

**THE PERCEIVED VALUE OF MANDATORY QUALIFICATIONS HELD BY
JOHANNESBURG EMERGENCY SERVICES PERSONNEL WITH
REFERENCE TO VOCATIONAL APPLICABILITY AND PROMOTABILITY**

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DECLARATION

I declare that “THE PERCEIVED VALUE OF MANDATORY QUALIFICATIONS HELD BY JOHANNESBURG EMERGENCY SERVICES PERSONNEL WITH REFERENCE TO VOCATIONAL APPLICABILITY AND PROMOTABILITY” is my own work, that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this dissertation was not previously submitted by me at another university.

C Lambert

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all members of the emergency services be they Soldiers, Fire Fighters, Paramedics or Rescue Workers for their unselfish dedication to the profession.



ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate and describe perceptions Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders from Johannesburg Emergency Services have of educational offerings offered by and / or deemed applicable to the emergency service, with specific reference to their vocational applicability and value in relation to promotion. It is argued in this report that such perceptions may affect the motivation experienced by adult learners to engage in further study and thus may influence the learning process as a whole. An understanding of how emergency service workers feel about the various courses and or qualifications that are on offer becomes important for managers, trainers and educators not only within the Johannesburg Emergency Service but also within industry as they plan and structure future educational offerings and training programmes.

To collect data on the perceptions described above in-depth face to face interviews were conducted with a purposefully selected sample of Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders. During these interviews the participants were required to respond to questions which were specifically designed to elicit their views and perceptions on the vocational applicability of courses and qualifications relevant to their daily work within the emergency service and the value of further study for promotion. The interviews were audio recorded producing raw data, which could be later transcribed verbatim.

Once sufficient data was collected, this data was analysed and interpreted. The analysis and interpretation yielded a number of significant findings relating to the participants' perceptions of the vocational applicability of various courses and qualifications linked to the service as well as the

perceived value or link between further study and promotion. The findings relating to vocational applicability emphasised that perceptions about which courses and / or qualifications had higher levels of vocational applicability were most often linked to the participant's position within the service as well as their own personal preference for a particular specialist area or vocational discipline. In addition, the frequency with which the participants utilised a learning outcome or skill appeared to play a significant role in determining their perception regarding the vocational applicability of learning events. Although the courses currently on offer were largely seen as being vocationally applicable there was a perception that significant deficits existed in their levels of training and preparation for particular incidents and components of the participants' vocational activities. The study also found a perception among the participants that they were not afforded an equal opportunity to study further in each of the three main vocational disciplines.

Regarding further learning and promotion within the service, this study found that the participants did not perceive a clearly identifiable link between further study and promotion and that promotion was not the main driving force behind their desire to study further. There also appeared to be confusion and a lack of consensus about which courses are best for promotion. The rescue courses specifically receive little recognition from the service in terms of promotion.

Based on these findings a number of recommendations were made. It was recommended that the service consider the introduction of new learning programmes to supplement the learning outcomes of existing qualifications and courses. The employer was also encouraged to provide better clarity and guidance for staff about how all the different courses and qualifications are to be recognised and managed within the service. In order to do this, the employer was encouraged to carefully reflect on the role of further study within the service as well as the envisaged linkages between particular courses and qualifications and the workers operational duties, promotion, specialisation and career development.

CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXTUALISATION AND PROBLEMATISATION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to provide the reader with information relating to the educational context within which this study is grounded. Background to the problem, the problem statement as well as an overview of the aim and objectives of this study will be discussed. Chapter 1 concludes with an overview of the various chapters and a discussion on the ethical considerations relevant to this study.

1.2 Contextualization

The study takes place within the Johannesburg Emergency Management Service, henceforth called the JHB EMS or “the service”. With over 900 operational staff, the JHB EMS is one of the largest combined Fire, Rescue and Ambulance Services in the country. This service as it is today was formed as a consequence of the amalgamation of a number of formerly independent local authorities. Prior to this amalgamation, each local authority had its own independent local town council and emergency service such as the Randburg, Sandton, Roodepoort, Johannesburg, Alexandra and Soweto Fire Departments. Each of these fire departments had their own personalised management and training structures. This resulted in a situation where the academic criteria for promotion and the linking of qualifications to posts varied from service to service.

In 1996, with the amalgamation of the smaller local authorities and the emergence of the Johannesburg Metropolitan City Council, a unified multidisciplinary Emergency Management Service was born. The years following 1996 saw both radical and rapid transformational processes being

embarked upon in order to integrate the formerly independent services into one department.

This study takes place within the domain of vocational adult education within the emergency services industry. The researcher, a member of the emergency services profession, who has worked since 1992 with both operational as well as educational structures of the emergency services, found the issue of how the different courses and qualifications required for Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders link their vocational activities within a multidisciplinary service intriguing. In addition the possible ways in which such vocational courses and qualifications applicable to the different disciplines link to career pathing and progression remained a topic of debate amongst trainers and educators within the emergency services, specifically services such as the JHB EMS which continues to undergo significant transformation and restructuring.

1.3 Background to the problem

As a result of this amalgamation and continuous transformation staff within the various formerly independent services have had to cope with significant changes such as the rationalisation of posts and resources and harmonisation of conditions of employment. Apart from affecting the individuals within the service these changes have also had a direct effect both on in-house education and training as well as the recognition of value attached to other externally obtained qualifications. These, amongst other factors, saw the exodus of a significant number of experienced and well-qualified personnel, resulting in challenges for specifically the education and training structures of the service. One of these challenges facing the service was a high turnover of personnel within a relatively short space of time. It therefore became a priority for the service to provide applicable training for new recruits as well as learning experiences that would capacitate and develop existing personnel, many of whom had recently been promoted into new posts or positions. The output from existing as well as future personnel development, education and

training opportunities needed to be in line with the operational as well as transformational needs of the emerging service.

