THE CONTRIBUTION OF CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION IN GROWING TALENT

by

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Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR IN PHILOSOPHY

in

LEADERSHIP IN PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE

in the

FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

at the

RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY

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July 2003
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr Willem Schurink, my supervisor, for his support and guidance.
My wife Martie, who encouraged and supported me and often served as a sounding-board.
Nthabiseng Kotsokwane & Amanda Koekemoer, information librarians, who made a major contribution to the literature review. Also Hannerí Botha, who continued to copy me with relevant information.
Nikiwi Mfene & Lourika Meintjies, who organised the interlibrary loans required for the study.
Elizabeth Smith, for her excellent editing and sound advice pertaining to the final product.
The research participants, for sharing their perspectives and verifying my reconstruction of their perceptions.
Deon Baird, my line manager, who supported my research and accommodated my study leave requirements.
Theresa Krüger, my associate administrative professional, who kept the office going and offered a hand wherever possible.
Technikon SA, my employer, for the educational assistance and study leave to make this study possible.
My parents and my mother-in-law, for their interest and accommodating long periods of absence.
Karel Stanz, assisted by Mariëtte Steyn, for their co-ordinating efforts and administration of the doctoral programme, which enabled me to focus on my studies. Last, but not least, the many scholars referenced in this dissertation, who contributed so much to this field.
ABSTRACT

Although the present study identifies several shortcomings regarding the practice of co-operative education, it pioneers the notion that the growing of talent can be enhanced through a co-operative education strategy. The study has attempted to distil the core principles of a phenomenological research design within the greater context of qualitative research. Perspectives of the research subjects are presented as thick descriptions. The literature review indicates the need for the growing of talent in South Africa, against the backdrop of international talent struggles. It points out the need for collaboration between Higher Education and enterprises in growing talent. The study distils the core properties of co-operative education, contextualised within the dysfunctionality of Higher Education in South Africa and the development of Higher Education internationally.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. DEFINITIONS

The International Dictionary of Adult and Continuing Education (1999, p. 37) defines co-operative education and co-operative programme respectively as follow:

A form of education in which the school [educational institution] and the occupational field co-operate in order to provide a joint educational programme with alternate attendance in both school and work. A concept used in US [United States of America] education.

US equivalent of the sandwich course in the United Kingdom, where a student spends blocks of time in an educational institution and blocks in the workplace. Courses of this nature are usually either at professional qualification or undergraduate level.

Generally talent is understood to mean the natural endowments of a person, a special aptitude (often creative or artistic), a gift, or high mental ability/intelligence. Michaels, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod (2001), three consultants at McKinsey & Company, coined the phrases ‘the war for talent’ and ‘the talent mind-set’, based on the belief that sustained success of business enterprises depends on acquiring and retaining talent at all levels of the organisation. They define talent in terms of key employees, that are characterised by an astute strategic mind, leadership ability, good communication skills, the ability to draw and inspire people, having entrepreneurial instincts, possessing the relevant functional skills, and able to deliver results.

1.2. ORIENTATION

Talent, in the sense of people’s knowledge, skills and abilities is crucial to enterprises. The growing of talent is currently an international significant people-management issue, and South Africa is no exception. Education and training play a
vital role in providing the talent requirements of enterprises. However, the corporate landscape is constantly changing, resulting in totally different emergent talent requirements. In this context, work-based learning is considered an effective way of growing talent. Co-operative education is the formal integration of work experience into the theoretical curriculum of an educational programme. Co-operative education should not be confused with the concept co-operative learning, which is defined by the International Dictionary of Adult and Continuing Education (1999, p. 37) as a “small group of students working together to achieve a common goal”, also known as group learning.

The report of the Black Economic Empowerment Commission (BEE Com.) (2001, p. 4), makes the following statement:

South Africa’s democratic Government inherited a mismanaged economy designed to serve the needs of a minority of the population and condemn the black majority to a vicious cycle of extreme poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment. Over the past seven years, it has fundamentally transformed the country’s political, economic and social landscape. It has entrenched the values of equality and freedom and laid the foundations for the country to chart a new path to economic development for other developing nations to follow.

Developed countries continuously experience a struggle for talent. Matthew (2000) and Reed (2001), for example, write about the shortage of skilled people to fill thousands of vacancies in Britain. Due to the heritage of apartheid, South Africa is faced with a dual challenge, i.e. on the one hand competing globally and on the other overcoming the disempowerment of the majority. In this regard the BEE Com. (2001, p. 13) states that “[t]he new competitive environment ushered in by globalisation has brought new education and training demands — for example, the need for a highly skilled labour force able to employ new technologies and add value to goods and services through continuous innovation”.

Matters are further complicated in South Africa by the HIV/AIDS pandemic that threatens initiatives which are aimed at increasing the country’s human capital. BEE Com. (2001, p. 13) reports, based on projections, that “the overall prevalence of HIV
will reach almost 25% in the general population by 2010” and life expectancy is expected to drop from 68.2 to 48 years. This further emphasises the need for growing talent.

South Africa therefore needs an educational strategy that will accelerate the education of its people and that will enable Higher Education institutions to respond more rapidly to the changing human resource needs and international competitiveness of the country’s economy. The George Washington University’s Center for Social Policy Studies recommends the expansion of co-operative education, especially regarding the United States’ national concern about its global market competitiveness and the need to improve its national workforce (Levitan, 1992). The premise of the present study is that South Africa will benefit similarly to the United States by adopting co-operative education as an educational strategy.

Against the backdrop of BEE Com’s emphasis on increasing access to education for the black majority, Knowles’ (1971) insights offers a valuable contribution. HE postulates that co-operative education is particularly well suited to the needs of disadvantaged people. It is important to note that an essential criterion of co-operative education is that work experience (and in the present-day South Africa also community service) is “considered an integral part of the educational process and that the [educational] institution take a definite responsibility for this integration” (Ferris, 1969, p. 480-481) Because the parents of learners from disadvantaged communities are often either unemployed or labourers at the lowest levels of enterprises, such learners are largely business illiterate. Co-operative education is suggested as an element which could supplement the South African government’s existing laws, policies and strategies towards the reform of the labour market and Higher Education in an effort to reverse the Apartheid legacy.

The following sections will outline the motivation, aim and objectives of the present study, whereafter an outline of the chapters of this dissertation will be given.
1.1.1. Motivation, aims and objectives of this research

The Higher Education debate during the past decade in South Africa unfortunately did not explore the contribution that co-operative education can make towards the talent development of the South African people. Co-operative education seldom featured and when it did, it was associated with the career-focused education of technikons. A possible reason for this situation is that those involved with co-operative education are largely concerned with experiential learning placement coordination. From a study undertaken of local literature it is clear that limited research has been undertaken on co-operative education in South Africa.

In the light of the preceding discussion it is reasonable to project that large-scale adoption of co-operative education as a strategy will set the ball rolling towards redressing the legacy of Apartheid and the improved global competitiveness of South Africa. The aim of this research is to demonstrate the value of co-operative education in the growing of people talent.

More specifically, this research strives to first explore, then describe, the contribution that the practice of co-operative education can make with regard to the growing of talent. Although co-operative education is not largely and explicitly practised, a number of Higher Education institutions in Gauteng offer very successful programmes in partnership with selected enterprises.

This research therefore entails a qualitative study in order to capture rich descriptive data about the experiences and perceptions of both the providers (academic staff concerned) and their partners (enterprises that participate in the programmes offered). To eliminate any possibility of leading the research subjects, the purpose of the study was presented as ‘a study of existing joint ventures between Higher Education institutions and enterprises, in order to describe if and how joint ventures contribute to growing the talent of people’.
1.1.2. Outline of chapters

There is a predisposition towards quantitative research in Industrial Psychology and Human Resource Management. For this reason it is considered necessary to explain the qualitative research design of this study. Chapter 2 starts with an exposition of this study’s research design. Since particular scientific beliefs underpin social science research it is advisable to qualify these philosophical-theoretical predispositions, i.e. the ontology, epistemology and methodology of this study. A description of the specific research methodology utilised in this study, namely phenomenology, includes location of the data and identification of subjects, the data-gathering methods, and the explicitation (a phenomenological concept explained in Chapter 2). The explicitation includes brief descriptions of bracketing and phenomenological reduction; delineating units of meaning; clustering units of meaning and forming themes; summarising each interview, validating and modifying; and identifying general and/or unique themes from all interviews and writing a composite summary. The chapter concludes with some remarks regarding the analysis of qualitative data.

Chapter 3 is the first of two chapters representing the literature review of this study. This chapter firstly outlines the debate about the use of literature in qualitative research. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to the literature pertaining to the importance of growing talent. An overview is given of the challenges experienced internationally to develop and retain the required talent. This is followed by a review of the need for growing people talent in South Africa. Finally the chapter includes a review of literature dealing with the alliances between enterprises and Higher Education institutions in order to develop talent.

In Chapter 4 the literature review is continued and co-operative education is contextualised within the development of Higher Education. This is followed by a brief overview of the historical development of Higher Education. The development of co-operative education based on the literature reviewed is presented in three parts.
• The origins and fundamentals of co-operative education are presented. Because of the conceptual drift regarding co-operative education, it is considered necessary to reflect the voice of some pioneers.

• A review of the literature regarding subsequent developments of co-operative education.

• An overview of the practice of co-operative education in South Africa, including a synopsis of official policy documents.

The chapter concludes with an outline of the current dysfunctional state of Higher Education in South Africa.

Chapter 5 presents rich qualitative data collected on the practice of co-operative education by public Higher Education institutions in Gauteng. This chapter starts with a reflection about the identification and selection process of the research subjects, which in itself is indicative of the current practice of co-operative education. A composite summary follows, which reflects the common themes of all the interviews, follows. This is followed by several themes emerging from this study, which include the voices or actual expression of views of the research subjects. These themes are:

- The adaptation of learning programme curricula to accommodate corporate needs, enabled by collaboration.
- The functioning of programme advisory committees.
- The undermining of the benefits of work experience due to the difficulties to find placement opportunities.
- The certification of in-service training providers, the monitoring of experiential learning and the value of structured experiential learning.
- The creation of a ‘talent pool’.
- Learnerships: an important element of the South African skills development strategy.
- Mentoring which plays a significant role.
- Real work versus experiential learning.
- Collaborative programmes which offer learners the opportunity to clarify their career choices.
- ‘Synchronous dissimilarity’ of different generations involved.

Chapter 5 concludes with a third source of data, namely the perspectives of two groups of learners or programme participants.
In Chapter 6 the research findings of the present study are compared with the literature reviewed, and the interpretations are discussed. The findings reinforce the importance of a needs-focused programme curriculum that integrates theory and practice, in the practice of co-operative education. Several shortcomings in this regard, that detract from growing talent, are highlighted. The findings further reinforce the idea that experiential learning is at the heart of co-operative education. However, once again shortcomings are evident. The findings reinforce the importance of the logistical organisation of experiential learning, as well as the importance of co-ordination devices, and again shortcomings are evident. The interpretation of the findings highlights two advantageous aspects of co-operative education, i.e. the potential of co-operative education in (a) producing a talent pool and (b) allowing for career-choice clarification. The chapter concludes with triangulation of the perspectives of research subjects with the perspectives obtained from programme participants.

Chapter 7 contains the conclusions drawn from this study as well as recommendations resulting from this study and also highlights possible future research.
CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the research design used in the study. However, before this can be done it is important to discuss a number of important considerations of qualitative research design and related concepts.

2.2. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Generally the construct research design refers to a comprehensive research plan of action (Holloway, 1997), from conceptualising the problem or the purpose through to the narrative of the dissertation (Creswell, 1998). It is important to point out that the type of qualitative research determines the research design (Creswell, 1998). There are several types or styles of qualitative research. Different types of qualitative research originated from different intellectual and disciplinary perspectives, for example, ethnography from anthropology, grounded theory and symbolic interactionism from sociology, phenomenology from philosophy and psychology, case studies from human geography and education, and biography from history (Creswell, 1998; Mason, 1996). Therefore it is important that the researcher understands the tradition and the core elements of the particular type of qualitative research s/he employs (Creswell, 1998). In addition, it is important to note that researchers are not restricted to any one pure approach but may blend different approaches and metaphorically weave a fabric comprising a variety of threads, colours, textures and blends (Creswell, 1998), thus blurring the disciplinary boundaries (Schurink, 2002a). Holloway (1997, p. 103) refers to this as ‘method slurring’ meaning the “muddling of different methods and procedures in a single piece of research”. In the words of Denzin and Lincoln (2000a, 1998) the qualitative researcher can be compared to a bricoleur, the French word for a jack-of-all-trades, in that the qualitative researcher pieces together different representations of a complex situation. The research results then emerge from the bricoleur’s
construction of whatever strategies, methods and materials were utilised. Let us now take a brief look at the current status of qualitative research in general.

The qualitative paradigm started in the late 19th century as a counter-movement to the positivist tradition of the time and may be termed post-positivist, post-modern, naturalistic, constructivist or interpretative (Creswell, 1994). Although some scholars (Creswell, 1998) believe that qualitative research reached a similar point of development in the early 1990s which quantitative research had achieved in 1964, others (Mason, 1996; Schurink, 2002b) believe it is still necessary for those opting for a qualitative research design to qualify and substantiate their positions. F.S. Chapin in 1920, P.V. Young in 1939 and F.N. Kerlinger in 1964 firmly established quantitative research designs in social research (Creswell, 1998). Be that as it may, qualitative research designs have since the 1920s established a distinguished history (Schurink, 2002a).

In view of the plethora of qualitative research designs, it is advisable for qualitative researchers to qualify their scientific beliefs and research paradigm (comprising ontology, epistemology and methodology) with regard to choosing one particular research design (Holloway, 1997; Schurink, 2002b). The following section outlines research paradigm.

2.3. RESEARCH PARADIGM

Any research undertaking starts with the selection of both the topic, problem or area of interest, as well as the paradigm (Creswell, 1994; Mason, 1996). Denzin and Lincoln (2000b, p. 157) define a research paradigm as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action”, dealing with first principles, ‘ultimates’ or the researcher’s worldviews. This view is supported by Stanage (1987) who traced ‘paradigm’ back to its Greek (paradeigma) and Latin origin (paradigma) meaning pattern, model or example. A paradigm is the patterning of the thinking of a person; it is a principal example among examples, an exemplar or model to follow according to which design actions are taken. Differently stated, a paradigm is an action of submitting to a view (Stanage, 1987).
Because of the qualitative methodological pluralism (Schurink, 2002b) which exists, a researcher must make her/his paradigm known, i.e. what constitutes her/his ontology (beliefs and perceptions about the nature of reality), her/his epistemology (where the researcher stands in relation to reality and in which way s/he will go about searching for truth) and her/his methodology (the methods and techniques that will be used to research reality; the how) to those with an interest in research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Mason, 1996; Schurink, 2002b). Creswell (1994, 1998) as well as Denzin and Lincoln (2000b) add a fourth concept, i.e. the researcher’s axiology (i.e. ethics and values). This concept is particularly important since it differs from quantitative research endeavours, which claim to be value-free and unbiased, in that qualitative research is value-laden and biased.

From an ontological position or perspective, qualitative researchers believe that reality is constructed by individuals, i.e. different personal versions of the nature and the essence of things (Mason, 1996). A multitude of realities therefore exists. Creswell (1994, p. 4) observes that “[f]or the qualitative researcher, the only reality is that which is constructed by the individuals involved in the research situation”. The researcher is dependent upon the voices (quotes and themes in words) and interpretations of informants or subjects to understand a given reality (Creswell, 1994, 1998).

The ontological dimension of the present study is the sub-discipline or study area human resource development, more especially leadership in performance and change. Within the present study there is, further, an overlap with education as a discipline. Generally individuals are held responsible for the growth of their own talent. However, planned and co-ordinated educational programmes, especially those which alternate theoretical learning with real-life application, result in synergy, i.e. the whole is more than the sum total of the parts. The value that an individual will derive from an educational programme is dependent on her/his own efforts and abilities, as well as the management of the programme. The value which is derived is further influenced by the extent to which the curriculum succeeds in integrating theory with real-life application.
A researcher’s epistemology according to Holloway (1997), Mason (1996) and Creswell (1994) is literally her/his theory of knowledge, which serves to decide how the social phenomena will be studied. The epistemological position of this present study can be formulated as follows (a) data are contained within the perspectives of people that are involved with co-operative education programmes, either in a co-ordinating capacity or as programme participant, and (b) because of this the researcher will engage with the subjects in collecting the data.

A phenomenological methodology was identified as the best means for this type of study. Phenomenologists, in contrast to positivists, believe that the researcher cannot be detached from her/his own presuppositions and that the researcher should not pretend otherwise (Hammersley, 2000). In this regard Mouton and Marais (1990, p. 12) state that individual researchers “hold explicit beliefs”. The intention of this research, at the outset (preliminary focus), is to gather data regarding perspective of research participants about the phenomenon of the growing of talent and the contribution of co-operative education in this process. However, as Schurink (2002b) points out, this focus may change based on data which may emerge during the research. According to Davidson (2000) and Jones (2001), phenomenology lends itself ideally to this kind of research.

2.4. PHENOMENOLOGY

When one searches for an answer to the question “What is phenomenology?” Vandenberg (1997, p. 4) replies that “it would seem obvious that phenomenology is either the ‘logy’ or the ‘logos’ of phenomena”. Although the origins of phenomenology can be traced back to Kant and Hegel, Vandenberg (1997, p. 11) regard Husserl as “the fountainhead of phenomenology in the twentieth century”.

In order to appreciate what phenomenology means, Eagleton (1983) recommends that it is essential to look at the broad societal developments at the time phenomenology was coined. At the end of the First World War (1914 – 1918) Europe lay in ruins. Eagleton (1983, p. 54) wrote:

*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.

In this context of ideological crisis, the German philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938), “sought to develop a new philosophical method which would lend absolute certainty to a disintegrating civilization” (Eagleton, 1983, p. 54).

Husserl rejected the belief that objects in the external world exist independently and that the information about objects is reliable. Husserl argued that people can be certain about how things appear in, or present themselves to, their consciousness (Eagleton, 1983; Fouche, 1993). To arrive at certainty, anything outside immediate experiences must be ignored or placed in brackets and in this way the external world is reduced to the contents of personal consciousness. Realities are thus treated as pure ‘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). The aim of phenomenology is the return to the concrete, captured by the slogan ‘Back to the things themselves!’ (Eagleton, 1983, p. 56; Moustakas, 1994, p. 26) or ‘Zurück zu den Sachen’ (Kruger, 1988, p. 28).

Holloway (1997) points out that Husserl was a student of Franz Brentano (1838 – 1917) who provided the basis for phenomenology. Brentano first stressed the ‘intentional nature of consciousness’ or the ‘internal experience of being conscious of something’ (Holloway, 1997, p. 117). A student of Husserl, Martin Heidegger (1889 – 1976), introduced the concept of ‘Dasein’ or ‘Being there’ and the dialogue between a person and her or his world (Holloway, 1997, p. 118). Heidegger and Husserl respectively explored the ‘lived-world’ and ‘Lebenswelt’ in terms of an average existence in an ordinary world (Schwandt, 1997). A follower, Alfred Schultz (1899 – 1956), furthered the idea that “the human world comprises various provinces of meaning” (Vandenberg, 1997, p. 7). The existential phenomenology of Heidegger was carried forward by among others Jean Paul Sartre (1905 – 1980) and Maurice

However, by 1970 phenomenology “had not yet establish[ed] itself as a viable alternative to the traditional natural scientific approach in psychological research” (Stones, 1988, p. 141). The reason according to Giorgi (Stones, 1988, p. 141) was that a phenomenological praxis, a systematic and sustained way, had not yet been developed (Schwandt, 1997). In this regard Lippitz (1997, p. 69) remarked that after phenomenology flourished “during the first twenty years after the Second World War, this approach was forgotten for a while”. However, in the 1970s phenomenological psychologists established a praxis, which is a methodological realisation of the phenomenological philosophical attitude (Stones, 1988). However, Holloway (1997) submits that phenomenology is not a research method, but rather a philosophy.

According to Giorgi (Stones, 1988, p. 143) the operative word in phenomenological research is ‘describe’. The aim of the researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-given framework, but remaining true to the facts. According to Welman and Kruger (1999, p. 189) “the phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved”. Husserl’s philosophical phenomenology provided a point of departure for Alfred Schultz who turned it “toward the ways in which ordinary members of society attend to their everyday lives” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, pp. 488-489). A researcher applying phenomenology is concerned with the lived experiences of the people (Greene, 1997; Holloway, 1997; Kruger, 1988; Kvale, 1996; Maypole & Davies, 2001; Robinson & Reed, 1998) involved, or who were involved, with the issue that is being researched. The words of Van den Berg, translated by Van Manen (1997, p. 41) profoundly capture what is stated in this paragraph:

[Phenomena] have something to say to us — this is common knowledge among poets and painters. Therefore, poets and painters are born phenomenologists. Or rather, we are all born phenomenologists; the poets and painters among us, however, understand very well their task of sharing, by means of word and image, their insights with others — an artfulness that is also laboriously practised by the professional phenomenologist.
Holloway (1997) states that researchers who use phenomenology are reluctant to prescribe techniques. Hycner (1999, p. 143) concurs by stating that “[t]here is an appropriate reluctance on the part of phenomenologists to focus too much on specific steps”. One cannot impose method on a phenomenon “since that would do a great injustice to the integrity of that phenomenon” (Hycner, 1999, p. 144). However, some guidelines are available.

Now that research design and relevant key concepts have been explored, the following section outlines the particular research methodology used in the current study.

2.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED

The research methodology starts with locating the research subjects, followed by the data-gathering methods, whereafter data-storage methods are outlined. The research methodology continues with an exposition of the explicitation of the data (comprising several stages), followed by brief notes on validity and concluded by remarks regarding the analysis of qualitative data.

