became evident that organisations experienced a lack of efficient service providers (E10-3). This fact was also evident from the feedback obtained in Section B, where results indicated that sufficient external and internal training providers for learnerships do not exist (B16 and B17).
- The cost of training (E10-1) was viewed as a potential constraint to train and uplift employees. Feedback received in Section B also indicated that it is costly to implement learnerships (B8). In both instances, the cost factor was revealed as a concern.
- No need for further training was agreed upon in Question E10-5, while Question B14 indicated that management felt that required skills can be obtained through internal on-the-job training; that is, there is no need for learnerships.
- Organisations also agreed that factors such as time limitations (E10-6), unavailability of managers to supply training (E10-8) and managers who are not prepared to commit time/resources to learnerships (B13) as constraints to learnership implementation.
- A lack of financial support (E10-7) was also experienced and the fact that sufficient financial benefit do not exist within the organisation for the implementation of learnerships (B12).

4.8.8 Important training needs

Questions E11, in Section E, sought to establish which training needs are viewed as important by organisations and statistics are revealed in Figure 47.

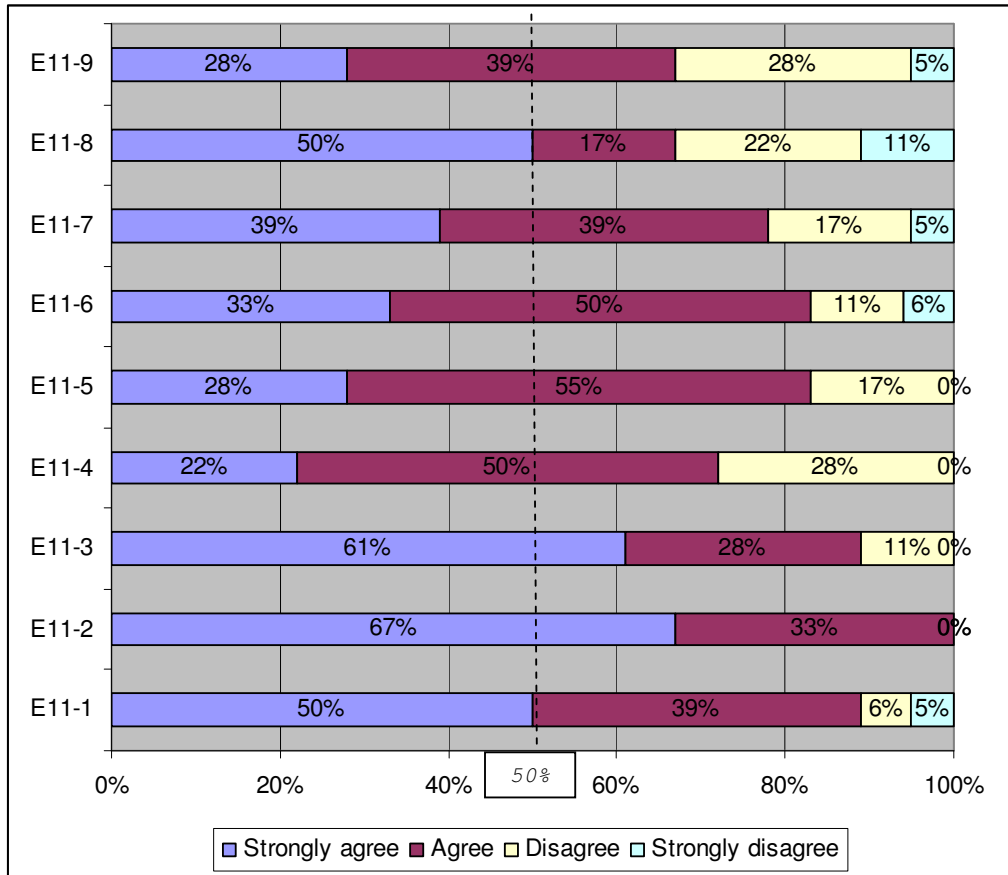


Figure 47: Training needs

Strong agreement was indicated for the following training needs:

- E11-2: technical job-related skills (67%)
- E11-3: engineering skills (61%)
- E11-1: management skills (50%)
- E11-8: ABET (50%)
- E11-7: computer skills (39%)

Agreement was reached on:

- E11-5: interpersonal skills (55%)
- E11-4: financial skills (50%)
- E11-6: health and safety (OHS Act) (50%)
- E11-9: HIV awareness (39%)

The above information on training needs also supports the current skills development programmes implemented in organisations, as mentioned in Question E5.

4.8.9 Important practical skills

Questions E12 obtained information on practical skills viewed to be important for the continued growth the organisations (Figure 48).