The majority of operational fire, rescue and ambulance personnel fall within the Fire Fighter EMT and Platoon Commander posts. Learning outcomes of education and training programmes aimed at these levels should arguably have a direct and significant impact on service delivery. If the service is to provide learning opportunities that Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders will readily and enthusiastically engage in, it becomes important to identify which qualifications and educational offerings are perceived by these staff to be valuable, not only in improving their current daily functioning, but also in terms of preparing them for promotion. Adult educational theory highlights the importance and possible influence such feelings and perceptions have on the levels of motivation experienced by an adult learner to engage in further study including the important role motivation plays in the learning process as a whole (Caffarella, 1994: 120-128). However there was an absence of specific literature and research describing the current perceptions Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders have about their qualifications in terms of vocational applicability, and enhanced promotional opportunity.

1.4 Problem statement

Based on the background described in the previous section the problem identified for the purposes of this study was thus:

To describe the current perceptions Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders have about their qualifications in terms of vocational applicability, and enhanced promotional opportunity.

As mentioned previously, and dealt with more extensively in Chapter 2, perceptions may affect the learner's motivation and desire to study further and may impact on the learning process as a whole. The absence of such data describing how JHB EMS personnel from the Fire Fighter and Platoon Commander ranks feel about their qualifications, with particular reference to


their vocational applicability and effects on promotion makes it difficult to structure, select and provide learning opportunities for personnel, which will not only meet the needs of the Emergency Service in terms of service delivery but also serve to develop and prepare the employee for work and promotion.

1.5 Aim

This study aims to determine and describe the perceptions emergency services personnel (Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders) have of vocationally linked educational offerings with specific reference to their vocational applicability and relevance in terms of promotion.

1.6 Research objectives

In order to achieve the aim stated above, the objectives of this research are to:

- 
- a) Determine the perceptions and views of Fire Fighter EMT's and Platoon Commanders about how vocationally applicable their courses and qualifications are.
 - b) Determine the value Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders attribute to their courses and qualifications in relation to promotion (promotability).
 - c) Derive recommendations regarding the appropriateness, recognition and structuring of courses, qualifications and / or additional learning opportunities for such staff within the service.

These courses and / or qualifications referred to in the research objectives above which become relevant for this study will be clarified next.

1.7 Clarifications on courses and qualifications

In Chapter 2 clarifications are provided for selected generic terms and concepts such as “vocational applicability” and “promotability”, which are central to this study and which are linked to and discussed further during the literature review. However, at this stage the researcher deemed it important to provide some clarity on specific vocational courses and / or qualifications which may be referred to individually by name or collectively as “courses and / or qualifications” throughout this study. Table 1 below therefore aims to provide a summary of the terms and abbreviations which refer specifically to particular courses and qualifications included in this study and which may be referred to in the discussions of the data collection and analysis.

TABLE 1 – EMERGENCY SERVICE COURSES AND QUALIFICATIONS

Name of course or qualification	Description	Recognition / Registration with Professional Body
Basic Ambulance Assistant (BAA)	Four Week Emergency Care Short Course	Health Professions Council of South Africa
Ambulance Emergency Assistant (AEA)	Four Month Emergency Care Course, Two Months of Theory, and Two Months of Experiential Learning	Health Professions Council of South Africa
Critical Care Assistant (CCA) or (Paramedic)	Nine month Emergency Care Course, 18 weeks of theory, and 18 weeks of Experiential Learning	Health Professions Council of South Africa
National Diploma Emergency Medical Care (N Dip)	Three year full-time tertiary qualification	Health Professions Council of South Africa
National Diploma Fire Technology (N Dip FST)	Three year part-time tertiary qualification	Health Professions Council of South Africa
B Tech Emergency Medical Care	Four year tertiary Bachelor degree	Health Professions Council of South Africa
Fire Fighter I	Time varies dependent on service providers,	May voluntarily register with South

	average 12 weeks including practical.	African Emergency Services Institute
Fire Fighter II (FFII)	Six week short course	May voluntarily register with South African Emergency Services Institute
Hazmat operations (Hazmat)	Two week short course	Internal Recognition

The next section deals with the ethical considerations applicable to a study of this nature.

1.8 Ethical considerations

Participants for this study comprise a purposefully selected sample of Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders from the JHB EMS. Due to the sampling method applied as well as the aim of this study and nature of the data to be collected it was felt that race, gender and age were not relevant and were therefore not taken into account when inviting persons to participate.

Prior to formulating the proposal for this study senior management from the JHB Emergency Services were approached and they provided a letter of endorsement granting permission for the study to take place (Annexure A).

A face to face verbal outline of the purposes of the study as well as how data would be gathered and analyzed was provided to each participant before the interviews. At this point participants were provided an opportunity to elect not to participate in the study. Participants who agreed to participate were required to sign a letter of consent indicating they were willing and informed participants in the study (Annexure C).

Anonymity and confidentiality was ensured by not referring to a specific individual's name nor station during data collection and / or the subsequent presentation of findings. Due to the nature of the sample there were no persons under the age of 18 years participating in this study. In order not to prejudice persons whose mother tongue is not English there was a suitably

qualified person available on site to provide clarification, should it have been required.

Having provided background to the research problem and clarified the aims and objectives of this study including ethical considerations the following section will now provide an outline of the study and overview of the five chapters encapsulated in this dissertation.

1.9 Outline of the study and overview of chapters

A short description of what each chapter in this dissertation entails, is included in this section.

This Chapter serves to conceptualise the study and provide some background to the research problem. Furthermore the aim, objectives and structure of the study were explained. Chapter 1 also explained the ethical considerations relevant to this study.

Chapter 2 argues the importance of this study by exploring and linking existing literature dealing with adult education and learning theory associated with the focus areas of this study as well as provide suitable working definitions for the key words, terms and concepts which are deemed central to this study.

Chapter 3 describes and validates the qualitative research design and method, which was applied to gather, analyse and interpret the data necessary for this study. The method of in-depth interviews is explained including a discussion of measures taken to address issues of validity and reliability in the study.