2.5.1. Locating research subjects/informants

According to Hycner (1999, p. 156) “the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice-versa) including even the type of participants”. Purposive sampling, considered by Welman and Kruger (1999) as the most important kind of non-probability sampling, was chosen in determining the primary subjects. Differently put, the sample was selected based on the judgement and purpose of the researcher (Babbie, 1995; Greig & Taylor, 1999; Schwandt, 1997), i.e. those that “have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched” (Kruger, 1988 p. 150). The researcher made use of Internet searches and telephonic inquiry to the offices of the academic vice-principals of all Higher Education institutions in Gauteng, to identify the programme managers at such institutions, who are responsible for educational programmes that are tailored to the needs of and offered in collaboration with commerce, industry and/or government. Interviews were arranged with these
programme managers. These interviewees are the primary unit of analysis (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000), with their ‘informed consent’ (Bailey, 1996, p. 11; Arksey & Knight, 1999; Street, 1998).

In order to trace additional subjects or informants, snowball sampling was used in two cases. Snowballing is a method of expanding the sample by asking one informant or subject to recommend others for interviewing (Babbie, 1995; Crabtree & Miller, 1992). Bailey (1996, pp. 50 & 55), Holloway (1997, p. 77) as well as Greig and Taylor (1999, p. 151) call those through whom entry is gained ‘gatekeepers’ and those persons that volunteer assistance ‘key actors’ or ‘key insiders’ (historically ‘informants’, a term which is losing popularity owing to negative connotations). Neuman (2000, p. 352) qualifies a ‘gatekeeper’ as “someone with the formal or informal authority to control access to a site”, i.e. a person from whom permission is required. Key insiders often adopt the researcher. Bailey (1996) cautions that such adoption may isolate the researcher from some potential informants or subjects. The purposive sample interviewees were requested to give, at their discretion, the names and contact details of persons based in commerce, industry and/or government who (a) were co-responsible for the educational programmes and (b) who had participated in the programme presented. Regardless of these strategies, the most accommodating gatekeepers did, as Neuman (2000) cautions, to some extent influence the course of the present study by for example steering the researcher to look into ‘learnerships’.

Ethics is a particular important area of concern the present study had to include. A particular ethical approach, emphasising informed consent (Holloway, 1997; Kvale, 1996), which is important with regard to all subjects or informants, was developed. Bailey (1996) cautions that deception may be counter-productive. However, not asking the leading (Kvale, 1996) central research question (given under the next heading) is not regarded as deception. Bailey (1996, p. 11) recommends that informants must be made aware of the following to gain their informed consent:

- That they are participating in research
- The purpose of the research (without stating the central research question)
- The procedures of the research
• The risk and benefits of the research
• The voluntary nature of research participation
• The subject’s (informant’s) right to stop the research at any time
• The procedures used to protect confidentiality (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000; Kvale, 1996, Street, 1998)

Bailey (1996) further observes that deception might prevent insights, whereas honesty coupled to confidentiality, reduces suspicion and promotes sincere responses. An ‘informed consent agreement’ was designed, based on the aforementioned pointers (see appendix A in this regard). The form was explained to subjects at the beginning of each interview. Most subjects signed the agreement and those that did not were not pressurised, but the researcher ensured that they were in agreement with its content.

Because Boyd (2001) regards two to 10 participants or research subjects as sufficient to reach saturation and Creswell (1998, pp. 65 & 113) recommends “long interviews with up to 10 people” for a phenomenological study, a sample size of ten managers, five responsible for educational programmes and five at collaborating enterprises were selected. In addition to the ten interviewees, one group of programme participants (learners or students) was requested to write essays on their experiences. With another group of programme participants some participated in a focus group discussion, while others wrote essays. The purpose of collecting data from three different kinds of informants is a form of triangulation, i.e. ‘data triangulation’ to contrast the data and ‘validate’ the data if it yields similar findings (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Bloor, 1997; Holloway, 1997). Data-collection interviews continued until the topic was exhausted or saturated, i.e. when interviewees (subjects or informants) introduced no new perspectives on the topic.

‘Memoing’ (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 69) is another important data source in qualitative research that was used in this study. It is the researcher’s field notes, i.e. what the researcher hears, sees, experiences and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting about the process (Schurink, 2001, p. 3). Researchers are easily absorbed in the data-collection process and may fail to reflect on what is happening. However, it is important that the researcher maintain a balance between descriptive
notes and reflective notes, such as hunches, impressions, feelings, etc. Miles and Huberman (1984) emphasise that memos (or field notes) must be dated so that the researcher can later correlate them with the data.

2.5.2. Data-gathering methods

The specific ‘phenomena’ (from the Greek word *phenomenon*, meaning *appearance*) the current research focuses on is existing joint ventures (completed and/or under way) between educational institutions and enterprises in order to educate people and grow talent. The central research question of the present study is: what is the contribution that co-operative education can make, in the growing of talent of the South African people? However, Bentz and Shapiro (1998) and Kensit (2000) caution that the researcher must allow the data to emerge: “Doing phenomenology” means capturing “rich descriptions of phenomena and their settings” (p. 104). For this reason the actual research questions that were put to subjects (both academics and enterprise representatives involved) were:

- How did/do you experience the joint educational venture?
- What value, if any, has been derived from the collaborative effort?

Kvale (1996) draws a similar distinction between the research question and the interview question. It is further important to keep in mind that the findings may, or may not, illustrate that the practice of co-operative education contributes to the growing of talent. In this regard Jon Kabat-Zinn, referenced by Bentz and Shapiro (1998, p. 39) state that “inquiry doesn’t mean looking for answers”.

Unstructured in-depth phenomenological interviews were conducted with both the educational institution-based programme managers and with the enterprise-based representatives. The remainder of this paragraph explains how the unstructured in-depth phenomenological interviews were conducted. The researcher’s questions were “directed to the participant’s experiences, feelings, beliefs and convictions about the theme in question” (Welman & Kruger, 1999, p. 196). Edmund Husserl according to Bentz and Shapiro (1998, pp. 41 & 96), called it *bracketing* where the inquiry is performed from the perspective of the researcher. *Bracketing* (Caelli, 2001; Davidson, 2000; King, 1994; Kruger, 1988; Kvale, 1996) in this study entailed asking the subjects/participants/informants to set aside their experiences about the
collaborative educational programme and to share their reflection on its value. Data were obtained about how the participants “think and feel in the most direct ways” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 96). The researcher focused on “what goes on within” the participants and got the participants to “describe the lived experience in a language as free from the constructs of the intellect and society as possible”. This is one form of bracketing. There is also a second form of bracketing, which, according to Miller and Crabtree (1992, p. 24) is about the researcher that “must ‘bracket’ her/his own preconceptions and enter into the individual’s lifeworld and use the self as an experiencing interpreter”. Moutakas (1994, p. 85) points out that “Husserl called the freedom from suppositions the epoche, a Greek word meaning to stay away from or abstain”. According to Bailey (1996, p. 72) the “informal interview is a conscious attempt by the researcher to find out more information about the setting of the person”. The interview is reciprocal: both researcher and research subject are engaged in the dialogue. In this study the duration of interviews and the number of questions varied from one subject to the other.

Kvale (1996, pp. 1-2) remarks with regard to data capturing during the qualitative interview that it “is literally an interview, an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest”. The researcher attempts to “understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold meaning of peoples’ experiences”. At the root of phenomenology “the intent is to understand the phenomena in their own terms — to provide a description of human experience as it is experienced by the person herself” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 96) and allowing the essence to emerge (Cameron, Schaffer & Hyeon-Ae, 2001). The maxim of Edmund Husserl was “back to things themselves!” (Kruger, 1988, p. 28).

In addition to the ten interviews conducted in this study, the educational institution-based programme managers in two instances arranged access to programme participants. Depending on the circumstances the researcher either talked directly to the programme participants and asked them to write essays or worked through the programme manager and presented the following request:

Write down your viewpoint, perspectives or feelings of the programme you are undergoing, or have completed. You need not give your name. You need not concern yourself with grammar or spelling. If possible, compare this...
programme with others you may have done, which are not offered through collaboration between an employer and an educational institution (or purely academic programmes known to you from talking to other students).

Having explained the two data-gathering methods, i.e. unstructured in-depth phenomenological interviews and essays, the data storage will be explained next.

2.5.3. Data-storing methods

During this study all interviews were audio-recorded (Arkley & Knight, 1999; Bailey, 1996) with the permission of interviewees. Each interview was assigned a code, for example Subject 21 May 2002. Where more than one interview took place on a specific date, the different interviews were identified by an alphabet character, e.g. Subject-B 18 June 2002. Each interview was recorded on a separate cassette. Each cassette was labelled with the assigned interview code. As soon as possible after each interview the researcher listened to the recording and made notes. Key words, phrases and statements were transcribed in order to allow the voices of research subjects/informants to speak.

The words of caution by Easton, McComish and Greenberg (2000) that equipment failure and environmental conditions might seriously threaten the research undertaken, was borne in mind. They advise that the researcher must at all times ensure that recording equipment functions well and that spare batteries, etc. are available. The interview setting must further be as free as possible from background noise and interruptions.

Field notes are a secondary data storage method in qualitative research. Because the human mind tends to forget quickly, field notes by the researcher are crucial in qualitative research to retain data gathered (Lofland & Lofland, 1999). This implies that the researcher must be disciplined to record, subsequent to each interview, as comprehensively as possible, but without judgmental evaluation, for example: “What happened and what was involved? Who was involved? Where did the activities occur? Why did an incident take place and how did it actually happen?” (Schurink, 2001, p. 4). Furthermore, Lofland and Lofland (1999, p. 5) emphasise that field notes
“should be written no later than the morning after”. Besides discipline, field notes also involve “luck, feelings, timing, whimsy and art” (Bailey, 1996, p. xiii). The method followed in this study is based on a model or scheme developed by Leonard Schatzman and Anselm Strauss (Schurink, 2001, p. 8) supplemented by Robert Burgess (Schurink, 2001, p. 14). Four types of field notes were made:

- Observational notes (ON) — ‘what happened notes’ deemed important enough to the researcher to make. Bailey (1996) emphasises the use of all the senses in making observations.
- Theoretical notes (TN) — ‘attempts to derive meaning’ as the researcher thinks or reflects on experiences.
- Methodological notes (MN) — ‘reminders, instructions or critique’ to oneself on the process.
- Analytical memos (AM) — end-of-a-field-day summary or progress reviews.

At this juncture it is important to note that field notes are already “a step toward data analysis” (Schurink, 2001, p. 5). Morgan (1997, pp. 57-58) remarks that because field notes involve interpretation, they are, properly speaking, “part of the analysis rather than the data collection”. Bearing in mind that the “basic datum of phenomenology is the conscious human being”, i.e. the lived experiences of the participants in the research (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 98; Heron, 1996), it is very important that the researcher must, to the greatest degree possible, prevent the data from being prematurely categorised or ‘pushed’ into the researcher’s bias about the potential contribution of co-operative education in growing talent. The writing of field notes during the research process compels the researcher to further clarify each interview setting (Caelli, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Schurink, 2001).

A file was opened with divisions for the various interviews and the following hard copy documentation was filed:

- The informed consent agreement.
- The researcher’s notes made during the interview.
- The field notes that were made subsequent to each interview.
- Any notes or sketches that were made by the subject during the interview and that were submitted to the researcher.
• Any additional information that the subject offered during the interview, for example brochures.

• Any notes made during the ‘data analysis’ process, e.g. grouping of units of meaning into themes.

• The draft ‘transcription’ and ‘analysis’ of the interview that were presented to the subject for validation.

• The confirmation of correctness and/or commentary by the subject about the ‘transcript’ and ‘analyses’ of the interview.

• Any additional/subsequent communication between the researcher and the subject.

Data storage includes audio recordings, field notes and filing of hard copy documentation. The interview transcriptions and field notes were also stored electronically on multiple hard drives. The data analysis, or rather explicitation of the data is explained next.

2.5.4. Explicitation of the data

The heading ‘data analysis’ is deliberately avoided here because Hycner (1999, p. 161) cautions that ‘analysis’ has dangerous connotations for phenomenology. The “term [analysis] usually means a ‘breaking into parts’ and therefore often means a loss of the whole phenomenon”. The term ‘explicitation’ implies an “investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole”. Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 9) regard analysis as the “systematic procedures to identify essential features and relationships”. It is a way of transforming the data through interpretation. Now that the term explicitation has been clarified, we can turn to a simplified version of Hycner’s (1999) explicitation process, which was used in the present study. This explicitation process has five ‘steps’ or phases, which is discussed here and the application to the present study detailed in Chapter 5. The five phases are:

• Bracketing and phenomenological reduction.

• Delineating units of meaning.

• Clustering of units of meaning to form themes.
• Summarising each interview, validating it and where necessary modifying it.
• Extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary.

(a) Bracketing and phenomenological reduction. The term reduction, coined by Husserl, is regarded by Hycner (1999) as unfortunate, because it has nothing to do with the reductionist natural science methodology. It would do a great injustice to human phenomena through over-analysis, removal from the lived contexts of the phenomena and worse possibly reducing phenomena to cause and effect. Phenomenological reduction “to pure subjectivity” (Lauer, 1958, p. 50), instead, is a deliberate and purposeful opening by the researcher to the phenomenon “in its own right with its own meaning” (Fouche, 1993; Hycner, 1999, p. 144). It further points to a suspension or ‘bracketing out’ (or epoche), “in a sense that in its regard no position is taken either for or against” (Lauer, 1958, p. 49), the researcher’s own presuppositions and not allowing the researcher’s meanings and interpretations or theoretical concepts to enter the unique world of the informant/participant (Creswell, 1998, pp. 54 & 113; Moustakas, 1994, p. 90; Sadala & Adorno, 2001). This is a different conception of the term bracketing used when interviewing to bracket the phenomenon researched for the interviewee. Here it refers to the bracketing of the researcher’s personal views or preconceptions (Miller & Crabtree, 1992).

Holloway (1997, p. 119) and Hycner (1999, p. 145) recommend that the researcher listens repeatedly to the audio recording of each interview to become familiar with the words of the interviewee/informant in order to develop a holistic sense, the ‘gestalt’. Zinker (1978) explains that the term phenomenological implies a process which emphasises the unique own experiences of research participants. The here and now dimensions of those personal experiences gives phenomena existential immediacy.

(b) Delineating units of meaning. This is a critical phase of explicating the data, in that those statements that are seen to illuminate the researched phenomenon are extracted or ‘isolated’ (Creswell, 1998; Holloway, 1997; Hycner, 1999). The researcher is required to make a substantial amount of judgement calls while
consciously bracketing her/his own presuppositions in order to avoid inappropriate subjective judgements.

The list of units of relevant meaning extracted from each interview is carefully scrutinised and the clearly redundant units eliminated (Moustakas, 1994). To do this the researcher considers the literal content, the number (the significance) of times a meaning was mentioned and also how (non-verbal or para-linguistic cues) it was stated. The actual meaning of two seemingly similar units of meaning might be different in terms of weight or chronology of events (Hycner, 1999).

(c) Clustering of units of meaning to form themes. With the list of non-redundant units of meaning in hand the researcher must again bracket her or his presuppositions in order to remain true to the phenomenon. By rigorously examining the list of units of meaning the researcher tries to elicit the essence of meaning of units within the holistic context. Hycner (1999) remarks that this calls for even more judgement and skill on the part of the researcher. Colaizzi, quoted by Hycner (1999, pp. 150-151), makes the following remark about the researcher’s ‘artistic’ judgement here: “Particularly in this step is the phenomenological researcher engaged in something which cannot be precisely delineated, for here he is involved in that ineffable thing known as creative insight”.

Clusters of themes are typically formed by grouping units of meaning together (Creswell, 1998; King, 1994; Moustakas, 1994) and the researcher identifies significant topics, also called units of significance (Sadala & Adorno, 2001). Both Holloway (1997) and Hycner (1999) emphasise the importance of the researcher going back to the recorded interview (the gestalt) and forth to the list of non-redundant units of meaning to derive clusters of appropriate meaning. Often there is overlap in the clusters, which can be expected, considering the nature of human phenomena. By interrogating the meaning of the various clusters central themes are determined, “which expresses the essence of these clusters” (Hycner, 1999, p. 153).

Coffey & Atkinson (1996) and King (1994) remark that many qualitative analyses can be supported by a number of personal computer software packages that have been developed since the 1980s. However, “there is no one software package that will do
the analysis in itself” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 169) and the understanding of the meaning of phenomena “cannot be computerized because it is not an algorithmic process” (Kelle, 1995, p. 3). In other forms of qualitative research, software packages such as askSAM, ATLAS.ti, C-I-SAID, NUD*IST, Ethno, HyperQual2, HyperRESEARCH, kwalitan, QUALPRO, TAP, The Ethnograph, winMAX, Word Match, WordCruncher, etc. (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; King, 1994; Scolari, 2002) were proven to ease the laborious task of analysing text-based data (Kelle, 1995) through rapid and sophisticated searches, e.g. the researcher produces an ASCII (American standard code for information interchange) version of the text which is line numbered by the programme and can be coded (King, 1994).

(d) **Summarise each interview, validate and modify.** A summary that incorporates all the themes elicited from the data gives a holistic context. Ellenberger, quoted by Hycner (1999, pp. 153-154), captures it as follows:

> Whatever the method used for a phenomenological analysis the aim of the investigator is the reconstruction of the inner world of experience of the subject. Each individual has his own way of experiencing temporality, spatiality, materiality, but each of these coordinates must be understood in relation to the others and to the total inner 'world'.

At this point the researcher conducts a ‘validity check’ by returning to the informant to determine if the essence of the interview has been correctly ‘captured’ (Hycner, 1999, p. 154). Any modification necessary is done as result of this ‘validity check’.

(e) **General and unique themes for all the interviews and composite summary.** Once the process outlined from (a) to (d) has been done for all the interviews the researcher looks “for the themes common to most or all of the interviews as well as the individual variations” (Hycner, 1999, p. 154). Care must be taken not to cluster common themes if significant differences exist. The unique or minority voices are important counterpoints to bring out regarding the phenomenon researched.

The researcher concludes the explicitation by writing a composite summary which must reflect the context or ‘horizon’ from which the themes emerged (Hycner, 1999, p. 155; Moustakes, 1994, p. 97). According to Sadala and Adorno (2001, p. 289) the
researcher, at this point “transforms participants’ everyday expressions into expressions appropriate to the scientific discourse supporting the research”. However, Coffey & Atkinson (1996, p. 139) emphasise that “good research is not generated by rigorous data alone … [but] ‘going beyond’ the data to develop ideas”. Initial theorising, however small, is derived from the qualitative data.

2.5.5. Validity and truthfulness

Schurink, Schurink and Poggenpoel (1998) emphasise the truth value of qualitative research and list a number of means to achieve truth. In the present study the phenomenological research design contributed toward truth. The researcher bracketed himself consciously in order to understand the phenomenon that was studied in terms of the perspectives of the subject interviewed, i.e. “the focus [was] on an insider perspective” (Mouton & Marais, 1990, p. 70). An audio recording of each interview was further made and again the researcher bracketed himself during the transcription of the interview. Thereafter each subject received a copy of the text to validate that it reflected the perspectives of the subject regarding the phenomenon that was studied. Finally, this dissertation contains (Chapter 5) a substantial portion of the voices (direct words) of the subjects, which suggests transparency.

2.5.6. Concluding remarks regarding the analysis of qualitative data

According to Bentz and Shapiro (1998, p. 99) the “data analysis involves a deconstructing and reconstructing process somewhat similar to grounded theory analysis”. The grounded theory deconstruction-reconstruction process involves, according to Glaser (1992), as well as Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998), three major types of coding, i.e. open, axial and selective. Groenewald, Strümpfer & Lessing (2001, p. 3) summarised the process as follows:

Open coding is the initial process of fracturing the data, examining them, comparing, conceptualising and categorising. Then follows axial coding. The term ‘axial’ refers to coding around the axis of the categories that were formed during open coding, along the lines of the dimensions and properties of the category. Axial coding is a set of procedures to put data together in new ways after open coding. The so-called paradigm model is used to link sub-
categories of data with categories. Simplified, the sequential steps of the paradigm model are: causal conditions, phenomenon, context, intervening conditions, action/interaction strategies and consequences.

Selective coding starts after the core categories have been found. It is a delimiting coding (or explicating the story line) of only those issues that relate to the core category.

The process described above is based on inductive logic (Babbie, 1995; Welman & Kruger, 1999). It begins with concrete data and by categorising and ‘interweaving’, generalities are identified. After categorisation, the research material no longer reflects the raw data, according to Corbin (1998), but the work of the researcher. This represents the classic problem of phenomenology, namely, if the researcher’s account is grounded and how well it is grounded in the primary meaning (Heron, 1996)?

In order to escape deductive analysis and engage in inductive logic Becker (1998) offers a number of ‘tricks of the trade’. Science, he argues, involves concepts, which can be defined by collecting examples of embodiment of what the concept refers to. Becker (1998) suggests a number of ways to help a researcher that is faced with a large volume of data. First, allow the case to define the category or concept. The second step represents the ‘Bernie Beck’s trick’ (p. 125), which requires of the researcher to explain the findings without using the obvious characteristics. A third way is to look for the other-than-generalised. Becker (1998) remarks that concepts are relational and urges researchers to look for the traits. He finds the ‘Wittgenstein trick’ (p. 138) very useful. It involves the stripping away of the incidental in order to get to the core. Once the stripping is done, it enlarges the reach, i.e. the researcher should search for similar cases in the data. Becker (1998) further encourages the researcher to look beyond what is the known or obvious, in order to ‘find the major premise’. The researcher should be attentive to any ‘strange talk’ (p. 150) and ask for defining distinctions. If a subject/informant defines something by exclusion, e.g. “it isn’t (whatever)” (p. 158) the researcher should explore what lies underneath the ‘turf talk’ or the preservation of privilege. If the ‘imperative voice’ (p. 161) is used by a subject/informant, the researcher should enquire ‘or else what?’. These are a
number of ways by which inductive data analysis is achieved (Becker, 1998). It requires discipline on the part of the researcher not to fall into the trap of analysing deductively.