Organisations strongly agreed on the need for the following practical skills:

- E12-11: supervisory (61%)
- E12-1: managerial (56%)
- E12-2: electrical (50%)

Agreement was reached on:

- E12-7: drafting (60%)
- E12-3: operator (56%)
- E12-8: machining (56%)
- E12-4: mill-righting (50%)
- E12-5: welding (50%)
- E12-6: fitting and turning (50%)
- E12-12: boiler-making (50%)

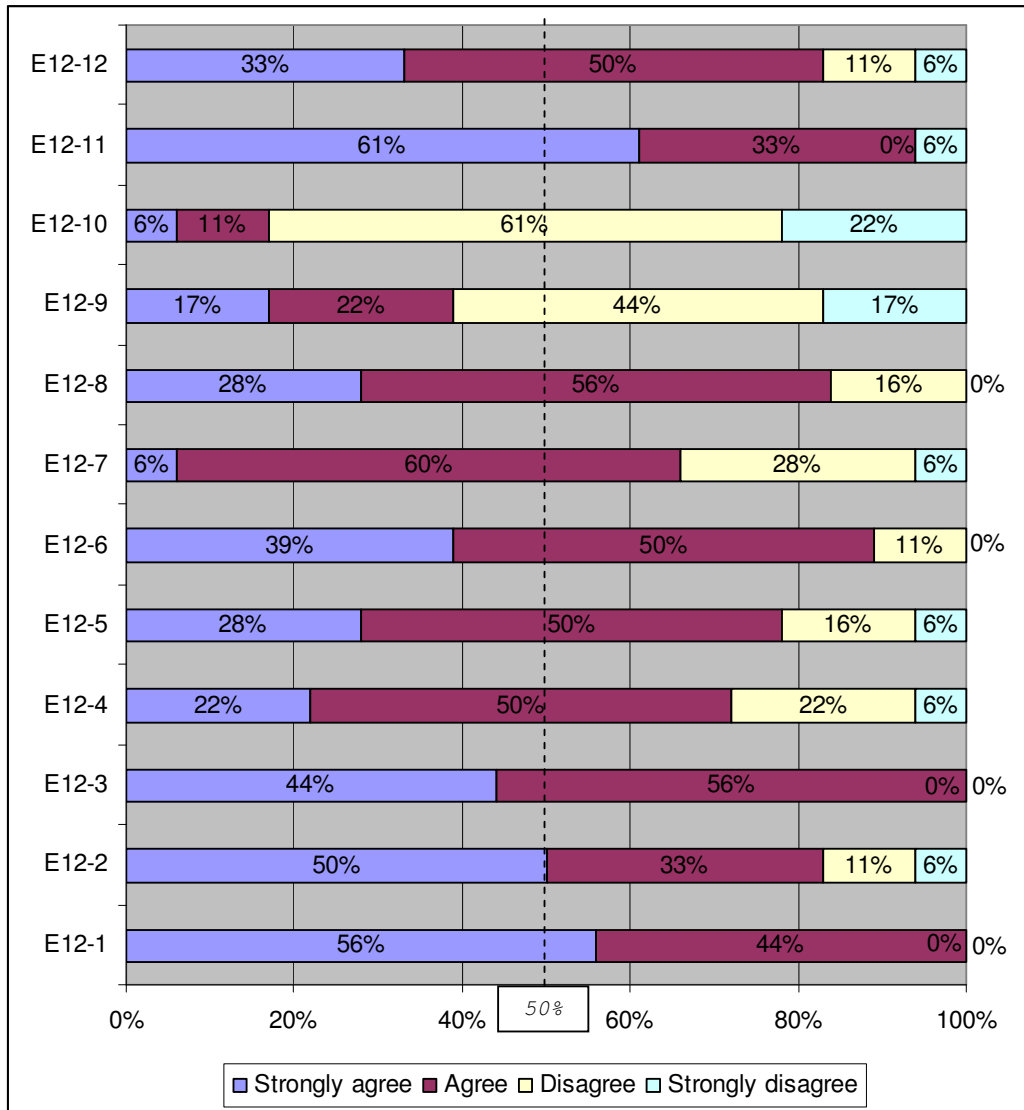


Figure 48: Practical skills

Organisations disagreed and strongly disagreed about the need for the following skills:

- E12-10: plumbing (61%)
- E12-9: tool-making (44%)

Wire drawing die making was listed by one respondent as an important required practical skill.

The results indicate that all the practical skills listed, identified from the literature study of Chapter 2, were regarded as important by the respondents.

4.8.10 Important technical and/or specialised skills

The last question (E13) in Section E evaluated which technical and/or specialised skills are important for continued growth in organisations (Figure 49).