Chapter 4 explains how the data collected by means of in-depth interviews was analysed and interpreted. The analysis and interpretation was conducted according to the two main focus areas of the study, firstly vocational applicability and then promotion.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings, which were derived from the analysis and interpretation of the data. These findings are argued and related to adult education and motivation literature. Recommendations are made based on the findings and finally the conclusions of this study are presented.

1.10 Summary

This chapter contextualised and provided background to the research problem including the aims and objectives of this study which took place within the context of the JHB EMS. The aim and objectives of this study were to determine and describe the perceived value Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders place on qualifications, courses and / or learning events, in relation to their vocational functioning and positioning within the hierarchy of the emergency service and then to make recommendations regarding the appropriateness, recognition and structuring of such courses and / or qualifications. This chapter also provided an overview of each chapter including a discussion on the ethical considerations taken into account for this research project.

In the next chapter a review of adult education and motivation literature is conducted which deals with the ways in which an individual's perceptions of a course, qualification or learning experience may affect the level of motivation experienced to engage in such further studies and how this motivation in turn could impact on the learning process.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this study aims to investigate prevailing perceptions Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders have of, and the value they attribute to courses and qualifications with specific reference to their vocational applicability and increased promotional opportunity (promotability).

One may well question the relevance of exploring and describing such views and perceptions. In this Chapter an attempt shall be made to show how an individual's perceptions of a course, qualification or learning experience affects the level of motivation experienced to engage in such further studies and how this motivation in turn impacts on the learning process.

This Chapter therefore firstly seeks to provide suitable working definitions for the key words, terms and concepts that are central to this study. Secondly, the processes by which people form perceptions and value judgments shall be dealt with, including the ways in which an adult learner's desire for promotion may influence their views and perceptions of courses and qualifications thereby influencing their choice of, and / or motivation to, pursue or (in the case of the employer) to sponsor further learning experiences. The linkages between one's views and perceptions and the level of motivation experienced by the adult learner to undertake further learning experiences shall be highlighted. Lastly, this Chapter deals with general educational theory about the importance of motivation and arousal in relation to learning before describing more specifically how vocational applicability and improved promotional opportunity linked to a learning experience may affect and influence the motivation experienced by an adult learner to engage in further study. The following section seeks to clarify a number of key concepts and terms that are central to this study.

2.2 Key concepts and terminology

Key words and concepts linked to this study are: *perception, motivation, value, qualification, short course, vocational education and training, vocational applicability, promotion and promotability.*

In literature there appears to exist a variety of definitions and interpretations for each of the above concepts and / or terms. It therefore becomes necessary to provide a working definition for these key words and concepts for the purposes of this study.

2.2.1 Perception

Perception may be broadly defined as the selection, organisation and interpretation of sensory input (Weiten, 1989: 106-107). *Perception* also refers to the way in which a person experiences sights, sounds, feels, tastes or smells (Morgan, King, Weisz and Schopler 1986: 107). For the purposes of this study *perception* shall be viewed simply as, “*how Fire Fighter EMTs and Platoon Commanders view and / or experience learning programmes and events within the emergency service environment*”.

2.2.2 Motivation

Motivation may be seen as a cyclic event that is set in motion by bodily needs or environmental stimuli; these stimuli lead to goal-directed behaviour which, when achieved lead to relief (Morgan et al: 268-269). Papalia (1988: 383) defines motivation as the force responsible for arousal, direction, and persistence of behaviour.

For the purposes of this study motivation shall refer to “*the urge or desire experienced by an Emergency Service Worker to behave in a goal-directed fashion aimed at satisfying a perceived need*”.

2.2.3 Value

A value may be thought of as an “idea” an individual or individuals have regarding what is good or bad, right or wrong, desirable or undesirable (Popenoe, 1989: 58). Values are usually emotionally charged and often provide the basis for justification of a person’s behaviour. For the purposes of this study *value* shall be viewed as: “*an idea or indication of the good, worth and / or desirability of a qualification, course or learning experience as perceived by Fire Fighter EMTs and Platoon Commanders*”.

2.2.4 Qualification

The American Heritage Dictionary (2004) defines the word *qualification* as “*a quality, ability, or accomplishment that makes a person suitable for a position or task*”. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) define a qualification as “*a planned combination of learning outcomes with a defined purpose or purposes, intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning*”. An additional key defining quality according to SAQA is the number of credits. A total of 120 or more credits are required for registration of a qualification (SAQA, RSA 2004 [1]). For the purposes of this study the SAQA definitions shall apply.

2.2.5 Short Course

SAQA defines a *course* as “*the content of a learning programme whereby learners progressively apply knowledge as described in unit standards and / or qualifications. SAQA (2004)*”. A *short course* is a type of short learning programme usually consisting of less than 120 credits (CHE, 2003: 4). In this study reference to either a short course or course will refer to a short learning programme of less than 120 credits.

2.2.6 Vocational Education and Training

Education is a complex learning process that deals with unknown outcomes and circumstances, which require a complex synthesis of knowledge, skills and experience to solve problems.

Training is only one part of the educational process and is focused more on skills acquisition targeted toward the mastery of an identifiable skill that has to be mastered. (Gibbs, Bridgen and Hellenberg, 2004).

Thompson (1974) notes- the phrase *vocational education* is a generic term that has been used historically with a variety of meanings. Thompson suggests a description for vocational education as “*programmes that assist people as they develop toward occupations and or careers*”.

Although correct, the above description could arguably be applied to virtually all learning programmes. For the purposes of this study the term vocational education shall be used in reference to any “*learning programme or event that facilitates the growth and development of a Fire Fighter EMT and or Platoon Commander within the Emergency Service Environment*”.