2.6. SUMMARY

This chapter serves as a set of guidelines, derived from a literature review, used in conducting this study. A qualitative research design, and more specifically phenomenological methodology chosen for this study is explained. The core ontological, epistemological and methodological scientific beliefs are clarified. A brief overview is given of the developments of phenomenology that focused the research methodology employed. The location of the data, the sampling methods in particular and ethical precautions taken, are explained. The data-gathering methods, i.e. unstructured in-depth phenomenological interviews supplemented by memoing, essays by participants, one focus group discussion and the making of field notes, are further explained. The data-storage and the explicitation of the data by means of a simplified version of Hycner's (1999) process is outlined. The chapter finally contains commentary about the validity and truthfulness measures and some brief notes on aspects that need to be borne in mind with regard to the analysis of the data of this study.
CHAPTER 3

THE IMPORTANCE OF GROWING TALENT

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter literature relevant to the importance of talent, both internationally and in South Africa, will be briefly reviewed. However, since there are currently different, if not opposing views amongst qualitative researchers about the use of literature in qualitative studies, the role of a literature review in qualitative research generally and particularly in the present study, will first be explored.

3.2. THE USE OF LITERATURE IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Generally literature serves several purposes in research. Creswell (1994) mentions three, namely:
(a) Informing the current study with the findings of related research.
(b) Relating the current research to the greater body of existing knowledge with the aim of filling gaps or extending previous research.
(c) Providing a context for positioning the current study and for comparative purposes of the new findings.

Creswell (1994, 21) states that “literature should be used in a manner consistent with the methodological assumptions”. Qualitative researchers generally caution that existing theory and findings from other research studies may interfere with the researcher’s grasp of the perspectives of the research subjects. In order not to contaminate the meanings of the perspectives of research subjects, qualitative researchers recommend that the researcher refrain from exposing her/himself to the literature and existing research findings until after s/he has collected the data and has at least initially interpreted it.

However, a limited number of qualitative researchers have no difficulty in using the existing literature when they conduct their studies. Furthermore, in the previous chapter it is mentioned that a researcher who uses a phenomenological design
cannot be detached from her/his own presuppositions or explicit beliefs and should not pretend otherwise. In the case of this study the researcher has been exposed to co-operative education since 1985 and has since 1995 been responsible for promoting the practice of co-operative education at the institution where he is employed. In order to align the present study with the international research regarding talent and to develop an appropriate research design about the growing of talent, a literature review about the importance of talent was undertaken.

In a phenomenological study the researcher is required to *bracket* (see Chapter 2) her/his own perspectives and allow the phenomenon to emerge. This requires self-discipline. The *explicitation* process further makes provision for a validation check by the subjects or informants. Although there is the possibility of influence or contamination of the data, it has been adequately controlled in this study by *bracketing* and the *explicitation* process.

The literature findings regarding the importance of growing talent are therefore presented in this chapter as theoretical backdrop of the research ‘arena’ of this study. Co-operative education contextualised within the development of Higher Education presented in Chapter 4 is presented as additional theoretical foundation.

3.3. THE INTERNATIONAL TALENT STRUGGLE

The Centre for Work Performance (Rand Afrikaans University, 2002) identified, among a number of current pressing issues for debate, the need for “effectively attracting, growing and retaining talent” (emphasis added). The literature review done during this study outlines several reasons why talent is an important Human Resource Management issue.

The title of the book by Ridderstråle and Nordström (2000) “Funky business, talent makes capital dance” (emphasis added) vividly captures the importance of talent and espouses vitality. The subheading “Talent equals profit” of an article by Lunn (Selecting and developing talent: an alternative approach) (1995) reinforces the importance of talent in an economy where more must be achieved by fewer. It is
widely recognised that human beings are the life-giving production factor of an enterprise and of a country’s economy.

Figura (2000), HRfocus (2001) and Johnson (2000) share the view that retaining the correct mixture of human talent ensures a competitive advantage. HRfocus (2001, p.1) suggests that while talent may cause one to think of dancers and actors, today’s human resource professional needs to be “an effective ‘handler’ of the ‘talent’ — your best and brightest employees — and to keep that talent in the company”. Seeman, an organisational advisor on intellectual capital writes: “the purpose of managing human capital is to ensure that the business has the right mix of talent at the right time to implement the firm’s corporate strategy” (quoted by Johnson, 2000, p. 186). Robert Gandossy puts it as follows: “People are your only source of sustained, competitive advantage. Everything else can be replicated” (quoted by HRfocus, 2001, p. 1). Figura (2000, p. 1) supports Gandossy with her remark that “the key competitive difference in the 21st century will be people”.

It is recognised internationally (HRfocus, 2001; Johnson, 2000; Liebmann, 2000; Ridderstråle and Nordström, 2000; Vicere, 1991; Ziarati et al., 1995) that the talent of people is a key success factor with regard to global competitiveness. Johnson (2000) prompts companies to compare their current level of individual skills with that of their competitors. Liebmann (2000, p. 33) also shares this view by saying “people — as inconveniently human as they may be — are what makes any organisation a success”. Ridderstråle and Nordström (2000) assert that “knowledge is the new battlefield for countries, corporations and individuals” (p. 21), “it is brains battling brains” (p. 20). Vicere (1991) and Ziarati et al. (1995) are of the opinion that in order for an enterprise to become world-class it must have world-class people. For the enterprise to remain world-class its people must stay world-class and education and training must play a vital part in achieving this. Finally, HRfocus (2001, p. 15) recommends accelerated development as one of the means to win some major battles in the talent wars and remarks that “rapid talent development will help you keep up with productivity opportunities”.

During the past decade incredible changes have taken place in the corporate landscape, such as globalisation, aggressive competition and cross-penetration of
markets, as well as the introduction of virtual work teams (Barner, 2000). These changes have impacted drastically on the talent life-cycle of enterprises; turnover of talent has been effected; totally new or different talent requirements have emerged and enterprises have experienced difficulty in recruiting and retaining talent. Cataldo et al. (2000, p. 55) remark that the “current skills sets are proving to be inadequate to meet the rapidly changing fast-paced world of technical and business needs”. HRfocus (2001, p. 14) reports that “eighty percent of white collar jobs would be obsolete in five years”. Because of the birth of new first-time technologies and competitors emerging from unexpected fields (Barner, 2000) leading enterprises experience a need for new talent to staff ‘jobs’ that did not previously exist. In this regard Cataldo et al. (2000) remark that it is no longer strange to lay off people, in order to eliminate obsolete positions, while simultaneously hiring people to acquire new talent.

From the literature reviewed it is evident that some scholars believe that talent is often latent and should be developed, whereas other scholars argue that talent is simply acquired through conscious effort. For example, Bals (1999) reports on research about the vocationally ‘talented’ or ‘gifted’ (p. 97) undertaken in Germany since the early 1990s, and the current fostering of talents. However, Simonton (2001) points out that most recent psychological research progressively raised misgivings about talent as innate or an inborn gift and that people that are recognised for world-class performance simply achieved this as result of their immense conscious practice. Sunoo (2001) supports the view that talent is acquired through a lengthy laborious process, and emphasises patience and a long-term view about the growing of talent. Lunn (1995, p. 10) is adamant that “training refines and develops talent, it does not create it” and quotes the sign on the office wall of a president of a restaurant chain: “Never try to teach a pig to sing — it wastes your time and annoys the pig” (p. 9). However, Lunn’s view is softened by that of Mayo (2000) that everybody has latent abilities that are untested, under-developed or under-utilised and as result that the capacity to grow. Simonton (2001) further argues that environmental factors do play a major role in the development of talent. Simonton (2001, p. 41) states that talent develops in keeping with “inherent epigenetic trajectories” or “its own distinctive growth pattern”.

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that talent growth is a dynamic process and that with late-bloomers the development
of talent starts “when the first genetic component emerges” (p. 41).

Because of the fierce competition in attracting and retaining sought-after talent
(Banner, 2000; Figura, 2000; Friedland, 2000; Greene, 2000; Hammett, 2001;
Matthew, 2000; McDonald, 1999; Seligman, 2000; Shoebridge, 2000; Tulgan, 2001;
proactively develop leadership and grow talent to ensure a best-in-class workforce.
Cataldo et al. (2000), among others, recommend the following strategies towards
this end: fast track staffing and training; ‘re-skilling’ employees before they become
obsolete; in-house or outsourcing training and retraining; collaborative e-learning;
technology and electronic performance management systems; maintaining an up-to-
date talent databank; continuous learning solutions; strategic alliances with
professional and academic institutions with regard to core technical and business
areas; and venturing into the corporate university environment. Strategic alliances
and corporate universities will be explored in more depth in 3.5. The
recommendations of the American Society for Training & Development (2001)
regarding the crisis in human capital in the United States' federal workforce among
others include e-learning, integrating learning with work, addressing the needs and
interests of individual learning, shifting the learning process from institutions to
individuals, customised and personalised content delivery, access to best-in-case
learning content and e-learning embedded in policies and practices to broaden
individual opportunity and to increase the federal government’s economic
effectiveness.

Whereas several scholars recommend that enterprises initiate the growing of talent,
Johnson et al. (1999) and Seligman (2000) recommend that individuals should
manage (there should be a shift in accountability) their own talent growth by means
of own career management; seeking a strong mentor from among seniors; critically
evaluating their employer in terms of what the employer has to offer; and making the
most of their employer’s human resource department. El-Tannir (2002) and Greene
(2000) also emphasise the accountability of individuals for their own careers. Maloka
(n.d.) and Radebe (2001) point out the need to integrate oneself into the global
environment, to take one’s destiny into one’s own hands. From the perspectives of
these scholars individuals should accept responsibility for the growth of their own
talent. However, the following paragraph summarises some views of scholars who
do not agree with this point of view.

It becomes clear from the writings of El-Tannir (2002) and Garavan et al. (2001) that
although individuals may be held responsible for their own talent growth, employers
who wish to retain world-class talent need to make opportunities for growth and
development available. In an article “Human capital accumulation, the role of human
resource development” Garavan et al. (2001) report on a survey that found that more
than 90% of graduates expect employers to help them in their development. The
findings of another survey emphasise that one-third of high-fliers would resign if their
skills were not broadened. Garavan et al. (2001, p. 48) concludes “individuals place
considerable value on the investments that organisations make in their human
capital enhancement”. In this regard Johnson (2000, p. 183) states: “Development —
or talent will most surely leave”. El-Tannir (2002) claims that corporate universities
contribute to retention of talent.

With regard to the seeking of mentors, mentioned in a preceding paragraph, the
Managers Handbook (1997, p. 12) points out that the largest companies in the
United States of America nearly “unanimously agree that mentoring — sharing
personalised guidance and expertise with a junior employee is a must-do”. Research
findings indicate that there is a strong correlation between retention of staff and
mentoring. Junior colleagues often derive intangible knowledge that is usually not
attainable though formal study, from being mentored. Taking a protégé under one’s
wing (mentoring) is regarded a crucial talent growing strategy for transferring wisdom
and for providing a solid foundation for future business growth. Johnson et al. (1999)
observes that structured mentoring is increasingly being institutionalised, that it
contributes to career development, but that mentoring has the potential to impact on
all facets of life. Conway (1995) concludes that mentoring unleashes individual talent
and potential and allows organisations to keep pace with change.

Various labels (such as high flyers, fast trackers and high potentials) are used to
refer to talented graduates destined for senior management positions (Doherty et al.,
1997). These scholars indicate that many companies have graduate programmes to
provide for high-calibre executives to ensure companies’ future competitiveness. One example is a formal three-year programme of recruiting and grooming management talent for Consolidated Graphics, a Houston based corporate parent company (Cross, 1999). In order to provide for the aggressive growth of the group of companies it needed “a means to continually attract top management talent” (p. 93). About eighty recruits from fifty tertiary institutions country-wide annually start with nine-months of extensive shop floor learning about the production and manufacturing process of printing. They work side by side with the employees they will one day manage. Thereafter the new recruits undergo a three-month period of on-the-job learning rotating through the business side of printing. The third and final stage of the training programme involves choosing a career in either sales or operations. Several graduates of this management development programme are already presidents at subsidiary companies. Whereas Consolidated Graphics implemented a post-graduate internship programme, the Kingsway Group formed a partnership with Sundridge Park Management Centre for middle management employees identified as potential senior management (Smith & Smith, 1990). Both ventures experienced the benefit of growing their own talent. In contrast to this, Kaye (1996, p. 44) observes that “leadership development is often the least systematic aspect of an organisation’s strategy development”. Kaye (1996) emphasises the importance of leadership succession, not only at executive level, but also for senior management as well as for new positions that may be created in the organisation.

Another factor in the ‘war’ for talent is the currency value of time. One example is reduced working hours and workplace flexibility (Barnett & Gareis, 2000a; Barnett & Gareis, 2000b; Barnett & Hall, 2001) which are increasingly becoming draw cards in especially two-career households, but more particularly among professional and managerial employees. It appears to be either a win-win situation for both employers and individuals (Barnett & Hall, 2001), or facing another drain of talent in that “fewer employees — especially younger ones — are interested in management because of the perceived stress and time commitment” (Joinson, 1997, p. 5).

From the ideas discussed thus far the importance of talent should be evident. Small wonder that talent is perceived as an issue of major importance. There is, however, some doubt concerning talent as an inborn gift. The need for developing latent talent
is uncontested. Because of the fierce competition in attracting and retaining talent, a variety of strategies or means of growing talent are mentioned. While the individual’s responsibility is emphasised, the duty of employers is also crucial if they wish to attract and retain talent. Mentoring, graduate programmes and partnerships with training providers were also discussed in brief.

3.4. THE NEED FOR GROWING PEOPLE TALENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

The report of the Black Economic Empowerment Commission (BEE Com., 2001, p. 13) states that “Colonial and Apartheid policies had a devastating impact on the development of black human capital” or talent. This neglect of part of South Africa’s “most important economic resource — its people” will for a long time restrict the potential growth rate and will render many South African enterprises less competitive. In this regard Ziarati et al. (1995) observe that for enterprises to continue to prosper in the face of the international marketplace, where competition is fierce, enterprises can no longer afford mediocrity. In other words the situation presents a major challenge to both educational providers and to enterprises to grow or develop the talent of South Africans. In this regard BEE Com. (2001, p. 17) argues the need for “an integrated National HRD [Human Resource Development] Strategy”, published in April 2001, i.e. the Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa — A Nation at Work for a Better Life for All (Republic of South Africa, 2001a).

Mulemfo (2000) highlights the need for growing talent in view of the lagging productivity in South Africa and in Africa as a whole. He asserts that low productivity is evident and cites examples such as workers sitting idle when the boss is absent; teachers chatting rather than doing their work; a variety of illnesses invented by government officials to miss work; and go-slow attitudes promoted by unions. Mulemfo (2000, p. 90) submits that “people who will work hard to produce more” are needed.

Hadland and Rantao (1999, p. 135) capture the need for growing talent in South Africa by quoting the profound words of Patti Waldmeir subsequent to the first democratic elections of 1994: “It emerged in the real world, where poverty is the biggest challenge to all democratic governments, and where there are tougher
problems to solve than apartheid”. Hadland and Rantao (1999) remark that the more than 50 years of apartheid marginalised and disempowered black people. South Africa shares this predicament of decolonisation and deracialisation with the rest of Africa, according to Mamdani (1999).

This idea of the socio-economic legacy of apartheid was supported by President Thabo Mbeki’s ‘Two Nations’ speech of 29 May 1998. In this regard Mamdani (1999, p. 126) observes that “if white South Africa were a country on its own, its per capita income would be 24th in the world, next to Spain; but if black South Africa were a separate country, its per Capita income would rank 123rd globally, just above the Democratic Republic of the Congo”. Mamdani (1999, p. 129) appealing for “an intellectual rebirth, a reawakening of the mind”; asserts that “renaissance is first and foremost a reawakening of thought” (p. 130) and claims that the driving force “is inevitably the intelligentsia”. He uses the word ‘intelligentsia’ in the original broad Russian sense, not the narrow English context of ‘intellectual’, i.e. “all those that drive forward creative thought and frame debate, whether in the arts or culture, whether in philosophical or social thought” (p. 130).

According to the article “Education for an ‘African Renaissance’” (2000, p. 14) “education is the sine qua non [indispensable or absolutely necessary] for empowering the people of Africa to participate in and benefit more effectively from the opportunities available in the globalised economy of the 21st century”. James (1997) cautions that the renaissance in South Africa must not be simply celebrated as an event or serve as symbolic rhetoric (Fourie, n.d.; Maloka, n.d.) or merely represent hopes and ideals (University of Witwatersrand, 1999). The African Renaissance must be carefully nurtured in order to succeed. Fourie (n.d.), Mbeki (1998a, 1998b), Netshitenzhe (1998), Radebe (2001) and the African Renaissance and International Co-operation Fund Act (Republic of South Africa, 2000a) emphasise factors such as the importance of good education and human development to succeed in the immense challenge.

Maloka (n.d.) refers to an article by Vusi Maviembela, President Mbeki’s political advisor, portraying the ‘African Renaissance’ as the third moment in the post-colonial history, after decolonisation and the democratic upsurge of the 1990s. Kofi Annan,
Secretary General of the United Nations, according to James (1997), refers to three waves similar to these moments. The second wave was marked by civil wars, tyranny of military rule and economic stagnation.

The key elements, according to Maloka (n.d.) of the ‘African Renaissance’ are socio-political democratisation, economic regeneration and improvement of geopolitical standing in world affairs. These elements represent a globalist perspective. Further perspectives are a Pan Africanist perspective (Pax Africana: resolve African problems by African solutions) and a culturalist perspective (an ethnophilosophy of returning to the roots of the people of Africa).

An element of the culturalist perspective is the notion of ubuntu (Nguni) or botho (SeSotho) — humanness or humanity. This entails the essence of the inner being and values which are manifested outwards (Maloka, n.d.; Mulemfo, 2000). Ubuntu/botho impels one towards hospitality, caring, willingness to go the extra mile and helping the community. It “teaches people to work for economic emancipation, social harmony and political stability” (Mulemfo, 2000, p. 58). Ontologically the culturalist perspective of African Renaissance deals with the question “what does it mean to be an African?” (Maloka, n.d.). Among others Maloka (n.d.), Mbeki (1998b) and Netshitenzhe (1998) emphasise that people themselves drive their destiny and that tomorrow belongs to them. Radebe (2001) argues that it is critical that Africa should integrate itself into the global environment.

Within the context of importance of talent argued internationally, literature reviewed dealing with South Africa reveals the indispensable necessity of good education, human development and improving productivity. Large-scale poverty exists among black people due to their having been marginalised and disempowered. Economic regeneration forms part of an overall need for an African Renaissance, for which the driving force is inevitably black intelligentsia. However, once again the idea emerges that people are personally responsible for achieving their destiny. The subsequent section will examine the position of businesses regarding talent and its related aspects.
3.5. BUSINESS FORGING ALLIANCES WITH HIGHER EDUCATION TO DEVELOP TALENT

Berkeley (1998) remarks that never before has it been more important for educational institutions in Britain and business to work together than at the present time. He further remarks that collaboration has been a great success story, with increasing numbers of active partnerships. He also states that partnerships between business and education are no longer merely an option for commerce and industry but have become a mainstream business necessity. “Education for an ‘African Renaissance’” (2000) also emphasises partnership, among others, between education and the private sector.

An excellent example of an education-business partnership is provided by a case study about the advantageous partnership of the University of Central England and the Rover Group (Ziarati et al., 1995). The university has a long tradition of association with industry in providing education focused on the needs of industry. A joint industry-academic committee designed and developed part-time and full-time programmes from post-graduate certificate through to MSc levels. Currently the sponsoring companies cover a broad range, from very small to large enterprises.

There are several other examples. Barnes and Phillips (2000), Blackburn and Fryer (1996), Brindley and Ritchie (2000), Doncaster (2000), Gericke (2001), Rosenbaum (2000), and Stephen et al. (1997) report on mutually advantageous working (symbiotic) partnerships between Higher Education and businesses. Some of the successful issues they highlight include:

- the curriculum which is not defined by subject experts but based on the needs of industry;
- industry-related hands-on lessons which provoke interest in students;
- early limited exposure to the workplace which is followed by later extensive hands-on experience;
- joint research and development projects;
- experienced practitioners operating as programme instructors;
- accreditation of prior learning and mentoring;
• supportive senior management; and
• considerable personal development of academics.

Davies (1998) points out that successes such as these outlined above frequently escape the attention of the conventional academic staff (standard Higher Education programmes). He remarks that innovative vocational and professional programmes, with strong backing from commerce and industry, are often delivered outside traditional educational environments. Regrettably Higher Education senior management is not necessarily concerned with work-based or workplace learning, the corporate degree, the recognition of in-company courses and off-campus learning achievements. These are not central concerns of academia, Davies (1998) observes.

Teare (2000) advances a case for corporate virtual universities based on the need of enterprises to stay abreast of continuous change and the need for learning to be firmly aligned with current business needs. He argues that “training and learning can be used to accelerate change and development” (p. 111). Internet technology, he says, enables the provision of learner support anywhere and anytime. The goal is to create an educational system that is indeed market-driven, which gives programme participants the opportunity to actively discuss current issues, diagnose real-life challenges and recommend solutions to actual problems. Teare (2000, p. 114) reports that “many companies around the world have embraced action learning, achieving real and often remarkable results”. Action learning integrates the study of learning resources and literature with solving real-life business challenges. El-Tannir (2002) emphasises the importance of active learning and just-in-time access. Sandelands (1998) points out that the corporate virtual university embraces a paradigm of workplace learning.