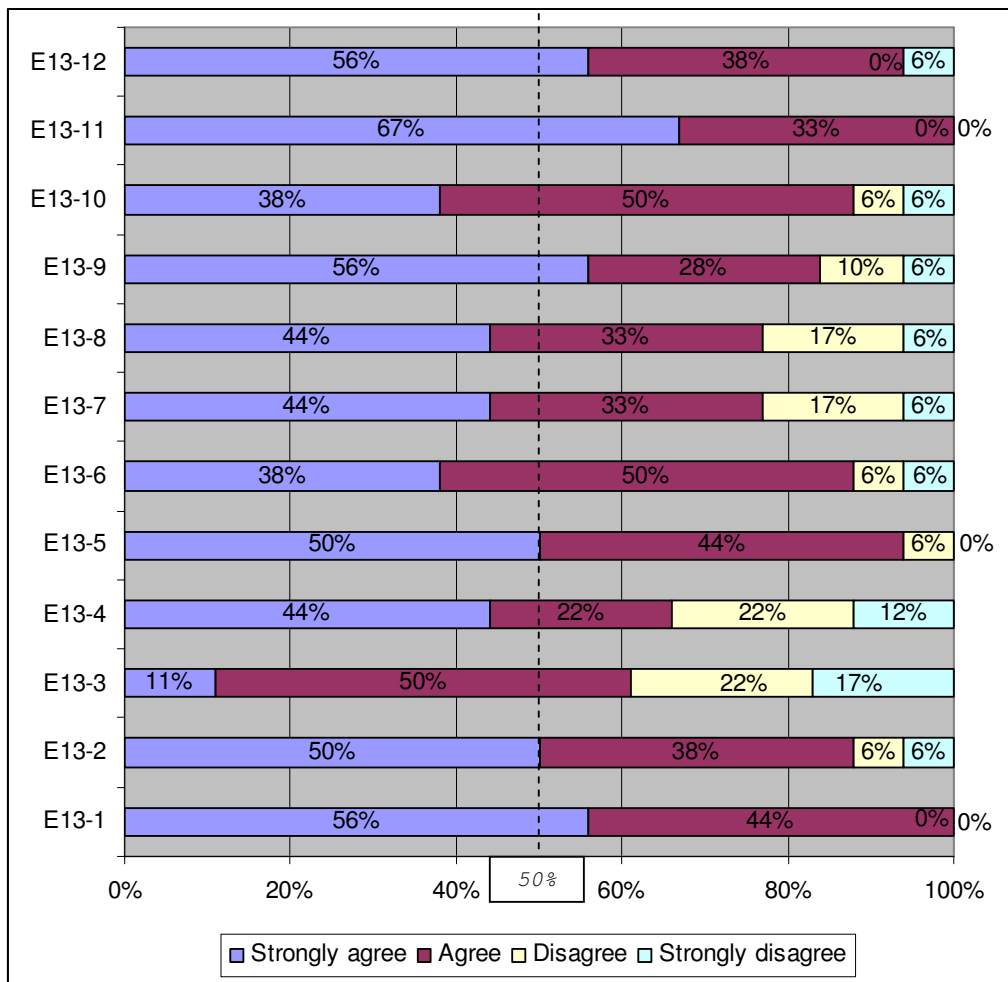


Figure 49: Technical and/or specialised skills

Respondents strongly agreed that the following technical and/or specialised skills are important:

- E13-11: plant/machine operation (67%)
- E13-9: sales (56%)
- E13-12: health and safety (OHS Act) (56%)
- E13-1: managerial (56%)
- E13-2: financial (50%)
- E13-5: technical (50%)
- E13-4: IT (44%)
- E13-7: service (44%)
- E13-8: marketing (44%)

Agreement was also reached on the importance of:

- E13-3: e-commerce (50%)
- E13-6: quality control (50%)
- E13-10: maintenance (50%)

Data on technical and/or specialised skills indicate that the listed skills are important for continued growth in organisations.

4.8.11 Summary of the results of Section E: Skills development and training requirements

The overall results of Section E indicate that these local MERSETA organisations do focus on skills development programmes to conquer the existing skills shortages, which including scarce and critical skills.

4.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented and analysed the data gathered, and discussed the statistical results of the empirical study.

Although almost two-thirds of the researched organisations do currently implement learnerships, it is evident that the organisations experience several barriers and challenges when taking on learnerships.

A cross-analysis between the sections of the questionnaire and the identified groups was conducted to establish the degree of correlation between them. Whilst there are some consistent responses across the various groups and sections, differences have also emerged, which have been explored and discussed.

Discussions in this chapter demonstrate the link between various barriers, constraints and perspectives.

In the next chapter, conclusions are drawn based on the results discussed in this chapter.