2.2.7 Vocational Applicability

This term is derived from the following two words:

- “*Vocation*” i.e. “a persons job or occupation” or “ a strong desire to do a particular kind of work” (South African Oxford Dictionary 2000: 501)
- “*Applicable*” i.e.” able to be applied” or “suitable, relevant” (South African Oxford Dictionary 2000: 21)

The term “*Vocational Applicability*” thus encapsulates the meanings of both of the root words and when used in this study shall refer to; “*the*

extent to which the learning outcomes of a vocationally orientated qualification or course are relevant to the actual work that is being performed”.

2.2.8 Promotion

Promotion may be seen as a process by which increased responsibilities, benefits and usually remuneration are bestowed upon an individual (Statt, 1994: 270-271). Upward career movements in organisations usually take place in the form of promotion. For the purposes of this study *promotion* shall refer to “*the upward movement of individuals within the rank structure of the emergency service*”.

2.2.9 Promotability

This term is derived from the following two words:

- “*Promote*” *i.e.* “to move a person to a higher rank or position” or “to help with the progress or sale of something” (South African Oxford Dictionary, 2000: 349).
- “*Ability*” *i.e.* “being able to do something” or “cleverness; talent” (South African Oxford Dictionary, 2000: 1).

The term “*promotability*” thus encapsulates the meanings of both of the root words and when used in this study shall refer to; “*an ability to develop and or master the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights required to progress to and function at a higher level within the emergency service organisation*”.

2.3 Review of literature on perceptions, values and motivation

2.3.1 Introduction

In this section the review of adult learning literature describes how adult learners have a desire for vocational development and promotion and how such desires may in turn affect their perceptions relating to the value of particular courses and or learning events. Adult learning and motivational literature furthermore explores possible ways in which an adult learner's perceptions and desires can affect the levels of motivation experienced to select and engage meaningfully in further learning and highlights the importance of motivation on the learning process in general. The review of literature presented here focuses on how perceptions are formed; thereafter it deals with how individuals may assign value to learning events as well as the importance for the adult learner of vocational applicability in learning events. Lastly, we review literature dealing with how the motivation to engage in further learning may be influenced by the adult learners' desires for personal improvement and promotion.

2.3.2 Forming of perceptions

An individual creates a perception of an object, person, event or environment by receiving sensory input. This input is then processed and organised within the brain's cognitive structures to create meaning. The cognitive structure may be seen as a function of all of ones life experiences, learning and understandings from the moment of birth onwards. The cognitive structure continues to expand and change shape as one is exposed to new experiences (Knowles, 1998).

From the above it could thus be argued that, as no two persons will ever move through life experiencing exactly the same thing; no two cognitive structures can ever be exactly alike. Therefore, by logical extrapolation, although individuals may share similar *perceptions* on a topic or event, there will always be differences, which may be subtle or significant. In this study an

attempt is made to identify what the prevailing perceptions are of members of the JHB EMS from the Fire Fighter and Platoon Commander ranks regarding specific courses and qualifications.

2.3.3 Assigning value to learning events

Individuals tend to assign value to things according to their culture, beliefs and past experiences. However the assigning and perception of value may also be a function of circumstance and / or environment. For example: A starving man may assign a much higher value to a loaf of bread than to a free weekly bus pass; on the other hand a well fed student who needs to commute to college may do just the opposite. The circumstances and environment within which the emergency service worker functions is often directly linked to his or her rank. It could be thus argued that, if they were operating within a similar vocational environment, persons of the same rank would assign a similar (but not identical) value to vocationally orientated educational offerings. Theories of adult learning and motivation highlight the link between a learner's interest (arousal) in the subject matter and their perceptions of the personal value of the learning experience (Knowles, 1998: 48-54). Value and motivation are linked and are often based on emotion (Statt, 1994: 243).

2.3.4 Importance and value of vocational applicability

A fundamental concept underpinning educational offerings that are designed to address the needs of the adult learner is the notion of *vocational applicability*. Vocational applicability may be seen as the extent to which the learning outcomes of an educational offering equip learners with the necessary knowledge, skills and values that will enable them to be productive in the workplace (SAQA, 2004). Employers should thus rightly, under normal circumstances, direct their personnel and learning resources towards the attainment of vocationally applicable educational offerings as apposed to generic offerings, which cannot necessarily be linked to increased or enhanced productivity. The emergency services have, by nature of their operations, historically placed a strong emphasis on delivering and supporting

education and training programmes with learning outcomes that can be directly linked to the employee's job description and function within the service.

In support of the above Cloete and Bunting (2000: 43-44) note that employers, when assessing educational offerings, invariably focus on work-related skills. Where education is more vocationally orientated, learners appear to engage more readily in learning opportunities that result in the attainment of qualifications that are recognised by their employer and are also linked to promotional opportunities. The JHB EMS as an employer and service provider must continue to adapt as technological advancements are implemented in the workplace and also in response to the growing needs of the communities they serve. The workforce is thus under constant pressure to remain abreast of new technologies, practices and procedures. The retention of skills and the concept of life long learning therefore become very important in a vocational setting of this nature.

Vocational education is therefore no longer something that occurs at the start of a career, but something that continues throughout the whole of an individual's working life (Knowles, 1980: 207-212). Government reports also emphasize the significance of knowledge for work. In many service related industries and specifically the emergency service sector, there are certain professional requirements and competencies that can be directly linked to the successful achievement of recognised courses and qualifications. Posts, positions and ranks are often directly linked to and / or associated with the attainment of specified courses and qualifications (Hall & Adams, 1998: 5-10). Thus, prior to embarking on a learning experience, adult learners within this sector would most likely ask two key questions: (1) how will these learning outcomes make me better at performing my current duties? (2) If I successfully complete this course / qualification will I stand a better chance of being promoted? Therefore, in order to have a successful programme, planners must be able to design offerings that are consistent with the mandate of the sponsor (employer) and are also considered to be of value by the learner (Cooksen, 1998: 274-275). The employer in the case of this study

is the JHB EMS; the learners (employees) under consideration are the Fire Fighter EMTs and Platoon Commanders.