El-Tannir (2002) and Global Learning Resources (2001) submit that corporate universities started simply as an alternative denomination for the training department of business enterprises. Programmes organised by such departments were often subcontracted to universities. At the beginning of the 1990s there were about 400 corporate universities in the United States. The number grew in one decade: by the
end of 2000 it had grown to almost 1 800. Whereas Teare (2000) promotes the corporate virtual university based on the notion that company training departments tend to be reactive, Dealtry (2001, 2000) cautions against resurrecting the training and development function as corporate university. He emphasises strategic fit. The secret, according to Sandelands (1998) is to dovetail the learning needs of the organisation with the learning provided by universities. However, Dealtry (2001) insists that the concept corporate university is indeed an audacious concept that presents unique challenges. For example, for complete success it needs to engage the minds throughout the company and beyond. He (2001, p. 216) asserts that the company must “symbolically and executively take full ownership and responsibility for the development of the complete concept”. It must not be seen as a set of training programmes owned by a department nor viewed as a place, but must become “a shared positive collegiate dynamic in the psyche of the organisation” (p. 216). Since 1999, Dealtry has published research regarding the establishment, evolution, development or configuration of and transition to the corporate university.

The South African version of the corporate university is the private Higher Education institution. The Department of Education keeps a register in accordance with the requirements of the Higher Education Act, 1997, No. 101 of 1997, as amended by Act 55 of 1999 and Act 54 of 2000 (Republic of South Africa, 2002b). Registration applies only to private Higher Education institutions that offer whole qualifications at Higher Education levels on the National Qualifications Framework. The register includes mostly dedicated privately owned Higher Education institutions that have a profit motive and only a few company owned corporate universities.

In this section on the partnering of business with Higher Education to develop talent, an example of a partnership was mentioned earlier as a means of growing talent. An examination of further literature revealed great successes derived from such partnerships and collaboration, which is considered a necessity for business. Education that focuses on the needs of industry, joint design and development, industry-related hands-on exposure and joint research are mentioned. It is disconcerting that conventional academic staff, in contrast, is not necessarily interested in work-based education. Conversely corporate universities are spreading. The South African version is private Higher Education institutions.
3.6. SUMMARY

This chapter starts with a discussion of the use of literature in qualitative research and in the present study in particular. It emphasises that when a researcher uses a phenomenological design her/his own presuppositions are bracketed and the phenomenon is allowed to surface. The phenomenological research process further requires a validity check by subjects, which means that possible influence by the researcher is controlled.

The literature review starts with the international emphasis on talent, debated within Human Resource Management. Phrases such as ‘talent makes capital dance’ and ‘talent equals profit’ vividly capture the importance of people in organisational success. People are the ‘key competitive difference’ and possibly the only source of ‘sustained competitive advantage’ in the 21st century. The point is made that in order for an organisation to be world-class it needs to have world-class people. However, the incredible changes that have taken place internationally in the landscape of organisations further add to the talent debate, for example, the shortened lifecycle of specific talent and the emergence of totally new or different talent.

The literature review further reveals opposing views about the origin of talent and the capacity of people to develop talent. Whereas some argue that talent can be acquired by conscious practice, others maintain that people either have it or they do not. It appears that talent is inherent to some extent but that the ability of people to grow and develop talent remains unexplained. Because of the fierce competition for talent, organisations are encouraged to grow and develop their people in order to ensure competitive talent. This perspective is countered by a belief that people are responsible for their own growth and development. A balanced approach is put forward, i.e. that people are held responsible for self-development, but that organisations should make growing of talent possible and offer opportunities. In this regard mentoring is mentioned as a value-adding intervention. Examples of structured programmes which achieve the development of the desired talent are mentioned.
The review of literature dealing with international talent issues subsequently focuses on the needs of the new South Africa. Overcoming the legacy of Apartheid, and the need for global competitiveness are presented as particular South African challenges. The socio-economic realities and the aspirations of the African Renaissance are discussed and the study concludes that good education, Human Resource Development and productivity improvement are essential issues.

The third section of the chapter zooms in on examples of successful partnerships between business and education in the growing of talent. Issues such as joint industry-academic design and development of programmes; industry-related hands-on learning experiences; accreditation of prior learning and mentoring are mentioned among others as benefits of such symbiotic relationships. However, it is also mentioned that regrettably the conventional academic staff and Higher Education institution management are not necessarily concerned with work-based programmes. In contrast, the internationally expansion of the corporate university and the South African version — the private Higher Education institution — is presented in brief.

It is evident from the literature reviewed that ‘attracting, growing and retaining talent’ is internationally seen to be of critical importance. Due to the heritage of Apartheid, it is specially important to South Africa.

Co-operative education, which presents itself as a means to grow the required talent, will be discussed within the context of Higher Education in the next chapter.
4.1. INTRODUCTION

Co-operative education is an educational philosophy that advocates the formal integration of work experience (or community service) into the theoretical curriculum (Pratt, 1996). Cates and Jones (1999) define co-operative education as a structured educational strategy that progressively integrates academic study with learning through productive work experiences in a field related to a student's academic or career goals. This experiential learning is not an add-on to the curriculum, but an integral part of the educational process. Co-operative education presents itself as a means to grow the talent of the South African people.

It is recognised internationally that talent of people is a key factor (Liebmann, 2000) in enterprises' pursuance of global competitiveness. The role of education and training in developing the required talent is widely recognised. Work-based learning and partnerships between enterprises and providers of Higher Education are considered good ways of growing talent.

Whereas Chapter 3 presented a literature review upon which the importance of growing talent was based, this chapter contextualises co-operative education within the development of Higher Education. The chapter (a) opens with a brief overview of the historical developments of Higher Education, followed by (b) a literature review upon which the development of co-operative education is based, and (c) finally gives a synopsis of the dysfunctional state of Higher Education in South Africa.

4.2. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

According to Louw (1996; 1997) and Posthumus (1997), the South African Higher Education structure and practices originated from Western European (Rauner,
1997), and especially, British (Pratt, 1997) systems. The existing binary — separate funding-arrangements (Anderson, 1968; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) — of the Higher Education system in South Africa (universities versus technikons) cannot be isolated from their historic international origins, discussed in the next paragraph.

Blignaut (1985) and Bonnen (1998) traced the origin of the university back to the medieval theological education of priests. Mphahlele (1996) states that the term 'universitas' emerged during the thirteenth century. Synonymous with university education, academic freedom is an associated dimension (Aronowitz, 2000; Bargh, Scott & Smit, 1996; Nelson & Watt, 1999; Nkabinde, 1997; Posthumus, 1997; Sowers-Hoag & Harrison, 1998; Venter, 1997). However, it is important to note Aronowitz’s (2000) observation that power has shifted in recent times from faculty to administration. Rising costs and stagnant or declining revenue since the 1980s have resulted in budget cuts and downsizing. Even faculty’s sovereignty over the curriculum and the educational process has had to make way for academic planning and the shift of power to administrators “who retained final determination of nearly all university issues” (Aronowitz, 2000, p. 66).

It is important to note the difference between the classic university and contemporary universities. The classic university (Louw, 1997), does not consider it necessary to engage with their surrounding communities. The classic university stands in contrast to the present-day expectation (Seaberry & Davies, 1997) that Higher Education institutions must lead the creation of knowledge and address contemporary society issues. Aronowitz (2000, p. 17) refers to the “transformation of universities into teaching machines” and highlights the important impact of World Wars I and II on universities to become “premier sites for the production of useful knowledge” (p. 19). Other developments are the land-grant university, in the United States (Aronowitz, 2000; Bonnen, 1996, 1998), and metropolitan universities which arose in answer to the need of serving the community. Louw (1996) and Posthumus (1997) highlight the African emphasis on the relevancy of Higher Education institutions. A transition therefore occurred from the classic university to society-focused institutes of learning.
The interrelationship between the university and its community is described in terms such as outreach, collaboration, partnerships, co-operative agreements, internships, part-time employment and service learning (Deruosi & Sherwood, 1997; Furco, 1996; Green, 1997; Hamilton & Hamilton, 1997; Palm & Toma, 1997; Perold & Omar, 1997; 1997; Seaberry & Davis, 1997; Wade, 1997).

At this juncture it is important to note that with the disappearance of polytechnics from the Higher Education landscape in Britain, Barnett and Bjarnason (1999, pp. 87, 96) asked ‘Why were universities not required to call themselves polytechnics? Kerr argued in 1963 that “the academic system should be organised into two tiers” the top tier devoted to research and graduate study and the second to technical training and general education (Aronowitz, 2000, p. 31). The Council on Higher Education ‘Size and Shape Task Team Discussion Document’ (Republic of South Africa, 2000b) argues a similar transformation of Higher Education in South Africa. However, the latest debate with regard to the transformation of Higher Education in South Africa implies the merging, in some cases, of existing universities and technikons.

Against this brief overview of the historical developments of Higher Education the development of co-operative education will be examined next. First the origins and fundamentals of co-operative education will be reviewed, thereafter the subsequent developments, and finally the practice of co-operative education in South Africa.

4.3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION

4.3.1. The origins and fundamentals of co-operative education

Because of the large degree of conceptual drift of the construct co-operative education it is considered necessary to revisit the literature of the inception years and to let those voices speak in this study. The construct co-operative education or co-op is nowadays used by many institutions to refer to a non-integrated add-on stint of work exposure. This is not how it was originally intended. The next few pages will outline what was understood when the construct co-operative education was conceived.
On 26 January 1914 Herman Schneider, Dean of the College of Engineering of the University of Cincinnati, appeared before the Committee of Education of the House of Representatives in Washington, and stated (United States of America, 1914, pp. 3-5, 9) among others the following regarding the ‘Cooperative System of Education’:

“[T]he cooperative system aims to tie theory and practice together directly. The student completes all the ... courses ... necessary to the obtaining of a ... degree, and he [or she] also finishes his apprenticeship course in the practical field ... This apprenticeship course in the practical work is arranged by the university, and is just as carefully worked out as his university curriculum. The theoretical work in the university and the practical work in the commercial field are coordinated by a number of devices, but principally by the use of teachers whom we call coordinators. [T]he theory and practice are made to work hand in hand so that the practical work has the highest possible educational value. The practical work is just as carefully arranged as the college curriculum. Every detail of the practical course is carefully arranged and practice and theory are knit together in a uniform scheme through a carefully devised system of coordination. The function of this [coordination] department is to see that an intimate tie is established between the theory and practice and to check and counter check this tie. In this way the outside practical work is made of great educational value.” (emphasis added).

Thirty two years later, on 16 October 1946 an elite group of people gathered in Ohio to celebrate four decades of the practice of co-operative education and to extend congratulations to Herman Schneider, the generally regarded founder of this unique pedagogy (Sovilla, 1998). The next few paragraphs contain the voices of some of the speakers (Eshbach, Freund, Geier and Walters) at the pretentious occasion in 1946. Their voices were chosen to give authenticity and are interwoven with more contemporary views.
Raymond Walters (1947, p. 9), President of the University of Cincinnati, remarked “[t]he idea of combining work with study had earlier exemplifications, as in the mediaeval guilds with their apprenticeships and in the earlier American training of young men for the bar and for medicine in the offices of lawyers and physicians”. In this regard Engelbrecht (1993, 2002) asserts that the origins of co-operative education can be traced back to the training for the building of the pyramids in Egypt. Carlson (1999) acknowledges that although the term: ‘cooperative education’ (American spelling) may have originated in the United States, the concept did not, i.e. that the idea of an integrated curriculum that includes experiential learning did not originate in the United States. She points out that in 1903 (three years before the founding of Schneider’s co-operative system) Sunderland Technical College, in Northern England introduced a sandwich education programme. By 1908, 25 local engineering firms had made use of sandwich programmes, which were regarded a progressive concept (Sunderland University, 2001). However, Engelbrecht (1993, 2002) cites several South African examples of co-operative education which have occurred since 1855. Where and when the concept originated is of lesser importance. The important point is that the notion of work-integrated learning has been in existence for more than 100 years.

The great achievement of Schneider, according to Walters (1947) lay in the spirited determination with which he “related work and study in an orderly system and convinced the world that it would work” (p. 10, emphasis added). Walters praised Schneider as administrator, with specific reference to his swaying force and remarkable salesmanship. Walters further recognised Schneider as teacher, who in 1899 “stressed the educative merits of the co-operative system” (p. 11) and succeeded in 1906 in obtaining permission to establish a co-operative course at the University of Cincinnati. Sovilla (1998) reports that the first ‘Cincinnati Plan’ (as it was commonly labelled) in 1906-7 involved 27 students and 13 participating employers. Although academics and industrialists scoffed at such radical departure from traditional education, more that 400 prospective students inquired after the initial trial. Word spread quickly and other institutions showed interest.

The nucleus of Schneider’s philosophy is balanced training, i.e. “theory comes first, both as to time order and as to emphasis” (p. 10) followed by “hard contact with life”
and comprehension of the workings of things where they operate. In this regard Frederick Geier (1947, p. 25), President of the Cincinnati Milling Machine Company, corroborates that “[c]o-operative education seeks to weld theoretical knowledge and practical experience into the most effective tool for today’s work” (emphasis added). According to Ellison (n.d.) this new teaching methodology changed twentieth-century education. Only when students began to apply the theory to practice did their minds start to ask questions, suggesting a need or motivation for deeper learning (Langford & Cates, 1997). Schneider further became convinced that many professional concepts and skills could only be understood and mastered through actual work experience (University of Cincinnati, 1998, 1996). The president of the American Society for Engineering Education in 1936-7 remarked that co-operative education has been the single most noteworthy development in engineering education in the USA since 1893.

Regrettably “Schneider left no comprehensive statement of the philosophy of the co-operative system” (Freund, 1947, p. 13). However, he did leave a heritage of success in education. Eshbach (1947, p. 18) remarks that “[w]hen properly done, there is no better or more effective method than co-operative education for professional vocations”. He suggested the adoption of the Latin motto ‘experimentia docet’, meaning experience teaches, which is the heart of co-operative education. Eshbach (1947, p. 19) observes that the innovative contribution of Herman Schneider was the “taking of the student to industry, where experience and practice can be observed in a more natural state” (emphasis added). The success of co-operative courses, he feels, depends largely on three things (1947, pp. 19-20):

(a) The calibre of the students, which it attracts;

(b) The soundness of the theoretical teaching;

(c) The “character and scope of experience the student receives in co-operative work and the extent to which it affords him/her the opportunity to demonstrate his/her ability” (emphasis added).

Co-operative education student numbers grew from a meagre 27 students in 1906 to 3 500 in 1947. In this regard Frederick Geier (1947, p. 24) states: “Industry
welcomes this growth because it values the work of the co-op student, and counts on co-op graduates as a most promising source of superior ability and leadership”.

Well worth revisiting, with regard to the need for growing talent, are the words of Geier documented in 1947: “While the problems of industry have become more complex, there is corresponding room to broaden further the scope of the types of work experience desirable for co-op students, in anticipation of the future demands they surely face” (p. 24). Within the 1946 context of wage-rate increases and the need for attainment of low-unit costs, Geier (1947, p. 26) observes that “[t]hese cannot be overcome except by practical-minded men [and women] who can bring to bear all the latest and best in engineering, in science and in proven operating experience. For a need such as this, what better training could have been devised than co-operative education?”

From a study undertaken of ‘classic’ (by or personally about Schneider) literature it is clear that co-operative education aims to blend theory and practice. Based on the notion of experimentia docet a programme of study also includes workplace experience, meaning that the student goes to industry where experience and practice are observed in a natural state. The practical curriculum is just as carefully worked out as the theoretical curriculum. To ensure that the practical experience is of the highest possible educational value, it needs to be carefully arranged and co-ordinated in an orderly system. Theory is taught first, followed by real-life experience, and in this way theoretical knowledge and practical experience are intimately welded into the most effective tool for today’s work environment.

4.3.2. Subsequent developments of co-operative education

In 1909 the Boston Polytechnic, which later became the Northeastern University, established a co-operative education programme and by 1941 a further 28 institutions had followed suit (Sovilla, 1998). The article ‘Graduates at work’ (1994) and Carlson (1999) report that in 1950 the concept of co-operative education hopped across the Atlantic and started in the Netherlands. In 1956 Canada saw its first co-op programme at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, and Australia in 1962. By 1957, about 60 educational institutions in the United States had adopted co-operative
education. Charles Kettering, a strong advocate of co-operative education, a research director of General Motors Corporation and chair of the Thomas Alva Edison Foundation, initiated the documenting of evidence of co-op’s educational value. This resulted in a publication ‘Work-Study College Programs’ in 1961, which attributed many educational benefits to co-operative education (Sovilla, 1998). With regard to the educational value and educational benefits Ferris (1969, p. 482) highlights the following key advantages:

First its impact on the curriculum. It not only provides the occasion for making changes that have been put off because they require too much work, time, and money, but once a programme is going, a new kind of interplay is set up between campus and community that gives the curriculum a dynamic quality. Students bring something back into the classroom. They confront questions and problems that would not have occurred to them in the classroom alone and bring them back looking for answers and solutions. In the process, the gap between theory and practice narrows. And because practice keeps changing, theory is kept to the test.

The second side advantage is that private industry is brought into the educational process in a meaningful rather than patronizing way. … coordinating a cooperative education program is no simple task, placing students has not been a major problem. The job market — in many ways the most critical aspect of all — has been excellent. (emphasis added).

From the quotations above it is evident that in the late 1960s the educational paradigm co-operative education resulted in a dynamic programme curriculum as well as an interaction between the Higher Education institution and its community. Learners enjoyed the benefit of workplace learning in addition to their formal studies. The job market was seen as a critical aspect and the involvement of private industry in the educational process was emphasised.

The National Commission for Cooperative Education (n.d. Web Page), a private non-profit organisation in the United States of America, was formed in 1962 to promote co-operative education and to raise funds to sustain it (Carlson, 1999; Sovilla, 1998). Through its advocacy towards legislators and societal forces at work, a series of legislation followed which enabled funding for co-operative education to be
accessed. A new federal funding programme in 1976 fuelled major expansion of co-operative education, from 60 institutions in the late 50s and 225 by 1971 to its peak in 1986, when no less than 1 012 institutions in the United States, 97 000 employers and 250 000 students participated in co-operative education (Carlson, 1999, Ellison, n.d.; Sovilla, 1998). The federal subsidy was eliminated in 1996 (Monk, 1999). In contrast, the Ontario Ministry of Finance, in Canada, introduced in 1997 a Co-operative Education Tax Credit (CETC) and the Graduate Transitions Tax Credit (GTTC) to foster youth employment and skills training. It is believed that these refundable tax credits will enable students to gain work experience in particularly leading-edge technology (Ontario, 1997). The article ‘Graduates at work’ (1994) report that the co-operative education philosophy has spread rapidly in Canada, because of its perceived value to employers and students. There are more than 50 000 co-operative education students in Canada at 45 universities and 96 colleges and institutes in most programmes, ranging from computer science to liberal arts and from health studies to engineering.

Despite the major growth that took place in the United States, a lack of co-operative education expertise resulted in four major misjudgements according to Sovilla (1998):

- First, there was an emphasis on increasing student numbers, but inadequate attention was given to quality. This resulted in the collapse of many programmes due to poor design and the insufficient integration into academic and administrative structures.
- Secondly, a ‘campus-wide implementation’ mindset that emphasised implementation of co-operative education throughout institutions, which resulted in co-ordination resources being spread too thinly and an inadequately sustained faculty interest.
- Thirdly, with the rush to get on the bandwagon, institutions failed to recognise that the key success factor of viable co-operative education programmes is faculty ownership of the programme.
- Finally, there was a myth that co-operative education is good for every institution regardless of the institution’s educational philosophy.
These four misjudgements stand in direct opposition to the notion that co-operative education requires the embracing of a new paradigm of firmly and formally integrating relevant work experience into the curriculum.

It is evident that scholars writing about the concept co-operative education have produced a very limited body of knowledge. In this regard Groenewald (2002) points out that there is a close relationship between co-operative education and the marketing concept, and illustrates the value of relevant marketing theory to the practice of co-operative education. Boyd and Walker (1990) assert that the marketing concept entails that an organisation’s primary goal is to render needs satisfying goods or services and in that way maintain a competitive edge. If co-operative education programmes in institutions are to remain relevant, the academic staff concerned must remain in touch with the changing needs of the institution’s client-base. Prinsloo (2002) emphasises this principle and observes that if there is true consumer orientation, exploitation of the consumer is not possible.

It appears that the original Schneider notion of a co-operative system disintegrated. Regarding Sovilla’s (1998) third misjudgement, referred to in a previous paragraph, Smith and Lancaster (1995, p.1) remark that “[a] recurrent theme in the co-op literature is the identification of strategies for integrating cooperative education into the ‘academic mainstream’ of colleges and universities”. They observe the persistence of this theme since 1980. In this regard the Accreditation Council for Cooperative Education (n.d. Web Page) also emphasises faculty involvement as one of the required attributes of co-operative education programmes at colleges and universities. In contrast, Duwart and Canale (1997) remark that co-operative education is often not seen as an educational partnership, whereas it should be. It should integrate cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions. The opposing views are further illuminated by Kerka (1999) who indicates that co-operative education is not regarded as academically legitimate, because it detracts from classroom time. Smith and Lancaster (1995), however, observed that there is substantial evidence suggesting that if faculty were to see co-operative education as an enhancement of classroom learning, they would tend to support it.
From the literature reviewed in this paragraph it appears that the original notion of Schneider may have been derailed.

Regardless of the conceptual drift, the practice of co-operative education has spread internationally. The World Association for Cooperative Education, Inc. (WACE), which began to take shape in 1979, held a meeting of a group of educators from Australia, Britain, Canada and United States, and after the event dubbed it the first world conference on co-operative education (Carlson, 1999). World conferences have subsequently been held every alternate year, and the concept of WACE was born in 1983. Today WACE has more than 900 members from 39 countries (Carlson, 1999; WACE, 2002). Several countries have national associations or societies. Internationally there is a trend to refer to work-integrated-learning (WIL) rather than co-operative education. In this country the Southern African Society for Co-operative Education (SASCE), established in 1985, promotes the practice of co-operative education (SASCE, 2002).

At some institutions experiential learning is a mandatory component, whereas at others it is an elective or even an extension of time on-the-job before graduation. In most cases students work full-time for pay or for a stipend for one or more semesters. Some co-operative education programmes also run parallel to tertiary study schedules (Green, 1997). Kerka (1999) identifies two prominent models, i.e. alternating semesters of academic coursework with equal duration of paid employment and the parallel method that splits the day, usually having morning classes and afternoons of experiential learning.