It could thus be argued that such learners, namely Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders would be more likely to engage meaningfully with their study material if they perceive the learning outcomes to be valuable in relation to not only the improvement of their functioning in their current position, but also to prepare them for promotion. Therefore it could be argued that the assigning of value to a learning experience could conceivably affect both the attitude as well as the levels of motivation experienced by a learner. Increased motivation levels have a significant effect on the learning process (Caffarella, 1994: 120-128). Therefore it would seem that the levels of motivation experienced by Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders to undertake further education and training might well be affected by the value these individuals place on the various courses and or qualifications.

2.3.5 Motivation and learning



As mentioned above motivation and arousal are important components of the learning process. Research in literature on motivation and learning shows a positive correlation between motivation and achievement (Parsons 2001: 284-285, Statt, 1994: 244-246). Statt (1994) notes that motivation comprises of two main components: extrinsic and intrinsic. *Extrinsic motivation* focuses on a form of reward that is not directly linked to the learning process itself. An example in the context of this study is the Fire Fighter who undertakes a hydraulics module, not because he is interested in hydraulics, but because he needs to complete the module for his pump operator's course. *Intrinsic motivation* occurs when an individual feels motivated to perform or undertake a learning event for its own sake. Aside from the components of motivation it is also worth reflecting on the actual process by which individuals become motivated.

The expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964; Statt, 1994; Parsons, 2001;) describes the *process* by which motivation occurs. This expectancy theory links an

individual's behaviour to an outcome, e.g. If I study this course or obtain this qualification (behaviour) I will be promoted (outcome). The expectancy theory proposes that before taking any action an individual asks three kinds of questions: One; If I attempt this action (study this course), how likely am I to succeed? (Expectancy). Two; Will successful action (passing) lead to the desired outcomes (promotion / instrumentality)? Three; How much do I *value* these outcomes? (Valence).

Whilst the expectancy theory deals more with the *process* by which motivation occurs, Ormrod (2004) deals with the effect motivation has on the learning process. Ormrod notes that motivation appears to affect learning itself in at least four ways:

- *Motivation increases energy and activity levels* (Maehr & Meyer 1997; Pintrich and Maehr 1993; Vernon 1996). It thus influences the extent to which an individual will engage *meaningfully* in a certain activity.
- *Motivation directs an individual towards certain goals* (Dweck & Elliot 1983; Eccle & Wigfield, 1985; Maehr & Meyer 1997). Thus it indirectly affects the choices people make.
- *Motivation promotes initiation of certain activities and persistence in those activities.* (Eccles & Wigfield, 1985; Maehr & Meyer 1997; Pintrich et al, 1993; Stipek, 1993).
- *Motivation affects learning strategies and cognitive processes* (Dweck & Elliot, 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 1985)

The above motivational theories, if extrapolated to the field of vocational education, would seem to indicate that motivation has an effect on the learning process as a whole and that the intrinsic motivation experienced by adult learners when undertaking a learning activity merely because it is

enjoyable plays a far less significant role in motivation than extrinsically linked outcomes such as higher wages and / or promotion.

Based on the above it could thus be argued that both the Fire Fighter EMTs and Platoon Commanders should be more motivated to complete courses and qualifications that will lead to higher wages and promotion than those which (although they may be applicable and of interest) cannot be directly linked to upward mobility. Cross (1981), also argues that learning that will improve ones position in life is a major motivation to study. Young people are especially interested in education for upward career mobility (promotion).

Much research in adult learning and motivation has already been done on what specifically motivates adults to study further. A 1984 triennial survey by an American body, the National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES) revealed that 64 percent of adult education participants were involved in adult education either to become employed or to become promoted. (Snyder, 1988). Locally, the White Paper on Education specifically mentions that graduate and knowledge outputs of higher education must to an increasing extent meet the needs of a modernising economy (DoE, 1997: 2.91). The National Training Board (NTB) in its strategy initiative document mentions that education and training should be, and remain relevant to the national needs, industry and sectoral needs and also individual development needs.

As can be seen, there are indeed a number of factors that may determine how an adult learner forms a perception regarding the value of a qualification and / or learning experience, furthermore the literature reviewed suggests that the majority of learning, which takes place after school and in higher education, is geared toward the attainment of and / or furtherance of employment opportunities. Higher paying jobs generally go to workers with more education and training; additional training and further education are important to prepare for work and promotion. (Wanat, Pfeiffer, Weston & Van Gulik 1999: 261). Similarly the emergency services have a well-defined organisational hierarchy and rank structure with increased benefits and remuneration the higher up one progresses. It could thus again be argued that

the desire to specifically secure these additional benefits may serve as an important source of motivation for Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders within the service to undertake particular courses and or pursue specific qualifications.

2.4 Summary

Literature in adult learning and motivation indicates that adult learners are far more likely to assign value to learning events that they perceive as having a vocationally linked benefit or useful outcome. In addition there is a general expectation that success in further studies will lead to career advancement and promotion. These factors in turn play a significant role in motivating the adult learner to select and engage in further studies. Motivation in turn has a direct effect on the success of a learning process. It therefore becomes important to identify what the perceptions are of JHB EMS personnel regarding the vocational applicability of educational offerings as well the perceived linkage between further study and promotion within the service.

The following chapter explains how these perceptions were identified, analysed, interpreted and described.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the previous Chapter, this study aims to investigate prevailing perceptions Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders have and the value they attribute to vocationally orientated courses and qualifications with specific reference to their vocational applicability and increased promotional opportunity (promotability). This Chapter will focus on describing and validating the research design and methodology which was applied. Following this shall be a more detailed discussion on the methodology selected and the steps taken to gather, analyse and interpret the valuable data necessary for this study.



3.2 Qualitative research design

As this study attempted to explore and describe the Fire Fighters' and Platoon Commanders' perceptions and views a generic qualitative research design was selected. In this regard (Leedy, 1997: 160-162) notes that generic qualitative research designs best attempt to understand participant's perceptions and views. Furthermore qualitative designs, such as the one chosen for this study, are commonly used for social and educational research activities as they lend themselves more toward the collection and analysis of qualitative data (Babbie, 1995: 280-281).

Grahame (1999: 4-6) also notes that many authors, when attempting to explain and / or define the concept of qualitative research, find it valuable to highlight the differences between the quantitative and qualitative approaches. Although the idea that describing qualitative research as generally non-quantitative may be correct, it still remains largely uninformative (Grahame,

1999: 4). Silverman (2005: 2) notes that qualitative research covers a wide range of different, even conflicting, activities. The word “*qualitative*” in qualitative research refers not only to the research method and activities applied by the researcher but also provides an indication of the very nature of the data or evidence to be collected. Whilst *quantitative* research focuses mainly on data obtained by measurements, which may be statistically analysed, *qualitative* research on the other hand focuses on investigating and describing a phenomenon as it occurs (Polgart & Thomas, 1995:109-110).

Taking the above into consideration it became evident that the very nature of the data itself, which was to be collected for this study, played a significant role in the determination of a suitable research design. The data that was gathered and analysed during this study consisted of the participants’ ideas, views, and perceptions. The Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders who participated in this study each have individual perceptions, views and beliefs which needed to be obtained, analysed and described in an attempt to achieve the aims of the study. These perceptions, views and ideas could not be easily obtained by measurement, nor did they lend themselves to statistical analysis - for these reasons a quantitative design would not have been suitable. Therefore it was with reference to both the nature of the data, which needed to be collected as well as the primary aims and objectives of this study that a generic qualitative research design was selected. It was felt that such a design indeed allowed for, and supported, the gathering, unpacking and describing of the perceptions, views and experiences of the participants (Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders).

Within generic qualitative research designs there exist a number of relevant methods that may be used to gather such data. The following section deals more specifically with the specific research method that was selected for collecting data for the purpose of this study.

3.3 Research method

3.3.1 Introduction

In qualitative research literature, a vast number of research methods and specific data gathering techniques were found that may be applied within a generic qualitative research design such as the one selected for this study. Silverman (2005: 11-12) notes that there the main methods used by qualitative researchers to gather data are; observation, analysis of texts and documents, interviews, recording and transcribing. Silverman goes on to mention that these methods are often combined. After considering all these possibilities it was felt that for the purposes of this study, in-depth interviews would be best suited for the gathering of valuable and meaningful data.

3.3.2 In-depth Interviews

Whilst different types of interview are described in research literature, in-depth interviews were ultimately selected to gather data for the purpose of this study. This type of interview is thought to be a suitable method if the aim is to understand and document others understandings (Silverman, 2005: 99-101). Thus, the data for this study was gathered by undertaking face-to-face in-depth interviews with Fire Fighter and Platoon Commanders. Fielding (2003); notes that the term “*depth*” interview has grown in popularity in, amongst other areas, studies of human relations in industry. This fits in well with the context of this study, which occurs within the domain of vocationally orientated education within the emergency service industry. The interviews conducted were audio recorded and transcripts were produced which constituted the raw data for analysis. The next section provides a description of the activities undertaken to prepare for and conduct the in-depth interviews.

3.3.3 Interview procedure

The way in which the interviews were planned and conducted would ultimately impact on the validity, reliability and value of the data obtained. For this reason a number of steps and actions were taken by the researcher in an attempt to gather as much valid and reliable data as possible from the interview conducted.

The Principal of the JHB EMS (Brixton) Training Academy was contacted and dates were confirmed for the interviews. The Fire Fighter interviews were set for Monday 28th August 2006 and the Platoon Commanders were scheduled for the following day Tuesday 29th August 2006.

Prior to these dates a site visit to identify and inspect a suitable venue for the interviews at the in-house Brixton Fire Fighter training academy was conducted by the researcher. It was felt that the academy's library would serve as a suitable venue. The Library was dedicated to the researcher on the days of the interviews and provided good acoustics for the voice recordings.

Six suitable willing participants were identified and each was provided with a written invitation to participate in the study (Annexure B).

After the participants had indicated their willingness to participate in the interviews it was confirmed with the Principal that they were indeed from the desired ranks and levels to be investigated in the study.

Prior to the start of the interviews an assessment was done in the venue to test the recording equipment that was to be used. In this instance it was decided to make use of two independent recording devices. The first was a conventional magnetic tape audio recorder which was placed onto the desk between the researcher and the subject, a second digital audio recorder was also used and the microphone was clipped to the collar of the subject. Both of these recording devices functioned well. The digital recorder had the

advantage of the microphone being much closer to the subject and the responses were found to be much louder and clearer.

The interviews were conducted according to a predetermined agenda (Annexure D). A trial run was conducted with a colleague beforehand to gauge the suitability of the time allocated to each area. In general it was found that the interviews ran slightly longer than the time scheduled in the agenda however none of the interviews exceeded the maximum allocation. The researcher had allocated a 15-minute gap between interviews to compensate for such an eventuality.

Prior to beginning each interview the participants were welcomed and thanked for their time and participation. They were given a brief verbal description of the purpose of the study and the terminology used. They were reminded that it was their honest perceptions that were required and that there were no right or wrong answers. After this they were asked if they had any further questions; finally they were required to read and sign the consent form (Annexure C).

A “do not disturb” sign was hung on the door to avoid any interruptions whilst the interviews were in progress. Each interview was divided into two sections, each section dealt with one of the two main areas central to the outcomes of the study. These areas of vocational applicability and promotion with respect to courses and / or qualifications were probed by making use of the 14 specifically designed questions (Pg 29).

As mentioned above the interviews were audio recorded. On conclusion of each interview the participant was once again thanked for their participation and the researcher mentioned that they would each receive their own copy of the completed report should they wish.

The researcher then transcribed the audio recordings of each interview. The transcriptions were done in such a way as to provide raw data in the form of a

written “*verbatim*” record of both the questions and responses for each interview (Annexure G1-G6).