The original goal of co-operative education was to enhance student learning. Sovilla (1998) remarks that the leaders of many institutions do not seem to appreciate the mission of co-operative education or else choose to ignore it. The co-ordinating and administrative support service must be an integral part of the academic programme that aids the achievement of the curriculum outcomes. However, Kerka (1999) cautions that too much emphasis is placed on job placements instead of learning and calls for a redesign and/or reconceptualisation of co-operative education (i.e. learning from work experience integrated into the curriculum). Kerka (1999) as well as Wilson, Stull and Vinsonhaler (1996) suggest a fresh perspective and definition of
co-operative education as a curriculum model, affirming work-based learning and based on sound adult learning theories and principles such as self-directed learning, reflective learning/practice and transformative learning. Duwart and Canale (1997) recommend a three-phase educational process, i.e. preparation, experience and reflection. However, Finn (1997) suggests it is necessary to go beyond reconceiving to adopting co-operative education as educational strategy.

Furco (1996) and Kerka (1999) indicate that although service learning (learning derived from rendering services related to the course of study) and co-operative education have different goals, the following apply to both:

- active engaging in meaningful work renders the best learning;
- active learners produce knowledge;
- contextual learning in real situations as instructional strategy;
- integration of the two forms of learning; and
- formal partnerships with real-life learning providers.

Kerka (1999, p.3) declares that partnerships should be developed into a supportive culture where “employer support does not have to be repeatedly obtained and there are clearly understood long-term expectations”. The Accreditation Council for Cooperative Education (n.d.) furthermore emphasises employer involvement as one of the required attributes of co-operative education programmes and Reuss (2001) declares partnerships a key component.

Franks (1998) portrays co-operative education as a means for companies to locate, gain access to, and cultivate African Americans and other minority groups (referred to as employment equity candidates in the South African context). With regard to the talent wars he observes that human resource professionals have a never-ending quest to find highly qualified and trained employees, regardless of whether these belong to minority groups. However, he encourages minority students to consider the real advantages of pursuing a co-operative education rather than ordinary study programmes and states that it will improve their access to permanent employment. He posits an alternating model of co-operative education, where a single position is allocated to two students. While the one covers the job, the other attends classes and vice versa.
The institution of origin of co-operative education in the United States, University of Cincinnati, currently refers to *professional practice* (Monk, 1999), an alternate term to co-operative education. This has been widely adopted internationally. Northeastern University (Freeland, 1999) refers to *practice-orientated education* and Murray State University (1998) to *professional experience*. Other terms (Freeland, 1999; Kerka, 1999 and other) that are often used are *interns or internships, externships, summer-hire programs, sandwich degree, work experience, work-based education/learning, service learning, experiential learning programmes, school-to-work, apprenticeship, career academies, on-the-job learning, field placements, field-based learning, job shadowing and co-op.*

The 2003 WACE conference will, according to Hövels (2002), focus on the integration of learning and work in Higher Education. He claims that in a society that progresses towards a knowledge economy, integration (which is the heart of co-operative education) will gain increasing importance. He indicates that knowledge seems to be the new basic resource in societies that are in transition from industry-based economies (physical goods, capital and labour) to knowledge-based economies, as a result of the influence of globalisation and technological renewal. Hövels (2002) highlights the importance of contextualised knowledge through individual competence and asserts that integrated work-based Higher Education will optimise the development of competencies.

To conclude this section: literature reviewed in this chapter indicates that although co-operative education experienced a slow start, its pace increased in the 1960s and 70s and accelerated remarkably in the United States during the 1980s. Federal funding served as a catalyst for this acceleration, but also caused poor design and quality, co-ordination resources which were spread too thinly, inadequate faculty ownership and an inability to fit into the institutional culture. When federal funding was withdrawn in the United States, tax credits were introduced in Canada. Since the 1980s there has been a counter movement in the United States to reposition co-operative education in the academic mainstream, which is one of the key requirements for the accreditation of co-operative education programmes.
It is further evident from the literature reviewed that the practice of co-operative education has spread internationally to 39 countries; that co-operative education takes on various forms and that several alternative terms are in use. Regrettably the leaders of many institutions do not support co-operative education. A need for redesigning or reconceptualising co-operative education, as curriculum model coupled with an emphasis on reflective learning, is advocated. Employer involvement is also strongly advocated. The value of co-operative education in acquiring employment equity candidates and developing their talents is highlighted. The integration of professional practice and educational study is a key to a society that is advancing to a knowledge economy.

The next section will deal with the state of co-operative education in South Africa.

4.3.3. The practice of co-operative education in South Africa

Franks (1998) reports that the World Association for Cooperative Education held its first conference on the continent of Africa in July 1997, in Cape Town. He captures the following description of co-operative education, presented by President Nelson Mandela, who served as the honorary patron of the conference, as “a way to promote a positive work ethic, encourage independent thinking and entrepreneurship, emphasize the responsibilities of leadership and citizenship, and maintain close cooperation with commerce and industry” (p. 3). The following paragraphs serve to either support or challenge this statement.

Steyl, referenced by Van Zyl (1991), indicates that various forms of co-operative education were used in South Africa as early as 1884 in Durban; 1895 in Uitenhage; 1897 in Kimberley, where the SA School of Mines was established; 1902 in East London, and 1903 in Johannesburg, when the SA School of Mines was moved to the Transvaal Technical Institute. These examples suggest that Schneider was not the founder of co-operative education, but according to Van Zyl (1991) Schneider introduced a new era of the construct ‘co-operative education’, in that it became commonly known.
Van Zyl (1991) also points out that the Van Wyk de Vries Commission’s investigation in 1974 into university education in South Africa revealed a shortcoming with regard to the absence of vocationally focused tertiary education institutions. A number of colleges for advanced technical education (considered quasi-tertiary institutions at the time) were converted to technikons to provide in this need. Van Zyl (1991) argues that co-operative education lends itself as an ideal educational approach for technikons to comply with their original brief to provide vocationally-oriented tertiary education.

Swart (1991) concurs with Van Zyl and reports that technikon education is primarily based on the practice of co-operative education. Swart (1991) remarks that co-operative education means the integration of education and workplace training in order to produce vocationally-ready graduates. Swart supports his view with the Technikon Witwatersrand mission statement of 1988, and a statement made by Meiring & Jacobs (representing the views of the former Certification Council for Technikon Education) in 1985, that technikon education is primarily based on the practice of co-operative education. Co-operative education is emphasised as a foundation principle (or philosophy) of technikon education in the provision of human resources required by the business community. Swart (1991) emphasises the notion of immediate productive readiness of technikon graduates to enter the vocation for which they were educated. In the next paragraph, research findings contrary to these views are presented.

Both van der Merwe (1988) and Swart (1991) found that the ideals of co-operative education are not fulfilled in its current form. Van der Merwe (1988) remarks that co-operative education has not adequately materialised in secretarial programmes offered at technikons. Swart (1991) notes that in contradiction to the educational philosophy outlined in the previous paragraph, environmental health graduates continually require retraining upon entering into employment and that the educational philosophy of technikons is unfounded. Groenewald, Strümpher & Lessing (2001) report that some technikon academic staff are of the opinion that co-operative education is a noble idea, but that it is not quite feasible and that there is little supportive enthusiasm among technikon academics and management for the practice of co-operative education.
Despite these research findings, the Department of Education’s New Academic Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in Higher Education (Republic of South Africa, 2002a, Ch 7, p. 12), generally referred to as NAP, states the following about the practice of co-operative education in South Africa:

As higher education institutions respond to the White Paper’s social responsibility and citizenship development agenda, experiential learning is likely to become a more common feature of the higher education curriculum in the future. Increasingly, higher education institutions will be obliged to form co-operative partnerships with the public and private sectors, and with local professions and communities, in order to deliver graduates and research outputs that meet the needs of society and the economy. The White Paper goes so far as to suggest that in the South African context, community service could become an overarching strategy for the transformation of the higher education system.

It is important to note in the section of the quote above that NAP foresees experiential learning and community service increasingly becoming a feature of Higher Education. Institutions will furthermore be obliged to form co-operative partnerships in order to meet the needs of society and the economy.

Co-operative education and experiential learning are terms used by the technikon sector to describe the integration of ‘productive work’ into the career-focused curriculum. Traditionally, university professional programmes have required students to complete practical components, variously termed ‘clinicals’, ‘practicums’, ‘pracs’, etc. Community-based learning or service learning are terms recently introduced to the university sector’s vocabulary to describe learning in a local community context, often with a community service ethos.

In this section of the quotation NAP differentiates between co-operative education and the practical components of professional programmes. Service learning is also emphasised. The last section of the quotation (emphasis added) gives NAP’s perspective of what co-operative education entails.
Co-operative education aims to prepare a technikon graduate for a particular vocation or profession. It is based on a co-operative partnership between a technikon, an employer and a student, which allows the student to experience a work placement, usually in industry, commerce or the public sector, under the supervision of a mentor. The concept of co-operative education is based on the application of the theory and knowledge learnt in the technikon classroom, and the development of practical skills using recent technology and techniques in a real workplace context. The technikon movement also emphasizes the importance of the experiential learning that occurs in these contexts for the development of attitudes such as responsible citizenship and professional ethics. Student progress in experiential learning is usually assessed via the use of logbooks, project reports, student interviews and a report from the mentor. The technikon movement insists that the academic and experiential components of its curriculum are inter-dependent, and that together they provide a learning experience adequate to meeting the demands specified in the learning outcomes of technikon programmes and qualifications.

In addition to the quotation from NAP it is important to take note of the perspective of the Committee of Technikon Principals (CTP), a co-ordinating and strategic policy-making body comprising the vice-chancellors and other senior management representatives from technikons in South Africa. The CTP regard co-operative education as “a powerful element in the Technikon education paradigm, allowing students to benefit from both formal education and training at Technikons along with first-hand work experience in the marketplace” (CTP Web Page, n.d.). The CTP further professes that industry and commerce are vital partners and are directly involved in the planning of technikon programmes in order to ensure continuous relevance. The CTP also professes that it is a requirement that all students undergo experiential or on-the-job training as part of their study programme. However, in reality many technikon programmes do not include an experiential learning component. Many university programmes, on the other hand, for example in the fields of medicine, nursing and social work are exemplary of good co-operative education practice.
In conclusion: this section on the practice of co-operative education in South Africa starts with a statement made at the 1997 world conference on co-operative education, held in Cape Town. This is followed by some historical references about the practice of co-operative education in South Africa and thereafter an investigation that gave rise to the introduction of technikons. Next, literature is reviewed that substantiates the fact that technikon education is firmly grounded in the principles of co-operative education. Thereafter research findings to the opposite are reviewed, followed by a quotation from NAP once again confirming that co-operative education is firmly part of technikon education. This is reaffirmed by reference to the CTP’s views.

The next section of the literature review looks at the dysfunctional state of Higher Education in South Africa. The reader should read this with the previous chapter in mind, in particular 3.4, where the need for growing people talent in South Africa is reviewed.

4.4. A SYNOPSIS OF THE DYSFUNCTIONAL STATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

In the foreword of the Ministry of Education notice (Republic of South Africa, 2002d) titled ‘Transformation and restructuring: a new institutional landscape for Higher Education’ the Minister of Education, Prof Kader Asmal, remarks:

The origins of the current institutional structure of the higher education system can be traced to the geo-political imagination of apartheid’s master planner, Hendrik Verwoerd, and his reactionary ideological vision of “separate but equal development”. This was given effect through the enactment in 1959 of the Universities Extension Act, which far from extending access to higher education on the basis of the universal values intrinsic to higher education restricted access on race and ethnic lines. Its main purpose was two-fold. First to ensure that the historically white institutions served the educational, ideological, political, cultural, social and economic needs of white South Africa. Second, to establish institutions that would produce a pliant and subservient class of educated black people to service the fictional homelands
of apartheid’s imagination. In this aim it failed miserably. The institutions became hotbeds of student resistance, which ultimately contributed to apartheid’s demise.

However, the apartheid legacy continues to burden the higher education system, which not only remains fragmented on race lines, but has been unable to rise fully to meet the challenges of reconstruction and development.

The university counterpart of the CTP, the South African Universities’ Vice-Chancellors Association (SAUVCA) corroborates the above remarks of the Minister of Education. SAUVCA (n.d. Web Page) gives a brief history of South African universities, which illustrates the origin of the dysfunctionality. South Africa’s first university, the University of the Cape of Good Hope, was established in 1873. It later became the University of South Africa (UNISA). In 1916 missionaries established the South African Native College, which became the University of Fort Hare in 1951. In 1959, by which time several universities had been established, the Extension of University Education Act, designed to exclude black students from historically white institutions (HWIs), was passed. Racially segregated ‘non-white’ universities: Durban-Westville, Western Cape, Zululand and the North, were established instead. During the height of Apartheid universities were established in the self-governing territories of Transkei, Venda and Bophuthaswana. A number of other universities were established in the twenty-year period between mid-1960s and mid-1980s, totalling twenty-one universities in South Africa. SAUVCA (n.d. Web Page) also mentions the gradual ‘racial opening up’ of HWIs. By the late eighties 150 000 white and 120 000 black, coloured and Asian students were studying at universities. By 1999 the order reversed to 207 000 black and 122 000 white students.

The Council on Higher Education (Republic of South Africa, 2000b) indicated the critical role Higher Education must play with regard to socio-economic development, and that the wealth or poverty of the South African people depends on the nature of the Higher Education in the country. In this regard the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) (Republic of South Africa, 2000c, p. 6) remarks that a symptom of the dysfunctionality of Higher Education in South Africa is the practice that the creators of knowledge and its guardians tended to be the same people, i.e. “those
responsible for deciding what learners should learn have in most instances been the same people responsible for learning programme development and delivery as well as those responsible for deciding whether that delivery process is of quality”. In this regard SAQA asserts that the fundamental challenge that the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) presents to educators is participatory and representative decision-making with regard to educational programmes. Again the relevance of marketing principles is raised. Wasmer, Williams and Stevenson (1997) state that Higher Education institutions increasingly adopt marketing principles. They assert that it is not advisable for an institution to attempt to reach the total market, because the total market is too heterogeneous.

Even before the first democratic elections in 1994, education and training in South Africa was challenged. Volumes of discussion documents, green papers, white papers and some Bills culminated in the Higher Education Act (Republic of South Africa, 1997) which set the legislative framework for transforming and reconfiguring Higher Education in South Africa.

The National Plan for Higher Education (Republic of South Africa, 2001b) indicates that one of the challenges facing Higher Education in South Africa is the development of human talent within a knowledge-driven world. The National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) further claims that its publication brings to a close a consultative process that started in July 1999. The NPHE covers a wide spectrum of challenges and priorities. However, co-operative education is not mentioned at all. The contribution of the educational strategy of co-operative education appears not to have been considered. This is regarded an unfortunate oversight.

In contrast to the strong emphasis the NPHE places on inter-institutional collaboration there is no mention of provider-client collaboration. Barnes and Phillips (2000) as well as Blackburn and Fryer (1996) demonstrate that a partnership between industry and Higher Education could render remarkable performance improvements. In this regard Blackburn and Fryer (1996), Doncaster (2000) and Stephen et al. (1997) highlight the value of work-based learning. Doncaster (p. 349) further emphasises the "increasing importance of knowledge as a type of 'capital'
required by organisations to ensure their survival”; the need for partnerships with education providers and the need for continuous learning.

The New Academic Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in Higher Education (NAP) (Republic of South Africa, 2002a) highlights the demands on and expectations of Higher Education with regard to enabling South Africa to compete globally in the knowledge society. NAP contextualises the Higher Education of 2002 in South Africa in terms of the origin and development of Higher Education internationally. The Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) Round Table (2000) echoes NAP and points out that many countries recognise Higher Education institutions as major economic resources.

NAP further states that co-operative education is a term "used by the technikon sector to describe the integration of ‘productive work’ into a career-focused curriculum" (Chapter 7, p. 12). However, the term co-operative education originated from the University of Cincinnati and is internationally the educational strategy of many university programmes. In addition to the 'co-operative education' nature of the professional programmes of South African universities, many programmes at universities are offered in close collaboration with and tailored to the needs of clients from industry.

Unfortunately NAP does not explicitly recognise the contribution that co-operative education can make in growing talent. This is probably due to the inadequate development of co-operative education theory, the inadequate accrual of literature and inadequate research undertaken, both locally and internationally.

4.5. SUMMARY

Because Chapters 3 and 4 together paint the literature backdrop of the arena of this research, a summary of both chapters is given.

Chapters 3 commences with reviewing literature pertaining to the international battle for talent and the need for the growing of talent. The significance of talent for business and why it is an important Human Resources Management issue is
outlined. Various manifestations of talent are also presented. A literature review follows, dealing with the need for growing talent in South Africa, with specific reference to making a contribution toward the African Renaissance. Chapter 3 is concluded with a review of the literature outlining the advantages of Higher Education and business, forming alliances in developing talent. The role of corporate universities is also mentioned.

Chapter 4 commences with an attempt to define co-operative education, followed by a brief overview of the historical developments of Higher Education in general. The origins and fundamentals the United States accepted founder of co-operative education is presented. The literature review further presents an outline of international developments in the period from the start of the last century until the present. This is followed by a brief literature review dealing with the practice of co-operative education in South Africa. The literature reviews conclude with an overview of the dysfunctionality of Higher Education in South Africa. International writers' views regarding the value derived from tertiary institution partnerships with industry are given and the proposed value of co-operative education is indicated.

The following chapter contains the research findings of this study. Since it is a qualitative, and in particular a phenomenological study, there is extensive representation of the voices of the subjects.
CHAPTER 5

THE PRACTICE OF CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION BY PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN GAUTENG

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2 the research design of this study was explained. Chapters 3 and 4 respectively presented the literature reviews relevant to this study. This chapter (Chapter 5) presents a review of the data gathered and an explicitation of the data in this study. More specifically the following aspects are dealt with in this chapter: (a) the process of identifying the research subjects or participants, (b) the range of research subjects and scope of the present study, (c) a composite summary of the individual interviews, (d) a relatively detailed account of minority voices or unique themes raised during the data collection, (e) an explanation of the South African Department of Labour ‘learnerships’ mechanisms, and (f) an account of the perspectives of some participants in co-operative education programmes.

5.2. IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH SUBJECTS

Although the list of members of the Southern African Society for Co-operative Education (SASCE) is available, the researcher decided against using it to select research subjects. The reasons are firstly, because SASCE members may perceive the phenomenon researched in an unrealistically positive light and therefore interviews restricted to a number of members of the society may produce a ‘halo effect’. Secondly, most members are technikon employees, which excludes university perspectives. Further most technikons have a central co-operative education department which is concerned with the co-ordination of experiential learning placements of students and the staff of these departments (mainly members...
of the society) are generally administrators without academic responsibility. One can therefore conclude that by using only the list of SASCE members for the selection of subjects, it may impact negatively on the validity of the study. A more objective selection process was therefore decided upon.

The purpose of the study is to determine what contribution co-operative education, as practised by Higher Education institutions in Gauteng, can make in growing the talent of the South African people. Therefore in keeping with Hycner’s (1999) viewpoint that the research method and type of participant is dictated by the phenomenon researched, the identification of subjects started at the offices of the Academic Vice-Principals of public Higher Education institutions in the Gauteng Province. There are six universities and five technikons based in the Gauteng Province. One university and one technikon are using a distance teaching mode, whereas the remainder are residential institutions. Many have multiple satellite campuses. The Gauteng public Higher Education institutions are:

- Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA)
- Rand Afrikaans University (RAU)
- University of Pretoria (UP)
- University of South Africa (UNISA) — Distance education mode
- University of Witwatersrand (WITS)
- Vista University
- Technikon Northern Gauteng
- Technikon Pretoria
- Technikon Southern Africa (TSA) — Distance education mode
- Technikon Witwatersrand (TWR)
- Vaal Triangle Technikon

The experiences with regard to the identification of the interviewees described in this and the next paragraph are considered significant with regard to the present study. The offices of the Academic Vice-Principals were contacted telephonically and the reason for the calls was given as identifying suitable persons to interview as part of a D Phil research project; studying existing joint ventures between Higher Education institutions and enterprises in order to educate people to improve (grow) their talent. In some cases the office of the Academic Vice-Principal immediately referred the call
to appropriate people who would be available. However, in some cases the enquiry was referred from pillar to post with no success at all. In one instance the enquiry was referred to the Continued Education Department. Another institution referred the enquiry to the unit responsible for co-operative education co-ordination. One institution requested a formal letter of request addressed to the Academic Vice-Principal. The person responsible for experiential learning placements at the institution responded to this formal request. In some cases there was complete incomprehension.

The experiences described in the previous paragraph are considered significant in the light of Chapter 7 of the New Academic Policy (Republic of South Africa, 2002a, Chapter 7) which indicates that professional programmes at universities traditionally require students to complete practical components or clinical training. However, it appears that the secretaries of the Academic Vice-Principals at universities are generally not aware of the collaboration of various academic departments with enterprises in offering education. In the light of the importance of the office of the Vice-Principal Academic, one would assume secretaries to be informed about this matter. Their ignorance may suggest that collaboration and joint ventures are not perceived as important parts of the institutional culture or mission of universities. Secondly, the New Academic Policy asserts that the technikon sector uses the term co-operative education to describe the integration of ‘productive work’ into the career-focused curriculum of a programme. However, it appears that the secretaries of the Academic Vice-Principals at technikons do not perceive collaboration and joint ventures with enterprises in offering technikon programmes to be part of the established technikon culture or mission. Assuming again the importance of the offices of the Vice-Principals Academic, it can be construed from the ignorance of their secretaries that collaboration and joint ventures with enterprises are not perceived as important aspects of the teaching culture of the technikons in Gauteng.