The interview techniques and questions were thus specifically selected, constructed and applied to explore and document the views and perceptions of the Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders.

3.4 Sample and selection of participants

3.4.1 Sampling strategy

Purposeful convenience sampling was decided upon so as to ensure that the individuals interviewed did indeed possess the qualifications and experience required for their rank and position within the service. This was necessary in order to ensure that the persons interviewed would be a source of rich and valuable information thereby increase the utility of data obtained from the relatively small sample (Leedy, 1997:162). The principal of the in-house training academy assisted the researcher in identifying suitable individuals from the Fire Fighter and Platoon Commander ranks who were then invited to partake in the study.

3.4.2 Participants

As explained above suitable individuals from the Fire Fighter and Platoon Commander ranks were identified and invited to participate in the study. It was decided to conduct in depth interviews with four Fire Fighters and two Platoon Commanders. It was felt that these numbers were such that they should provide sufficient valuable data to meet the objectives of the study. An option did exist to perform additional interviews with more participants should insufficient data be obtained from the initial set of interviews, however, in the case of this study it did not become necessary to conduct additional interviews as the data was saturated after the six interviews originally arranged.

3.5 Data analysis

Babbie (1995: 296) notes that, data, once gathered, should be structured and analysed using inductive logic focused specifically at attempting to identify any similarities and dissimilarities. Transcriptions of the responses to the interview questions were carefully analysed. The aim of this analysis was to attempt to identify and extract valuable information, themes, trends, concepts and / or ideas which were of relevance and could be linked to the aim and objectives of this study. In order to accomplish this all the individual responses to the interview questions were reviewed and analysed. Introspective analysis was undertaken of underlying themes and patterns that were identified (Babbie, 1995: 297). The results of data analysis, interpretation and findings of this study are presented in Chapter 4 and 5 of this research report.

3.6 Reliability and validity

3.6.1 Introduction



Leedy (1997:32-34) notes that validity is concerned with the soundness and effectiveness of the research tool and that reliability is the consistency with which the measuring instrument performs. In the case of this study it become important to ensure that the way in which the interviews were conducted and the methods used to subsequently document, analyse and interpret the data were both valid and reliable. The following section describes the steps taken by the researcher in an attempt to adequately address issues of validity and reliability for this study.

3.6.2 Measures taken to address validity and reliability

As mentioned in Chapter 1 the main aim and focus of this study centred on the determination, documentation and description of prevailing perceptions, attitudes and beliefs as experienced and expressed by the participants with regard to the value of their qualifications with particular reference to vocational applicability and promotability within the service. In order to do this in-depth

interviews were conducted with Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders in order to gather data for this study. The principle aim in interviewing is obtaining valid and reliable information (Fielding, 2003: 11). In this study issues of validity and reliability were addressed in a number of ways, one of which being the use of specially pre-designed questions. These questions were carefully constructed prior to and applied during the interviews in order to lend validity and focus to the data gathering activities. Another possible strategy for promoting validity and reliability within the context of such qualitative study is to ensure that the researcher is able to provide rich and thick descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam & Associates 2002). For this reason additional probing questions were added in order to elicit more detailed responses when necessary.

The researcher also attempted to provide the reader with a detailed account of the methods and procedures linked to the gathering and subsequent management of the data linked to this study thereby establishing a clear audit trail. Voice recordings (with permission), transcribing by the researcher together with note-taking during the interviews and members checks were conducted to further address issues of validity and reliability. At all times attempts were made to establish a strong chain of evidence between the research questions, methodology, raw data and the findings to strengthen the validity of this study (Leedy 1997: 169). Finally critical self-reflection by the researcher regarding the processes of data analysis and interpretation coupled with adequate engagement in data collection also contributed toward ensuring validity and reliability in this study (Merriam & Associates, 2002)

Taking the above into account it also became apparent to the researcher that the validity and reliability of the data collected for this study would significantly depend on the degree of success achieved when actually conducting the interviews. Fielding (2003) mentions that the success of an *in-depth interview* depends on the following important facets:

One must have a clear frame of reference that provides a bridge between the types of information needed, and the techniques employed to obtain it.

In the case of these interviews the frame of reference was determined by the aims, objectives and scope of the study. The agenda and the fourteen specially designed interview questions (pg 24-25 and Annexure E & F) were specifically designed and aimed at achieving sufficient depth of responses relating to the two focus areas of investigation (vocational applicability and promotion):

The interviewer must be sufficiently skilled and sensitive to detect which dimension they are dealing with at any given moment during the interview.

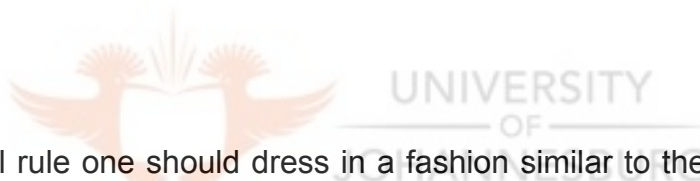
Therefore a number of texts describing various methods of interviewing and the interpretation of responses were consulted by the researcher in preparation for these interviews. In addition as a professional emergency care practitioner the researcher felt sufficiently confident that he would be able to correctly interview the participants, record, document and interpret the responses. The questions were divided into two main categories, those dealing with the issues of vocational applicability and those dealing with promotion.

The interviewer must be skilled in the techniques applicable to each dimension.

As mentioned, use was made of specifically designed questions and prompts to elicit the required answers and to focus discussion in the areas related to the objectives of the study. Failure to achieve sufficient depth in information gathered is also often linked to communication barriers. The “depth” of any item of information depends on its meaning for the participant, which in turn, relates to how he or she perceives the relationship between the information and the context in which it is given (Fielding 2003: 171). In this study the frame of reference is attitudes, perceptions and views regarding courses, qualifications and / or learning events within the emergency service environment.