In 2.5.1 the requirements for selecting research subjects is explained in detail. Suffice to point out at this point that Boyd (2001) and Creswell (1998) recommend that for a phenomenological study, a maximum of ten people should be interviewed. Purposive sampling was used to identify five interviewees based at Higher Education institutions. Sufficient interviewees were identified for the purposes of this research,
and a few were held in reserve should anyone cancel. The snowball sampling to identify enterprise-based collaborators in education, described in 2.5.1, did not quite materialise as planned. It happened coincidentally that the first educational institution-based interviewee (grouping A to E in the left-column of table 5.1) was linked to two of the commerce and/or government-based interviewees (grouping F to J in the columns on the right of table 5.1). The first represents true snowballing, which in turn led to interviewing a ‘learnership’ contact person\(^2\). Bogdan and Taylor (1975, p. 103) observe that subjects often ‘emerge’ in the course of the researcher’s activities, which is what happened here. A research subject mentions or emphasises something, which prompts the researcher to explore the lead. The remaining three commerce and/or industry-based interviewees were identified based on the researcher’s initiative, knowledge of joint ventures and the researcher’s judgement. One of the three happened to be a client of the first educational institution-based interviewee.

5.3. RANGE OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS AND SCOPE OF DATA

Table 5.1: The range of subjects or participants interviewed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational institution based interviewees represented the following fields or disciplines:</th>
<th>Commerce, industry and/or government based interviewees represented the following fields or disciplines:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Human resources/personnel management and general middle-management education.</td>
<td>F. General management development for local government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Project management.</td>
<td>G. Commercial and financial accounting services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Senior and middle general management development.</td>
<td>H. Construction and civil engineering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Marketing and management sciences.</td>
<td>I. Science, technology, engineering and minerals research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Information technology.</td>
<td>J. Travel, tourism and public transportation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^2\)The term ‘learnership’ is significant for this study and is explained later in this chapter.
Table 5.1 represents the ten research subjects or participants interviewed for this study. They span a considerable range of fields or disciplines\(^3\). The alphabet letters in this chapter serve to identify the subjects. Letters are used in view of ethical considerations to protect the identity of participants and their employers, and will be used henceforth in this chapter to identify the origin of perspectives shared by different subjects.

Table 5.2 represents a bird's-eye view of the scope of the perspectives that emerged from the data collection. The table is presented here as an overview of the rich qualitative data presented in 5.5 through to 5.14. The themes that emerged are in column 1 in the table and the research subjects from which the themes originated are indicated with ticks in the relevant columns.

Table 5.2: The scope of the qualitative data collected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes that emerged</th>
<th>Research subjects (see table 5.1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum adaptation to fit corporate needs is enabled by collaboration between Higher Education institutions and enterprises. Formal bureaucracy disempowers, whereas entrepreneurial freedom empowers. (5.5)</td>
<td>A B C D E F G H I J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓      ✓      ✓      ✓      ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The functioning of advisory committees leaves a lot to be desired. (5.6)</td>
<td>✓      ✓      ✓      ✓      ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The benefits of learning from work placements are undermined as a result of a lack of opportunities and support from providers. (5.7)</td>
<td>✓      ✓      ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views varied regarding the certification of in-service training providers. Monitoring of experiential learning providers seems problematic. Structured in-house programmes appear to work fine. (5.8)</td>
<td>✓      ✓      ✓      ✓      ✓      ✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table continues on the next page.

\(^3\)Please refer to table 5.1 for brief descriptions.
### Themes that emerged (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A “talent pool” is formed by offering in-service training programmes. (5.9)</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>J</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Learnerships’ are an important element of the South African government skills development strategy. (5.10)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring plays a significant role in work-based learning, as well as at post-graduate level. (5.11)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning is accelerated when real work is expected from learners. (5.12)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-based learning offers learners the opportunity to clarify their career choice. (5.13)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators and mentors should always take into consideration that although they are synchronously in a situation with learners from another generation their world-views are dissimilar to those of the learners. (5.14)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As explained in Chapter 2 the explicitation of the data of each interview involves four phases, i.e. (a) phenomenological reduction, (b) delineation of units of meaning, (c) clustering of meaning into themes, and (d) summarising. Upon completion of the explicitation of each, the text produced was returned to the interviewee to check validity, after which any relevant changes suggested were made. In two cases minor modifications were made to bring out certain aspects of the subject’s perspective of the phenomenon. As mentioned before, the explicitation is concluded with a composite summary, which reflects the context or the horizon from which the themes emerged (the expression of the perspectives regarding the phenomenon by the ten subjects or informants). This composite summary is presented next, whereafter the ten themes outlined in table 5.2 are presented.
5.4. COMPOSITE SUMMARY

A wide spectrum of perspectives was found regarding the phenomenon of joint educational ventures and the perceived value derived from such collaborative efforts. Among others, the significant role of mentors and the importance of a suitable mentor supervising work-based learning stood out. Associated with this was the importance of commitment by employers and the capacity to devote managerial energy. However, difficulty was experienced in finding suitable experiential learning opportunities. The perception existed that experiential learning does not add value because of deficiencies of experiential learning and the constraints experienced regarding its proper management. However, based on the good results derived from in-service training and satisfaction with the integration of theory and practice, an opposing perspective was encountered. Learnerships as element of the National Skills Development Strategy were further perceived important and contributing to society at large. Another important perspective was the required responsiveness by educational institutions to the needs of enterprises. Although some educational partnerships tailored to organisational needs existed, the failure of educational institutions and inflexibility of partnerships were also prevalent.

The composite summary above only reflects the themes that are common to most or all of the interviews. As already indicated in Chapter 2, individual variations or unique themes (Hycner, 1999) are as important as commonalities with regard to the phenomenon researched. The remainder of this chapter will present the minority voices or important counterpoints, as well as triangular data.

5.5. ADAPTATION OF THE CURRICULUM TO CORPORATE NEEDS ENABLED BY COLLABORATION (Theme 1 of 10)

With regard to the importance of collaboration between enterprises and educational institutions, one enterprise-based research participant, subject J, declares that “institutions have their curriculum outlined and corporate world has certain expectations, but the two do not really meet, however, we experienced that we could sit down with the staff of [a certain public Higher Educational institution] and tell them what we as an organisation need” (name of the institution substituted due to research ethical considerations). The
educational counterpart, subject A, proclaims in this regard that “programmes developed specifically for industry ... came about as result of the inflexibility of the institution’s formal programmes in relation to the changing needs in the market”. Subject A further indicates that their institutional structure makes provision for both the formal and industry-specific programmes and points out that “in the recent past they experienced an incredible growth of these types of programmes”. Subject A asserts that inflexible national educational structures do not accommodate rising industry needs and mentions that “one of the biggest problems currently in South Africa is the inflexibility of formal programmes”. A client of this institution, industry-based subject F, emphasises that “consultants and institutions must realise that organisations do have internal expertise and that a predetermined comprehensive programme presented as the only answer is not acceptable”, and adds that “there is no longer room for arrogance and a knowing it all attitude”. Subject F indicates that a broad framework, which may be adapted to organisational needs and to partnerships, is expected. Their organisation undertook a major needs analysis, which among other things, involved position profiles and determining key competencies. They seek an educational partner to address some of these needs.

In contrast to the informal programmes mentioned in the latter half of the previous paragraph, enterprise-based subject G experiences institutions as inflexible and remarks that “[u]nfortunately the technikons do not see the urgency as the companies see it, technikons are quite happy to carry on until they hit a brick wall and then they change”. Subject G observes that although “[s]ome institutions do work in close collaboration with industry with regard to formal programmes other institutions have a ‘take it or leave it’ attitude, fall in or leave it (‘val in, of dis jou indaba’)” and is of opinion that “[a]cademic staff largely remain in their comfort zones”. It is subject G’s experience “that if there is a training need in the organisation and the technikon is approached that it is most difficult for the technikon personnel to develop the required training”. Academic staff need to be coerced to create something, observes subject G, and “[i]f they do it is largely confined to cutting and pasting extracts from the curriculum (‘spoeg en plak’)” (the subject used the Afrikaans phrase during the interview and subsequently verified the translation).
Subject A suggests that it is mainly staff functions, such as administration, that are totally inflexible but also academics clinging to the functions associated with formal programmes. However, this person’s institution supports and accommodates entrepreneurial initiatives. The inflexibility versus the entrepreneurial supportive environment forms encouraging and restraining forces at work within the institution. Subject A motions that “a culture of entrepreneurship needs to be established at Higher Education institutions” and a consulting mindset espoused among academics. Subject A explains that the curriculum of formal programmes may serve as ‘spine’ or broad mental framework with which to approach the client. This idea is echoed by the views of subject F. According to subject A “what makes these programmes ‘powerful’ (ongelooflik ‘krag’ gee — the subject spoke Afrikaans during the interview and subsequently verified the translation) is the fact that they are practice-orientated. The secret of these programmes lies in the marrying of training and education. The consultant role of the programme manager is the key”. Subject A explains that they do not create programmes and try to ‘sell’ these or wait for enrolments in response to institutional advertising”, whereas programme development should be seen as a joint venture with the client.

The use of the Afrikaans word ‘krag’ (normally meaning strength, force, vigour, power, might, energy, muscle or intensity [Reader’s Digest Dictionary, 1984, p. 273]) is considered odd in the context of educational programmes. The Afrikaans explanatory dictionary HAT (2000, p. 611) gives *inter alia* the following meanings:

- Sterkte van liggaam, fisieke vermoë of geestelike vermoë (bodily, physical or spiritual strength)
- Oorsake wat beweging bring (causes for bringing about movement)
- Geestelike, sedelike en fisieke vermoëns, as geheel (spiritual, moral/ethical and physical strength, holistically)

HAT further elucidates the word to mean increased success or influence (van krag tot krag gaan); ability to sustain difficulty (krag na kruis); enforced retrospectively (met terugwerkende krag); authorised (uit krag van); valid/binding (van krag wees); and enforced by law or legal (krag van die wet).

Subsequently the word ‘krag’ was also used in a discussion at the researcher’s educational institution about co-operative education programmes. Upon inquiry the
user explained the use of the word ‘krag’ versus ‘mag’ (authority), used in a negative sense implying the need for empowerment and taking possession of, or usurping. In this regard subject A observes that “the existing national curriculum does not allow for tailoring the curriculum to the geographical client-base” and that “the formal national technikon and Department of Education structures, and even the National Qualifications Framework systems, impose restrictions”. Subject A asserts that “one is restricted by institutional rules and regulations (e.g. examination code, when registration takes place, when examinations are written), a rigidity that makes sense for bureaucracy of big institutions and large student populations”. However, subject A adds “for an employer with specific educational/training needs, that exists for a number of employees, these restrictions just do not make sense”. In addition to the formal programme structures, the institution of subject A makes provision for ‘centres of excellence’ that “do not make use of the institution’s staff [administration] component, but function as an independent business unit — a little enterprise linked to the institution but self-sufficient, with own financial and administrative systems”. Subject A adds with excitement that “another function that the centres of excellence undertake is to accredit [do quality assurance and issue certificates] industry-training initiatives, which often results in rendering advisory services to enterprises and/or collaborative training interventions”.

From the aforementioned views of participants it appears that the structures and systems associated with formal Higher Education programmes (technikons in particular) obstruct flexibility and responsiveness to organisational needs. The integration of learning from productive experiences and the theoretical curriculum of programmes therefore appear, according to the interviewees, to be difficult to achieve. However, it seems that research participants believed that if formal programmes are set aside and entrepreneurial initiatives enabled, it appears possible for educational institutions to address the needs of enterprises. It is important to note that formal programme mechanisms appear incapable of catering for collaborative programmes.

5.6. FUNCTIONING OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES (Theme 2 of 10)

In contrast to the participants’ views presented in the previous paragraph, i.e. that the Higher Education structures and systems appear to obstruct responsiveness to
organisational needs, the literature review (see Chapter 4, under the sub-heading ‘The practice of co-operative education in South Africa’) reveals that the Committee of Technikon Principals (CTP) claims that commerce and industry are directly involved in the planning of technikon programmes. The instruments to reach the client-base are found in programme advisory committees. However, the research participants suggest that the functioning of advisory committees leaves a lot to be desired.

Subject H often experienced “attendance of advisory committee meetings as being ill informed about preceding actions”. Subject H further observes that “[a] diverse grouping of people representing diverse organisations attends and needs to arrive at decisions, as a result people waffle”. It is the experience of subject G that advisory committees primarily serve the purpose of sharing technikon information with commerce and industry. Subject E corroborates this by acknowledging that although an advisory committee exists for their programme it “[s]ometimes meets once a year or once every two years, you tell industry what you are doing and they say great!” Subject E admits that the interaction has not been close and that involvement should be closer, but raises the following problem:

_The problem, however, is that every company you talk to sees things from their perspective. If you then take a particular course of action, favouring one company above another, it creates stresses and next time you want to hold an advisory committee meeting some may feel you discarded their idea. As academic you need to be very careful, because people get upset about things for their companies. There is sometimes a lot of controversy in industry among different application groupings. There is sometimes a need for teaching and education for opposing sub-fields. Tertiary institutions are sometimes better placed with regard to teaching one particular sub-field. This sometimes requires a lot of thinking and consideration._

Subject E further describes the following problems:

_Members of advisory bodies in the business sciences are often not well qualified, if at all. They are invited because of their stature in industry, but are possibly a little scared because they may be questioned on their qualifications. The meetings are very formal, people are invited, the staff dress smartly, there is an agenda, tea and cake. A_
senior member of staff chairs the meeting. Members are expected to know the programme. You invite Mr X for Company Z and on short notice Ms Y is sent just to attend, who does not know what it is about. Often there is no continuity. It is thus difficult to be informal if you do not know the people. Members that represent sub-fields do not know one another and are often of opposing companies. Formal meetings are therefore necessary.

From the data collected it is evident that the CTP’s ideals with regard to the functioning of advisory committees, do not necessary materialise. However, in contrast, subject B (university-based) claims that regarding their research advisory board “members are consulted in the research strategy of the departments involved and what needs to be researched” and adds that “[t]here is an inclination towards applied rather than basic research”.

5.7. THE UNDERMINING OF BENEFITS OF WORK PLACEMENTS (Theme 3 of 10)

Subject E professes that “the co-operative education model sparked the idea” and ‘thinks that it works very, very effectively”. This model, the origins, subsequent developments and existing practice are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Subject E acknowledges that because being based at a technikon the “thinking has always been that … we should formally integrate this work-based learning into the curriculum” and anticipates that “one day somebody is going to observe ‘excuse me but’ …?” This statement should be viewed in the light of the statement by the Committee of Technikon Principals (see Chapter 4) that all students undergo experiential or on-the-job training as part of their study programme.

It is the experience of subject E that in the field that she is responsible for “it is possible to get placements for students … almost effortlessly”. In contrast subject D finds that “the institution struggles to place students”. Their experience is that “employers no longer want to take students, due to resource constraints, mainly no longer having money to remunerate students but also not having people available/willing to mentor students”. Subject D is of opinion that “engineering programmes have a long-standing relationship with industry and thus finding placements for students is relatively easy, however, finding
placements for management sciences students is problematic; it is a foreign idea to employers”. This perspective is emphasised by Kerka (1999) by mentioning the creation of a supportive culture among employers (see Chapter 4). It is this researcher’s opinion that such a culture does not yet exist in many fields and for that reason difficulties are encountered when trying to find workplace experiential learning opportunities.

Subject B submits that “[t]he principle of work integrated learning is laudable and the concept is sound” but that “[s]ignificant industry experience at under-graduate level is practically problematic”. Subject B further contends that “[a]n extremely sensitive and willing industry partner is necessary to make reaching out activities, practical projects and vacation work successful” and observes that “the success of learning from work experience is fully dependant on the fact if an industry partner is supportive and available, that has the time and energy at management level to make this learning happen”. With regard to the latter subject B asserts that “[i]f not, the two weeks practical here and the three weeks there, that students may spend in industry have very little value” and supports the argument with the following:

To release students at a factory or to give them to a foreman is largely a waste of time. They can at most observe, walk around and look at how things work, what it looks like, what the atmosphere is like and what the workers are doing. Their experience would be limited; observing a factory as ‘a noise and a happening’.

A student would only get exposure to the mental processes behind the business activity, the management process that plan it and make it work, the governance processes and the human resource policy if the student can engage in penetrating interaction with the management of the factory. Regrettably members of management are never available and do not have the time, with the result that they abdicate the training responsibility to a technical foreman, who maintains the students by keeping them busy with all kinds of minor tasks.

From subject B’s perspectives it can be inferred that the failure of workplace management, or non-availability, to devote time and energy defeats the potential benefits of work-based learning.
Subject I points out that “[t]echnikons perform a certification activity of in-service training providers, because technikons are anxious that students would not just sit around”. In contrast subject G complains that “there is a big gap between the tertiary institutions and business with regard to what is expected and what happens in experiential learning”. Whereas, according to subject I, “the convenor technikon initially gave the organisation a hard time” prior to accrediting the enterprise as in-service training provider. Subject G says “the technikon is inclined to approve the experiential learning very easily”. Subject D explains that at their institution “the academic staff assess the employers [only] after about two to three years of making experiential learning opportunities available and if satisfied with the maintaining of standards present the employer with a certificate of approval.”

With regard to the monitoring of experiential learning, subject G observes that the “technikon does send somebody out once during a semester to interview, talkabout and see if experiential learning takes place correctly (‘kyk of dit reg geskied’), however, it is still very unstructured (‘dit is nog baie los’). Subject G pronounces, among others, monetary implications as a reason for this slackness, but also “that the organisation that employs the learner is foremost production-orientated, and less training-orientated” and elaborates:

Students are essentially cheap labour (‘dis basies goedkoop arbeid’). The organisation will use the learner as efficiently as possible for production purposes. Training is consequential and production the purpose (‘daar is ‘n uitvloeisel van opleiding daaruit’). There is a big deficiency (‘groot leemte’) in this regard.

Subject I remarks that their organisation finds in-service training students most valuable. However, students undergo a general training programme with an “in-depth grounding of a particular workplace” in the organisation of subject I. Previously students gained exposure to a variety of organisational settings. However, “[i]t has been found that it is too complicated to rotate students, they’ve hardly found their feet when they needed to move on and the organisation cannot afford having people around dangerous processes and equipment if they are not familiar with the safety procedures”. The
organisation furthermore has two dedicated staff members whose duties among others include overseeing the in-service training of students.

With regard to overseeing in-service training, subject C (institution-based) emphasises that the co-ordination responsibilities of in-house programmes (that is, formal tertiary programmes presented within or for a specific enterprise, instead of a public programme that is open to anyone to apply) are generally shared between the academic programme or project manager and a programme co-ordinator appointed by the enterprise. In contrast, subject F (enterprise-based) asserts that “the client must accept full responsibility for what happens internally”. The nuance difference between these two cases is that subject C refers to a ‘product’ presented in-house and the co-ordinator aiding the programme manager, whereas subject F refers to an enterprise programme that makes use of institution expertise. The dedicated trainers mentioned in the previous paragraph are exemplary of enterprises that take charge of the experiential learning component of co-operative education programmes. In contrast, subject G’s enterprise has a far less structured approach.

When comparing the five scenarios (views of subjects C and D that are institution-based, and subjects F, G and I that are enterprise-based) to the fundamentals of co-operative education, outlined in Chapter 2, only subject F’s scenario represents good co-operative education practice. Only subject F’s scenario is indicative of managed integration of theory and practice. Another example of managed integration of theory and practice is subject J’s scenario, which is mentioned under the heading dealing with collaboration to adapt the curriculum as well as mentioned under the next heading. It is important to note that both subjects F and J are enterprise-based. Instead, one would have expected that the views of institution-based participants would have reflected good co-operative education practice.

5.9. CREATING A ‘TALENT POOL’ (Theme 5 of 10)

Both subjects I and J remarked that in-service training programmes offer enterprises the opportunity to get to know the performance of people in training. This knowledge enables enterprises to make informed choices regarding whom to consider for future employment. Subject J says “[w]e created a talent pool, if there is a vacancy we know
whom to employ”. Subject J explains that a curriculum vitae can be deceiving “a person may have high marks, but in applying her/himself in a particular situation the person may not fit”. The money that would have been spent on recruiting is rather spent on training. Subject J asserts that “[w]e further do not have to use strangers because we know that we already have a pool of people, whom we know that they have this particular course, have this particular experience or that they have being exposed to this particular field” and concludes that “[i]t makes it easier for the organisation to have a pool”. When asked what the meaning of the term ‘talent pool’ is, subject J responded:

The term ‘talent pool’ means people with abilities, or hidden talent that the organisation needs. It is our duty, as an organisation, to unleash and expose that hidden talent. It is not a matter of not having the ability, the opportunities were just not available to those people. The organisation felt that it needed to do it to the society and also to us.

The literature review (Chapter 3) revealed conflicting views regarding ‘unleashing hidden talent’ versus ‘immense conscious practice’ regardless of talent. However, literature suggests that inherent talent is developed through a laborious process.

5.10. LEARNERSHIPS: AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (Theme 6 of 10)

Mdladlana (2002, p. 17), the South African Minister of Labour, states that the country has “dire skills shortages: employers find it hard to find the skills they need and job seekers are frustrated when they do not qualify for jobs that are available”. This statement further illustrates the need for growing the correct talent that is required. Mdladlana (2002, p. 17) says that the “Skills Development Act and the National Skills Development Strategy … seek to address this problem”. How the South African Skills Development Plan works is explained by Barron (2002), the article ‘Carrying the hopes of a nation’ (2000)’ and Mdladlana (2002). In terms of the Skills Development Levies Act all companies are required to pay a skills levy of 1% of the company’s payroll. By submitting a workplace skills plan by a predetermined deadline a grant of 15% of the levy that has been paid is refunded, and by submitting an implementation report by a predetermined deadline a further 45% is refunded. Barron (2002, p. 16) calls it “a combination of carrot and stick”, where the levy
represents the stick. Both Barron (2002, p. 16) and ‘Carrying the hopes of a nation’ (2000, p. 16) use almost the same wording to explain the ‘learnership carrot’:

In addition, employers are entitled to a tax rebate of R25 000 for each person they place (enter into a contract) in a ‘learnership’ — the official jargon for a training course. A ‘learnership’ is a mixture of theory and practice, and it is either conducted in-house by employers or at some approved site. Once a learner has gone through a ‘learnership’ and acquired the appropriate qualification, the sponsoring employer is entitled to a further R25 000 tax rebate.

A ‘learnership’ is developed under the auspices of a Sectoral Education and Training Authority (SETA), of which there are currently 27 (Republic of South Africa, 2002c). Barron (2002, p. 16) reports that if you ask the average employee about SETAs “she thinks you’re referring to an Indian goddess or inquiring how many passengers the company bus can take”. However, SETAs are “at the heart of the government’s plan — now well into the third year — to encourage employers to help build a skilled labour force to carry the country’s hopes of growth and prosperity” says Barron (2002, p. 16).

In this regard subject H professes that “learnerships are part of the national skills strategy, which is about human development … [it is] the vehicle (karretjie om mee te ry) … learnerships offers certain incentives from government and opportunities for enterprises”. Subject G indicates that the “hot subject at the moment is learnerships” and subject C asserts that in-house (explained earlier) programmes, which are still very popular in South Africa, are gaining interest from SETAs and that several in-house programmes are being arranged. Subject F claims that certificates issued by enterprises are no longer adequate, people want more substantial acknowledgement, which a learnership qualification offers. Subject G indicates that it is feasible to convert an existing formal qualification to unit standards and that it can then become a learnership, which will make it easy for an enterprise to recover bursary funding and increase available opportunities. Subject G observes further that although the convenor technikon agreed in this regard, nothing transpired and in the meantime “companies are losing money”. Both subject H and J emphasise that the employer is not obliged to keep (there is no guarantee of employment) the learner upon
completion of the learnership, and subject J highlights that learnerships contribute to society, “it helps students in locations [townships] who may have qualifications but who do not have exposure to work or to corporate world”.

Subject H asserts that historically the intern programmes of professional institutions, in order to register as members, included everything required of learnerships. The legislation and procedures, however, formalised and documented what has been done before, he observes. Although the assessment of learnerships tends to be somewhat of a paper monster, there is greater transparency and fewer biases. Learners are much more aware of their rights and do exercise their rights, remarks subject H.

5.11. MENTORING PLAYS A SIGNIFICANT ROLE (Theme 7 of 10)

Mentoring and mentorship come into play in educational programmes with the application of the theory studied and how the theory is applied in reality, according to subject H, who states “it brings out the ‘know how’ of a person”. This ‘know how’ (or talent) represents the person’s value to an employer. The mentor is very important for the mentee, says subject H and states that the mentor must know what needs to be done. Therefore, according to subject H, mentors “in order develop skills in people, needs as much training and education, which is the ‘know how’ of mentors”. Subject H further urges that a mentor must:

- demonstrate empathy and must be available,
- never give a cold shoulder, when he/she has been chosen as mentor,
- push a mentee when he/she considers the mentee as ready, but must be there when the mentee experiences difficulty,
- build the mentee within the boundaries,
- create a climate of confidence and build the mentee’s self-confidence,
- lead by example and practice what he/she preaches,
- refine his/her own expertise base and skills,
- lead, give direction and inspire the protégé (another term for the mentee),
- show an interest in what the mentee is doing and the mentee’s progress,
- champion his/her protégé, by recommending him/her and serve as representative of the protégé, and
- get involved with the educational institution’s advisory committee.

Regarding the importance of the mentor in the work-based learning setting, subject E remarks “[y]ou have to evaluate the mentor as well, because if you place a third year student in a company the mentor should be adequately experienced and qualified”. Subject C also regards the mentor as important, from the perspective of in-house programmes and states:

*Mentors play a significant role with in-house programmes. Mentors, of a higher rank and responsibility, are appointed. They are expected to fulfil their role as mentor or face the possibility of being surpassed by the would-be mentee. This keeps mentors on their toes. Often retired managers are retained in order to hold on to their vast organisational knowledge and expertise in the field. Such persons often serve as mentors. SAQA [the South African Qualifications Authority] requirements include both theoretical know-how and practical competence. The mentor facilitates the experiential learning of participants.*

At post-graduate level, according to subject B, it is often the practice that “[t]he participant has a study leader (academic person at university) and a mentor, in industry. The mentor considers the relevance of what is taught, if it addresses the problems experienced in industry, and if what is taught is applicable”. It is important that the reader realises that this type of research differs from other postgraduate research conducted at universities in that it is concerned with truth (‘die waarheid’). Subject B adds:

*The student is responsible to identify and involve a suitable mentor. The university would help the student if a suitable mentor were not accessible. Academics have contact with a variety of firms through their own consulting and training and thus know about suitable (‘sinvolle’) mentors. The mentor is ‘key’ in the learning process. A mentor that would merely read the research report and confirm a mark is neither suitable nor desirable (‘soek nie so ’n ou nie’). A person needs to be prepared to fulfil the role of what the word ‘mentor’ entails, i.e. to facilitate, to motivate, to*
encourage, to direct to aspects not yet explored, etc. If not, it is waste of everyone’s time.

The significance of mentoring, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, is evident from the data presented here. However, mentoring also applies to the post-educational work situation. What was learned during tertiary education, “this framework” says subject H, must be applied, “[h]owever many people cannot do this at all”. Scores of people “obtained a degree or diploma and sit with a lot of theory … but in the workplace they wonder how the pictures fit together, how the theory applies, and some do not even think about it” observes subject H. This reality increases the need for talent development in South Africa.

5.12. REAL WORK VERSUS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (Theme 8 of 10)

Subject G points out that the “compulsory [engineering] S2 experiential learning is generic technikon training, giving a general holistic view” and that “[s]elected students are signed on for a fixed term of experiential training”. Of importance with regard to growing (new) talent is subject G’s further revelation, i.e.:

However, an additional year of company-specific training (what the company does, how its done and why) follows on completion of technikon study. The number is annually determined by company workload. The cost is borne at operational level and the students work closely with the operational manager. During that year the company evaluates how they fit into the company culture and how competent the individuals are. If considered suitable, and in terms of company needs, the successful persons are offered a bursary for their third year of study, whereafter they become employees.

It is the experience of the company that students during the first half of their experiential learning do not contribute much, they are very raw and do not know anything. They do very basic stuff. During the second half they are very productive. The money spent on them is a good return on investment. However, the value of the individual depends very much on their own curiosity and drive. Some require pushing.
With regard to the second year of company-specific training and the productivity of in-service trainees during the second half mentioned above, subject I declares that “[a]n in-service training student becomes fully a member of a design or pilot campaign[^], which is carefully thought out”. It appears as if real work, rather than structured experiential learning, takes place. In this regard subject E shares the following:

> Co-operative education is an educational model that integrates classroom theory with real-life work placements. To be most effective, a work placement has to be managed by the educator and not just something left up to the company. It often happens that you are so pleased to get the student a placement that you do not plan adequately for the learning that is intended to take place in the workplace. It is almost as if it is not work-based learning but a job that you get for the student.

With regard to helping students to find a job, the reader is reminded about the last point under the section on learnerships (by subject J), i.e. people from disadvantaged communities often do not have access to gaining work experience. In this regard the following remarks by subject E must also be taken into consideration:

> It is difficult for people to get a first time work opportunity. I do think that the students benefit greatly by having that link, while still having the protected environment of an education institution. Often students approach their lecturers for advice and you can assist them as well.

Subject J speaks on behalf of students, when she reflects about work experience and the point above that students often approach their lecturers for advice, when she states:

> Furthermore, if you missed out on a point or are not familiar with a certain concept you are able to go back to your lecturer and say that you do not understand this or how does it work? The lecturer would then guide you, you would go and apply it and it would stay in your memory for longer and it becomes practical. That is the beauty of joining theory and practical.

[^]: Oxford dictionary: Campaign = an organised course of action; a series of operations with one objective constituting the whole or a distinct part.
Of foremost importance to subject J regarding collaborative educational ventures is that it represents an opportunity for learners to clarify their career choice. Subject J observes that “previously education separated theory and practice, because traditionally university study was isolated. Proceeding through an institution was not in conjunction with what you are going to be working in”. This is an important distinction for subject J, who in this regard mentions the following:

Sometimes people found that they though they loved a certain job, but when they got into it they discovered that it was not for them. Joint ventures give the student, or the learner, the other side [work realities]. Students partaking in a joint venture programme are really advantaged because they can see if this is what they really want. They can see is what they will really be going through when they be finished their degree, diploma or certificate. A student may really like a profession but discover ‘it is not me’ and may divert and do something else. In this way students save money and time, and do things they are really interested in.

Students partaking in a joint venture programme know what they can expect. Others, who upon completion of university study then only enter the corporate world, may find that it is completely different and is not what they wanted. Time and money have been wasted, which makes people miserable. Joint venture programmes give people the opportunity to divert if they want to.

At the educational institutions, especially universities, people tend to focus on theory and do not necessarily put it into practice. At technikons there is normally a bit of theory and a bit of practical. University graduates arrive in a totally new world when they start working, which can be very frustrating. However, if you study something you can practise, it gives you a better perspective. You are able to apply what you have studied, instead of waiting [studying] for four years and only then get the opportunity to really practise what you have studied.

Subject H concurs with subject J about the importance of career choice, but also introduces other important choices, i.e.:
The most critical decisions a person makes occur between 18 and 23: Am I going to study further? Will I look for a job? Will I pursue a career? Will I marry? These decisions influence a person’s entire life. It is a potentially dangerous phase and with inadequate guidance wrong decisions may be taken. Not everybody is fortunate to wake up and know what he or she wants to do. One needs to think widely and through a process of elimination arrive at decisions. Young people must exercise a choice between pursuing a profession or obtaining a job. On the path of maturity this choice is exercised, when a person contemplates what he/she wants to become.

With regard to the matter of choices subject H presents a personal theoretical construct which he calls ‘synchronous dissimilarity’ (gelyktydige ongelykheid) which is presented next.

5.14. ‘SYNCHRONOUS DISSIMILARITY’ (GELYKTYDIGE ONGELYKHEID) (Theme 10 of 10)

Emanating from the validation check of the phenomenological reduction of the interview, it is clear that the one matter that subject H feels very strongly about is what he calls ‘gelyktydige ongelykheid’ (translated ‘synchronous dissimilarity’). Illuminating subject H’s personal construct is the generational model of Codrington (2002), based on a theory of social history. In essence the theory suggests that the attitudes of different generations (grouped in 20-year blocks) are based on their value systems, which emanate from significant life events, that shape the values of people during their first ten years of life. Codrington (2002) and others give the following main generational groups:

Silent generation — birth years 1930 to 1949: Influenced by World War II, great depression, authoritarian governments and scarcity.

Boomers — birth years 1950 to ±1970: Cold war, inspiring and dynamic leaders, activists and revolutionists, abundance and variety.


Millennial — birth years 1990 to current: Mandela, equality enforced, global village, limited job opportunities and spirituality.
Subject H argues that the different generations are simultaneously in the same time frame but are dissimilar with regard to values and approach to work, learning and life. Scholastic (secondary) education has a formative role, according to subject H, preparation for tertiary education rather than an end in itself (Codrington, 1997). “Once the educational phase has been completed the person enters the world of work” states subject H.

With regard to all the choices people need to make on life’s journey, subject H remarks that “[i]t is as if the person looks at the world through a window and needs to decide where am I going? If the person is removed from the window, the view is limited. If the person moves closer the view broadens”. Figure 5.1 illustrates the theoretical construct of subject H, about which he states “[it] represents a perspective on life”.

Figure 5.1: An illustration of subject H's synchronous dissimilarity personal construct.

Subject H explains Figure 5.1 as follows (the underlined words in the text appear in the figure, the emphasis has been added to focus attention):

*Every person stands at a point of departure, when he/she becomes aware [of the need of making a choice]. The *time* aspect is the same for everybody, what one does with it is what matters. People need guidance [and those providing the*
guidance should be aware of, take into consideration and respect the differences between generation groups] with the elimination process to get to their goal in life, what is the shortest way? This is a mentor’s task and why it is necessary to know a mentee well. The mentor helps the mentee in the going (nonchalant) to get to the goal. However, the person must decide for him/herself. On the way to the goal are stumbling blocks, which a person must learn to overcome [illustrated by the wave-line] by going underneath, passing over, left or right but get past, because life is not fair. Realism is very important in striving to goal attainment. One must be aware of one’s shortcomings and limitations.

The learner, as a person, must be taken into consideration when growing talent through collaboration between educational institutions and employers. The synchronous dissimilarity of the individuals involved in these three-way partnerships deserves consideration.

5.15. PERSPECTIVES OF LEARNERS/STUDENTS

In 2.5.1 it was explained that collecting data from the programme participants (learners or students) of the primary and secondary subjects (the ten interviewees) served as a form of data triangulation. Contrary to the research planning it was only feasible to gain access to programme participants in two cases. The group of participants that subject A arranged access to, turned out to be the learnership candidates of subjects J and A. Twenty nine participants wrote essays about their points of view, feelings and/or perspectives of the programme they were undergoing. Subject E further arranged access to a few students, of which four wrote essays and three participated in a focus group interview (which assumed the form of a group interview).

Below is a summary of the essays of the learnership participants. Many convey very positive ideas and gratefulness, whereas some convey stress and a few are negative or contain criticism. The word ‘talent’ was spontaneously used three times:

- A learnership is considered a great opportunity for people that are seeking to or want to take up a particular career. “Programmes like this should be introduced to
all the companies in South Africa”. Companies save money due to government grants and get an opportunity to see how people perform (a probation period).

- The programme “gives young people hope for the future” in that it helps learners obtain tertiary qualifications from reputable institutions, which in turn enables marketing themselves, thus reducing unemployment. Employers look for people with experience, which a learnership offers.
- Unemployment is high, yet there is a shortage of skilled workers. The system of learnerships, where employers and educational institutions work together, should be taken down to school leavers to jumpstart their careers and to help those people with the love for and talent towards a specific job.
- It is a great programme because it gives people that completed matric, but do not have money to continue their study, an opportunity to learn and gain experience.
- The programme gives you an opportunity to realise your God-given potential and talent. This programme gives you an opportunity to succeed in life.
- The programme is a talent scout to society as a whole but the most underprivileged people, who cannot afford to learn and that need assistance, in particular. The programme helps to improve the well-being of society.
- “This programme is the best thing that has ever happened to me, I get to learn and get paid, by learning hard I can get a certificate at the end of this programme”.
- The programme exposes one to many things, among others the employer, the educational institution, teambuilding, knowing yourself and your capability, self-grooming, discipline, responsibility and the drive to work hard. Participants are most fortunate.
- Learnerships make young people confident and independent, it equips people for full-time work.
- The programme “prepares us for times ahead when we will actually be involved in the workplace”.
- This programme has been a mind opener for me, things that I was ignorant about or that did not interest me I now know by heart. During the three months on the programme so far I learned a lot about the company, the procedures of various aspects and telephone skills. I want to complete the official qualification once I completed the learnership programme.
• “Now I am a hard worker, because of this learnership, I am working and studying simultaneously, I have never done it before”.
• The programme introduces you to reality and shows you that life or success is what happens when you are in control, instead of just sitting around.
• “You get a good education for free, all you have to do is learn and get paid. It is really a good opportunity for all of us”.
• The programme is very good but stressful with regard to all the things that need to be learned. The programme offers opportunities to practise what you were taught. It gives you good communication and telephone skills, as well as how to go about e-mail, and teach you how to dress for work and grooming for young people.
• You are learning under pressure, learn about time management and more efficient use of time.
• The employers should pay attention to the way they inform their staff about the learnership programme, some departments were disorganised.
• Feel that the duration in some departments is unnecessarily long, a person can in less time understand what is going on.
• The programme schedule only makes provision for lectures and working experience, not for study time, for which provision should be made. Guidance and supervision in the workplace are further lacking, there should be dedicated staff in each department to teach students.
• The stress related to working late or night shifts and the time constraints for study as result of knocking off late makes the programme difficult, especially if writing an examination the following day. Also concerns about safety if working abnormal hours.
• The examination performance expectations set by the employer are threatening and create anxiety. Sometimes feel like quitting.
• Feel that the institution’s lecturers should rather go to the employer, this way learners would have more of their allowance at their own disposal.
• It is not pleasant when there is a lot of conflict, when learners do not like one another or differ in opinion, when they start arguing among one another or fighting.
The bulleted list above represents the views of the learnership participants of subjects J and A. What follows is a summary of the commentary of participants of formal technikon programmes, that was arranged by subject E:

- “[A]part from the technical skills that some subjects are offering me I learn a lot on how to work with people”. The programme is far better than some purely academic programmes in that it shaped me to be a professional that can fit in strategic management, planning, an admin related position as well as purely technical duties, “thus making me extremely versatile, flexible and giving me a solid enough base to expand on in future”. The technikon ought to give students more practical sessions in everything they do.

- “I have basically learned all my practicals at work … it has been quite embarrassing for me when I couldn’t do the most basic things …[i]t’s a very sad situation when you meet other students from other institutions having a clear understanding of basic stuff [which] you still have to learn … please introduce more practicals … experiential training has been quite beneficial for me”.

- “I’m not satisfied with the fact that the Tech didn’t prepare me practically for the working environment … I was totally shocked to find out that I was expected to know certain things …”

- “The experience and training that I have been privileged enough to receive [where I worked] has been invaluable … I firmly believe that I learned more about the [xx] field in the 8 months that I have been [working] than I learned in 2½ years at [the technikon]”.

- Things we learned theoretically come up every day in the practical work situation. However, some of the things that we learned theoretically may not have been enough when required to do it practically.

- Being obliged to complete a compulsory experiential learning period gives one an advantage above other students that did not gain any experience, when seeking permanent employment. Those students hardly know anything about applying what they learned theoretically.

- One learns a lot from experiential learning.

- Presentations by representatives from various companies give one an appreciation of what companies are looking for.

- We received a logbook that contains all the details of the required experiential learning. The employer must verify that the requirements have been met.
• How one relates to one’s supervisor plays an important role in experiential learning.

5.16. SUMMARY

This chapter starts with an explanation about the identification process of the research subjects. The problems encountered suggest shortcomings regarding the practice of co-operative education.

The presentation of the ‘analysis’ (explicitation) of the data collected starts with a composite summary, which is insignificant in that it neither supports nor refutes the premise that co-operative education contributes to the growing of talent.

The composite summary is followed by a presentation of the explicitation of the collected data. In order to give a fair hearing to minority voices, it contains sufficiently detailed exposition of these voices. The research data is presented under eleven headings, ten of which are listed below. The final section contains the perspectives of programme participants or learners from two situations. The headings are:
• Collaboration enables adaptation of the curriculum to corporate needs.
• Functioning of advisory committees.
• The benefits of work placements are undermined by difficulties to find opportunities.
• Certification of in-service training providers, monitoring and structured experiential learning.
• Creating a ‘talent pool’.
• Learnerships: an important element of the South African skills development strategy.
• Mentoring plays a significant role.
• Real work versus experiential learning.
• Opportunity for learner to clarify career choice.
• ‘Synchronous dissimilarity’ (gelyktydige ongelykheid).

A discussion of the research findings and conclusions is contained in Chapter 6.
CHAPTER 6

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the data collected (Chapter 5) in the present study is compared to the literature review which was undertaken regarding the importance of growing talent (Chapter 3) as well as about co-operative education contextualised within the development of Higher Education (Chapter 4). From the comparisons made, interpretations are drawn and the findings discussed. Cross-referencing to other chapters and headings is done. The next three paragraphs give an overview of Chapters 3 to 5.

In 3.3 the growing of talent is emphasised as a burning Human Resource Management issue, and more specifically in 3.4, the dire need for growing people talent in South Africa is reviewed. In 3.5 examples are given of enterprises that have formed alliances (collectively or individually) with Higher Education institutions to develop the required talent.

In 4.2 the development of Higher Education is outlined and the need for institutions to respond to the needs of society is emphasised. In 4.3 the development of co-operative education is reviewed, with 4.3.1 dealing with the fundamental principles of co-operative education, 4.3.2 with the international developments of co-operative education, and 4.3.3 the practice of co-operative education in South Africa. In 4.4 a synopsis is given of the dysfunctional state of Higher Education in South Africa.

Against the backdrop of the literature review contained in Chapters 3 and 4, Chapter 5 presents the qualitative data of this study dealing with the contribution of co-operative education in growing talent. In 5.2 it is inferred that collaboration between Higher Education institutions and enterprises, and joint educational ventures is not necessarily perceived as part of the institutional culture or mission. Table 5.1 represents a synopsis of the scope of participants in this study and Table 5.2 a synopsis of the themes that emerged from this study. A composite summary of the
ten interviews is given in 5.4. In 5.5 through to 5.14, themes and thick descriptions of the perspectives of the research subjects about joint educational ventures and the views of research subjects about the value derived from collaborative efforts are outlined. In 5.15 the perspectives of a number of co-operative education programme participants are presented.

In the present chapter, the review of the literature and the research findings of this study are compared and interpreted. This review starts with an investigation into how the research participants of this study perceive the curriculum, i.e. if it is seen as needs-focused and integrated.

6.2. NEEDS-FOCUSED INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

In 4.3.1 it is emphasised that co-operative education aims to tie theory and practice together and that the practical component, i.e. the experiential learning curriculum, is of equal educational importance as the theoretical curriculum. The interplay between the educational institution and the community it serves, and in particular the key role of employers, are emphasised in 4.3.2. The relevance of the ‘marketing concept’ with regard to the interrelationship aspect of co-operative education is further mentioned in 4.3.2 as well as in 4.4. From 5.4 it is evident that participants in this study do intellectually support the notion of a needs-focused integrated curriculum in the practice of co-operative education. However, in 5.5 a dichotomy is evident. The inflexibility of the formal programmes of educational institutions and the perceived resistance to change (or non-accommodative stance) of academic staff refute the core principles of co-operative education.

From 5.5 it appears that the national system regarding technikon programmes stands in the way of co-operative education. To elucidate the statement the national system is summarised. Core curricula of technikon programmes are nationally determined through a prescribed process of approval through among others the Committee of Technikon Principals, the Department of Education, and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). A convenor technikon is appointed for each programme, and when changes are considered necessary, a prescribed process of circulation among all technikons is required. Although there is some scope for
accommodating the needs of the geographical client-base of individual technikons, the existing prescribed process stifles the responsiveness of technikons to the changing needs of their client-base. This means that individual technikons are not free to render needs-satisfying formal programmes, which implies that it is not possible to pursue the marketing concept.

Advisory committees form a core element of the curriculum development process. Experiential learning should be an integrated part of the curriculum. However, from 5.6 it appears that advisory committee structures are not functioning well as a formalised means for technikons to remain in touch with the needs of the enterprise client-base of the respective technikons. It is questionable whether the failing advisory committee system (as reviewed in 4.3.2) enables any meaningful involvement of private industry.

In contrast to technikons, universities enjoy greater flexibility in that programmes are changed at institutional level. Even though universities must register their qualifications with SAQA (whole qualifications), universities are better enabled to accommodate their client-bases. This is reflected in 5.8 where the offering of ‘in-house’ (for a specific company) programmes are mentioned.

In order to unleash the potential that the practice of co-operative education may hold with regard to the growing of talent in South Africa, obstacles restraining the practice must first be removed. In this regard it remains to be seen how the merger of several universities and technikons, announced recently by the Minister of Education, will impact on the existing binary Higher Education structures in South Africa. Will technikons in future, for example, enjoy the same degree of academic freedom as universities?

A word of caution, in the light of the failure of polytechnics in Britain (mentioned in 4.2), is in order here. Technikons in South Africa came about for similar reasons as polytechnics did in Britain: to offer vocationally focused education (mentioned in 4.3.3). Polytechnics failed to fill their designated niche. It could be argued that the introduction of learnerships (brief overview in 5.10) in South Africa and the aspirations of technikons to achieve university status are indicative that technikons
have failed in filling their designated niche. The current reconfiguration of Higher Education (indicated in 4.4) in South Africa may well bring about an end to the technikon experiment, unless technikons reclaim their niche with vigour.

Whereas previous sections outlined this study’s findings about the integration of the theoretical curriculum and relevant experience, subsequent sections will now consider the findings of experiential learning in particular.

6.3. EXPERIENCE TEACHES (*EXPERIMENTIA DOCET*)

In 4.3.1 it was mentioned that the construct: *experience teaches*, is at the heart of co-operative education. However, it must be emphasised that the nucleus of the original construct was that related work (experience) follows theory, where the practical work has sound educational value. This is further emphasised in 4.3.2 where it is indicated that relevant experience enriches learning. The point is made that the realities of the workplace are constantly changing, and that exposure to practice puts the theoretical curriculum to the test. Contrary to an international tendency of conceptual drift, where the term co-operative education is increasingly being used for non-integrated experiential learning periods, it is stated in 4.3.3 that the technikon sector upholds the original notion of integrating productive work into the career-focused curriculum of programmes. The idea of ‘experience teaches’ is also addressed in 3.5 where business alliances with Higher Education for the development of talent is discussed.

In 5.7 the voices of participants in this study, comprising both the adherents to and the detractors from experiential learning, are given. It is important to note that even the adherents voice difficulties with regard to finding sufficient placement opportunities for the experiential learning of students. In 4.3.2 it is emphasised that the establishment of a supportive culture and reliable experiential learning placement partners are essential to the practice of co-operative education. The view put forward in this study is that educational institutions fail to adequately engage their employer client-base in the needs analysis, when new programmes are introduced or existing programmes changed. For this reason, difficulty is later experienced in gaining support for the placement of students for experiential learning. Further, this study
posits that because educational institutions fail to develop and maintain advisory structures that are representative of the employer client-base of programmes, a supportive culture does not exist for providing experiential learning opportunities.

It is further important to note that the detractors in 5.7 regard experiential learning and the principle of integrated learning laudable. The idea of a supportive and available industry partner, mentioned in the previous paragraph, is stated in 5.7 as conditional for success. Despite the Committee of Technikon Principals’ claim in 4.3.3 that commerce and industry are vital partners, the findings of this study as already discussed in 6.2 and 6.3 suggest otherwise.

It is important to take into consideration the fact that the notion of *experience teaches* is captured in the South African government’s introduction of *learnerships* (outlined in 5.10), in response to the need for growing the talent of people, that is outlined in 3.4. Learnerships are exemplars of good co-operative education practice in that they are designed under auspices of a Sectoral Education and Training Authority (SETA). They further involve both employers and providers of the required theoretical learning, and experiential learning is structured in an orderly system with adequate controls.

At the time this study was undertaken the Committee of Technikon Principals, the Department of Labour, the South African Revenue Services and the National Treasury were looking into the possibility of amending the Skills Development Act and the Skills Development Levies Act in order to extend taxation incentives to technikon experiential learning. If this happens the necessary incentive will be in place to assist Higher Education institutions to create a supportive culture. However, technikons may not rest on their laurels, since it has already been stated that numerous small employers regard the Skills Development Levies Act merely as another form of taxation that needs to be budgeted for. They do not bother to reclaim, because the effort is not worth the money receivable.

Another aspect of co-operative education, namely that experiential learning must be structured in an orderly system with adequate controls, is discussed in the following section.
6.4. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING, LOGISTICAL ORGANISATION AND CO-ORDINATION DEVICES

In 4.3.1 three dimensions of the original construct co-operative education are identified, i.e. (a) the integrated curriculum, (b) the learning derived from the work experience and (c) the arrangements and co-ordination of the experience. The findings of this study suggest major shortcomings regarding logistical organisation and co-ordination devices.

In 5.7 it is evident from the perspective of the participants of this study that the benefits of experiential learning work placements are undermined if the appropriate functionary at the appropriate level is not available or does not devote time and energy to the learner. Higher Education learners, for example, need to engage with management in effecting deep-seated, penetrating interaction. Operational level workers (e.g. floor supervisors) can only superficially expose and instruct Higher Education learners placed with them, and the latter can at most observe how things work and get a sense of the atmosphere of the workplace. There will be no deeper understanding of the mental processes underpinning the working of the enterprise.

In 5.8 it is evident that the certification of in-service training that technikons undertake leaves a lot to be desired. Because enterprises are primarily production oriented, the monitoring of learners that are undergoing experiential learning is lacking and therefore the desired learning does not necessary take place. Learning is often incidental rather than carefully managed, as mentioned in 4.3.1.

However, it is also evident from 5.8 that some organisations demonstrate possibly more commitment to the ideals of co-operative education than some educational institutions do. Some organisations have formalised in-service training programmes that are co-ordinated by dedicated staff, whereas in others (see 5.12) it merely consists of haphazard exposure through menial work, rather than structured experiential learning. It is mentioned in 5.12 that in-service learners initially do not contribute much, because they know very little, but later their productivity increases.
There is, however, a correlation between the individual’s curiosity and drive, and the return of investment on the individual’s training.

The individual’s role with regard to growth of talent is addressed in 3.3. While some scholars argue that individuals should accept responsibility for their own talent growth, others argue that employers have an important role to play. In 5.11 the significance of mentoring, as a co-ordinating device, is presented. Mentors facilitate experiential learning, which in turn brings about practical competence of graduates. It is evident from the perspectives of the participants in this study, in 5.11, that mentors play a significant role with regard to both undergraduate and postgraduate studies. 5.14 reflects the cautionary perspectives of one of the participants. Mentors must take into consideration that different generations have different values and that although they are simultaneously in the same time frame (in a synchronous situation) as learners, they and the learners are dissimilar with regard to their approaches to work and life.

It can therefore be concluded from this study that the logistical organisation and co-ordination devices for experiential learning are often inadequate. In order for co-operative education to contribute to growing the much-needed talent, it is essential to ensure that the relevant functionaries at the required levels are available to serve as mentors for the learners. In order to ensure that the planned learning takes place, adequate monitoring must be conducted. Educational institutions must convince enterprises that investment in growing the talent of people does pay dividends. This brings the discussion to the point of talent pools discussed below.

6.5. CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION PRODUCES A TALENT POOL

In 5.9 it is mentioned that in-service training programmes offer enterprises the benefit of making an informed selection of people based on their performance as learners. This feature of co-operative education programmes is internationally used in advertising material and publicity about co-operative education. The construct talent pool was used by one of the participants in this study. The participant is further of the opinion that organisations have a duty and responsibility towards society to unleash the hidden potential of people who have not had opportunities to develop.
With the desperate need for growing the talent of people in South Africa as outlined in 3.4, one can conclude that serious consideration should be given to the contribution co-operative education can make. By integrating education and training it is possible to accelerate the development of previously disadvantaged people. This brings the discussion to another advantage of co-operative education, i.e. an opportunity to clarify career choice, discussed below.

6.6. CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION ALLOWS FOR CAREER CHOICE CLARIFICATION

Of foremost importance to one of the participants in this study (in 5.13) was the fact that collaborative educational ventures offer learners the opportunity to clarify their career choices. By being exposed to workplace realities early on in a programme of study, people can confirm their expectations or change direction without having wasted valuable money and time.

However, a word of caution: co-operative education programmes should be designed in such a way that programme participants are left the option to change the programme and are not locked in, with penalties should they drop out. This approach will only defeat this major advantage that co-operative education programmes may offer.

Thus far in Chapter 6 the perspectives of (a) programme managers at educational institutions and (b) the co-ordinating representatives in industry have been interpreted in terms of the literature review. The perspectives of (c) co-operative education programme participants will be interpreted next. This represents some degree of triangulation.

6.7. TRIANGULATION OF PERSPECTIVES

In 2.5.1 the concept triangulation is explained and in 5.15 the perspectives of co-operative education programme participants collected in this study are reflected. The integrated curriculum (see 6.2) is generally highly valued by programme participants,
with, for example, paraphrased commentary such as: it prepares learners for full-time work; it gives young people confidence and independence; it introduces one to realities; learned how to work with people; helped to master the most basic aspects; preparation for the work environment; etc. However, some difficulty was also voiced, for example: the programme is stressful; a tight time-schedule and shift-work allows little time for study and examination preparation; examination performance expectations set by the employer are quite threatening; etc.

Programme participants strongly supported the notion that *experience teaches* (see 6.3) with paraphrased comments such as: learned a lot about the company, procedures and various skills; learned about time management and more efficient use of time; compulsory experiential learning gives one an advantage above conventional students that did not gain experience; etc.

The importance of the logistical organisation and co-ordination of experiential learning (see 6.4) is evident from the following commentary of programme participants: more attention should be given to informing staff about the programme — some departments were disorganised; the duration of exposure to various departments needs to be better differentiated; guidance and supervision in the workplace was lacking at times — sufficient staff should be made available; and the logbook received contained all the details of the required experiential learning.

Programme participants further regard the programme as a talent scout (refer 6.5) that jumpstarts people’s careers. Both learnerships and technikon programmes with compulsory experiential learning are highly valued by the programme participants consulted in this study. Many advantages are mentioned in 5.15.

6.8. CONCLUSION

The present study found that the core principles of co-operative education are refuted by bureaucratic processes. These bureaucratic processes obstruct needs-focused curriculum design, where experiential learning is integrated into the curriculum. It has further been found that advisory committees do not function the way they are intended.
The present study also found that major difficulties are experienced in finding sufficient experiential learning placement opportunities for students. It appears that supportive and reliable partners are key and must be nurtured. The present study found that the Committee of Technikon Principals’ claims in this regard are not realistic. On the contrary, learnerships appear from the findings of this study to be exemplary of good co-operative education practice.

The present study found further that the benefits derived from experiential learning are largely undermined as a result of inadequate arrangements, co-ordination and monitoring. The present study found that appropriate levels of supervision and/or mentoring of experiential learners is key to the success of co-operative education.

The preceding three paragraphs indicate substantial shortcomings with regard to the three dimensions of the original construct ‘co-operative education’, which are (a) the integrated curriculum, (b) the learning derived from the work experience and (c) the arrangements and co-ordination of the experience.

On a more positive note, the present study found that co-operative education programmes are instrumental in creating a ‘talent pool’, and afford programme participants the opportunity to clarify their career choices by being exposed to workplace realities.

From a limited degree of data triangulation undertaken in this study, it was found that the notion of an integrated curriculum is highly valued by co-operative education programme participants, but that the organisational logistics may be problematic.

The conclusions drawn from the interpretations of the findings of this study, as well as recommendations, are presented in Chapter 7.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. INTRODUCTION

In 1.1.1 the aim of this study is formulated as: to demonstrate the value of co-operative education in the growing of people talent. It is specifically stated at the outset that this study endeavoured to explore, in order to describe, the contribution of the practice of co-operative education in the growing of talent.

In 2.5.2 the central research question is formulated: what is the contribution that co-operative education can make, in the growing of talent of the South African people? The actual research questions that were put to the subjects were:

- How did/do you experience the joint educational venture?
- What value, if any, has been derived from the collaborative effort?

A phenomenological study was undertaken, which included ten interviews as well as essays by two groups of co-operative education programme participants. The interviews were transcribed and explicitated. A literature review was also undertaken regarding the growing of talent, as well as the development of co-operative education. The research findings (Chapter 5) were compared to the literature reviewed (Chapters 3 & 4) and a discussion of the interpretation presented in Chapter 6. In Chapter 7 the conclusions of the study are drawn and recommendations are made. The conclusions will be presented in the next section.

7.2. CONCLUSIONS

Although co-operative education is widely practised in South Africa, and in the Gauteng Province in particular where this study was undertaken, technikons identify or name joint ventures with industry as co-operative education, whereas universities do not.
From the commentary of the co-operative education programme participants reflected in 5.15, one may conclude with a fair amount of confidence that those programmes do contribute to the growing of talent of the participants. However, it is clear that not all programme participants are equally satisfied; some are more satisfied than others. In order to optimise the learning of those programme participants who are less satisfied, appropriate interventions are recommended, such as for example making the necessary arrangements that programme participants do not work nightshift prior to a test. Other interventions may include stress management by the educational institution’s student counselling services. From the perspectives of participants it is further evident that the logistical organisation and co-ordination of programmes may require improvements.

The ten subjects interviewed (five educational institution-based programme managers and five enterprise-based representatives) shared a comprehensive range of perspectives. From these shared perspectives one may conclude with confidence that co-operative education has the potential to serve as an educational paradigm to grow the talent of people in South Africa. However, from these perspectives it can also be concluded that there are currently several shortcomings and/or restraining factors with regard to the practice of co-operative education, for example:

(a) The existing national programme and core curriculum approval processes for formal technikon programmes appear to be standing in the way of sound co-operative education practice. Expressed differently, individual formal technikon programmes are not empowered to respond to the changing needs of the client-base, other than undergoing a protracted process which may or may not concur with the aims of the particular technikon. This implies that technikons are not in a position to establish a win-win relationship with their client-base by offering needs-satisfying formal programmes (application of the marketing concept).

(b) As a result of the above, technikon staff appear to be set in their ways or comfort zones, which is counter-productive to the pursuance of South Africa’s people development needs.

(c) The technikon sector advisory committee system appear to be riddled with problems, which render them ineffective.
(d) The benefits that workplace experiential learning may offer, are undermined by inadequate opportunities; inadequate supervision (of especially the appropriate level of functionary involved in mentoring); inadequate assessment of providers (certification of in-service training providers); inadequate arrangements (planning and organising) of the required experiential learning of particular learners; inadequate monitoring of the actual experiential learning learners are undergoing; and the fact that learners are given menial work which may not at all relate to their experiential learning requirements.

From the positive experiences of research participants of joint educational ventures and/or the perceived value derived from collaborative efforts one may conclude that co-operative education presents itself as an educational strategy to enable Higher Education institutions to contribute significantly to the talent growth required among the people of South Africa. The following supporting perspectives from the research participants apply:

- The income-generating drives of Higher Education institutions and the necessary enabling environments make it possible for institutions to engage with enterprises in terms of their talent development requirements.
- An entrepreneurship culture which allows academic staff to act as educational consultants enables Higher Education institutions to become directly involved with growing talent.
- Co-operative education programmes serve as a mechanism for enterprises and Higher Education institutions to jointly build up a talent pool of persons, to answer the need for particular human resources.
- Learnerships are examples of sound co-operative education contributing to the growth of talent. It is possible for Higher Educational institutions to become involved in learnerships as providers of the relevant underpinning knowledge.
- The growth of talent is often enhanced by good mentoring, especially but not only, within the context of co-operative education programmes.
- Co-operative education enables the clarification of career choice, which in turn contributes to optimising talent growth by appropriately channelling educational funds and effort.
Based on the conclusions of this study a number of recommendations are made, which are presented next.

7.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Various research topics and/or problem areas may be explored to supplement this study and include:

- Similar investigations should be undertaken in other parts of the country or a nationally co-ordinated investigation initiated.
- An investigation into the pros and cons of the existing convenor technikon system, examining whether it adds value to the technikon sector or detracts from the business prospects of individual technikons.
- An investigation into whether the existing convenor technikon system enables or withholds individual technikons from applying the marketing concept.
- An investigation into the existing circulation of proposed new or revised technikon programmes to address the questions:
  - to what extent is it a desk exercise (commentary made by academic staff in isolation without consulting their client-base);
  - what are the aims and purpose of the circulation process; and
  - does the circulation process still achieve the original goals, etc?
- An investigation into the success rate of non-formal (outside of the national qualifications structure) programmes offered by individual technikons and to what extent non-formal programmes have gained popularity as a result of the constraints presented by formally approved national programmes.
- An investigation into the functioning of the advisory committee system of technikons addressing the following:
  - How do advisory committees function?
  - What contribution(s) do advisory committees make?
  - Is the composition representative of the client-base?
  - To what extent are formal meeting procedures followed?
  - To what extent are participative techniques used?
- Action research should be considered in order to investigate the improvement of the functioning of the advisory committee system, through specifically applying participatory methodologies.
- Further investigation into the value of collaborative educational initiatives between universities and enterprises should be undertaken.
- An interdisciplinary (between Marketing Management, Human Resource Management and Education) investigation should be undertaken regarding the application of the services marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion, processes, people and physical evidence) in the practice of co-operative education.
- A quantitative investigation(s) into one or more of the themes identified in the present study should be undertaken.

In addition to possible research topics and/or problem areas it is recommended that co-operative education should be adopted as part of the integrated human resources development plan of the government. Funding should be channelled from the funds acquired through the Skills Development Levies Act, to enable sound experiential learning placements and monitoring. The national qualification system of the technikon sector should further be discontinued and technikons should be given the same qualification-awarding status as universities.

7.4. CLOSING COMMENTARY

The contribution of this study is twofold:
- An innovative research design.
- Significant research findings for consideration by four clusters of bodies.

7.4.1. Research design serving as example

The present study has attempted to distil the core principles of a phenomenological research design within the bigger context of qualitative research and serves as an example of how to undertake such research in the subject area of Human Resource Management.
7.4.2. Significant contributions

The qualitative research findings and literature review of the present study are of importance to four clusters of bodies:

(a) **For the Rand Afrikaans University’s Centre for Work Performance.** The findings address one of the major issues identified by the centre for resolution: the growing of talent. The literature review and findings of the present study are of considerable value to the endeavours of enterprises that are seeking ways to enhance their efforts in growing the talent of their people and should form part of the literature sources of the centre.

(b) **For the technikon sector of Higher Education in South Africa.** The qualitative research findings are of importance to the Committee of Technikon Principals (CTP) and technikon management, because the findings question the CTP’s assumptions regarding the practice of co-operative education by technikons in Gauteng. The findings further suggest an inefficacy of technikon education.

The findings are of importance to the Department of Education (DoE), the Council on Higher Education (CHE), South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the CTP, because the findings suggest that the national process with regard to the approval of technikon qualifications is counter-productive to needs-focused education by technikons.

(c) **For the national role players in the position to amend the Skills Development Levies Act.** The findings and literature review are of importance to the Department of Labour (DoL), DoE, the South African Revenue Services (SARS) and the National Treasury in view of the contemplated amendments to the Skills Development Levies Act to make provision for funding co-operative education programmes.

The findings and literature review are of importance to DoL, the various Sectoral Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and professional bodies, because of the
valuable contribution regarding the design and improvement of learnerships and similar co-operative education programmes.

(d) For the national government role players involved in the national human resources development (HRD) strategy. The findings and literature review are of importance to the South African national government and associated role players (for example, DoI, DoE, commissions such as the Black Economic Empowerment Commission, political parties, etc.) with regard to the national HRD strategy, skills development policies, etc.

The findings proved the value of co-operative education as a supplementary element of the South African government’s existing laws and policies towards the reform of the labour market and Higher Education in an effort to reverse the Apartheid legacy.
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APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT

This agreement serves to confirm that the research subject (participant) mentioned below gave her/his consent to participate in a phenomenological research study, i.e. a study concerned with understanding social phenomena from the perspectives of people involved. The specific phenomenon (a Greek word meaning appearance) that will be researched is existing (completed and/or under way) joint ventures between educational institutions and enterprises to educate people and grow their talent.

The undersigned participant understands the purpose and nature of this study and understands that her/his participation is voluntary and that she/he may stop the interview at any time. The participant further grant permission for the data collected to be used in fulfilment of part of the requirements for the degree D Phil: Leadership in Performance and Change, including a dissertation and any future publication(s).

The data collected will be used for research only, the researcher undertakes neither to disclose the identity of any of the participants, nor the origin of any of the statements made by any of the participants. However, the undersigned participant understands that the researcher may make use of verbatim statements in order to give the perspectives of participants a voice in the research report.

The participant grant permission for the audio recording and that the researcher may make notes of her/his responses to the following and subsequent questions to clarify her/his perceptions and or meaning regarding these:

- How did/do you experience the joint educational venture?
- What value, if any, has been derived from the collaborative effort?

The participant undertakes to give a true representation of her/his perspective and a true reflection of her/his experiences.

I, the undersigned participant, agree to meet at mutually agreeable times and duration(s) or other means of communication, e.g. by e-mail, as reasonably necessary to enable the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon researched. I further acknowledge that I received a copy of this agreement and that I may contact any one of the under mentioned if I have any subsequent queries.

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