Mindful of the above and in order to obtain honest responses it became important to identify and acknowledge the existence of potential barriers that may have prevented or hindered participants from opening up completely and providing the depth of information and responses required. In this regard it became relevant to mention that the emergency services have by nature historically operated on a paramilitary basis. Such an environment is not always conducive to the development and recognition of individual, attitudes, views and perceptions. Thus a concern from the onset of this study was to what degree the researcher would be able to create an environment of trust, openness and honesty that would encourage meaningful dialogue in the interview sessions. Babbie (1995) identifies certain barriers which may affect the validity and reliability of information gathered during an interview. These barriers are mentioned below along with a description of the way in which the researcher attempted to overcome the particular barrier in this study.

Appearance



As a general rule one should dress in a fashion similar to the persons being interviewed. The persons being interviewed were on duty at the time and were wearing uniform; for this reason (and as a member of the profession) the researcher decided to wear his uniform; however he removed all rank and qualification insignia. It was decided to remove qualification badges and any other insignia that may have been linked to rank so that it would be easier for the participants to interact with the researcher on a similar level as apposed to either as a superior or a subordinate.

Demeanour

An attempt was made to be relaxed and friendly without coming across as casual, clingy or false.

Approach

Interviews are more successful if the person being interviewed feels more comfortable with the interviewer (Babbie, 1995: 266). Therefore early on in the interviews attempts were made to try and relax the participants. The order of questions was structured in such a way as to start with the more straightforward questions and once the participant was more relaxed and engaged in the interview to then deal with the more complex core issues.

Coordination and control

As these interviews were aimed at eliciting honest opinion, sharing views and experiences it was also important to avoid making value statements and judgments relating to the responses. This included, being mindful of one's own body language. In addition, whilst allowing the participants the latitude to freely express themselves, the interview had to be kept on track in terms of the agenda and time allocated to conduct the interview.

During the interviews use was made of both open and closed questions (Annexure E & F) which were designed to specifically elicit responses pertinent to the objectives of the study. Closed questions were used to gather specific biographical and empirical data such as the individual's qualifications and rank. Although this information was certainly not central to the aims and objectives of the study it was felt that it may serve as a basis for the identification of trends or patterns. Open questions were utilised to allow the interviewees ample room to express their views, attitudes and beliefs about the value they place on their qualifications regarding vocational applicability and promotional opportunity (Babbie, 1995: 142-143). Prompts were used where necessary to encourage the participants to share their views and perceptions in a complete, detailed and in-depth fashion.

Environment

In an attempt to relax the participant it was decided to hold the interviews in a neutral but familiar environment away from the station where they worked. A venue was made available at the training unit of the service. The area used was quiet, secure and dedicated solely for the interviews.

3.7 Summary

In this Chapter the research design and methodology selected for this study were described along with the rationale behind their selection. A generic qualitative research design was applied. Data was gathered through in-depth interviews with a purposefully selected sample of operational staff. The interviews were structured and conducted in such a way as to obtain sufficient valuable, valid and reliable data necessary for the achievement of the aims and objectives of the study. The raw data, once captured, was structured and analysed using inductive logical analysis, where after it was interpreted to derive at findings which were presented in the form of a research report.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the previous chapter accurate transcripts (Annexure G1-G6) were produced from in-depth interviews which were conducted with a purposefully selected sample of Fire Fighter EMTs and Platoon Commanders from the Emergency Service. Four Fire Fighters and two Platoon Commanders participated in these interviews with the researcher. In this Chapter 1 explain how the data gathered from these interviews was analysed and interpreted.

As mentioned above Chapter 3 explains how fourteen specially designed questions were posed to each of the participants during an in-depth interview with the researcher, (See Annexures E & F). This was conducted in an attempt to extract as much valuable data as possible relating to the aim and objectives of this study. Transcriptions of the interviews referred to in the Chapter 3 were produced and then carefully analysed by the researcher (See Annexure G1- G6).

Each of the questions was analysed - the analysis was aimed at identifying and extracting valuable information, themes, trends, concepts and ideas which were of relevance and could be linked to the aim and objectives of this study. The questions, analysis and interpretation thereof were thus directed and focused on the two core concepts and outcomes of this study: firstly to establish the views and perceptions Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders have regarding the vocational applicability of courses and qualifications within the service; and secondly to determine their perceptions relating to the value of such courses and or qualifications in relation to promotion.

The analysis and interpretative processes mentioned above were conducted by firstly attempting to describe and classify the raw data, which consisted of

verbatim transcripts of the interviews. The researcher then through the use of inductive logic, reasoning and introspective analysis attempted to interpret the responses in order to identify themes, trends, concepts and ideas which could address the aim and objectives of this study and which could also be linked to sufficient supporting evidence. Next the analysis of data from each question will be described and explained.

4.2 Analysis of questions on vocational applicability

4.2.1 Question One: In keeping with the theory that humans are life long learners, who learn not only from formal educational opportunities but also through daily activities and interactions, which areas linked to your current vocational activities do you feel you would most like to develop and why?

This question was designed to gather data relating specifically to the current vocational activities of the participants as well as their desire to improve and or develop in a particular area.

Responses from the Fire Fighters to this question were quite varied and seemed to indicate a desire for development in a specific discipline such as either Fire, Medical and / or Rescue. Of the four participants, one indicated Urban Search and Rescue as an area he would like to develop: *“At the moment I would like to develop myself in urban search & rescue”* (FF1; 4); two participants indicated Medical: *“I say the medical part is the one that I really prefer to go mostly forward with it because it does not only end when in uniform”* (FF3; 1), and another desired for development in the Fire Technology area.

Regarding their position within the service it was interesting to note that both Platoon Commanders mentioned a desire for development in more generic areas such as personnel management, communication and people skills: *“.. my own people skills for one..”, “..the guys we are going to employ, I need to*

learn to communicate with them properly..” (PC1; 1) “..I think Platoon Commanders should be developed more in the managerial human relationship type of area...” (PC2; 1). These responses seem to indicate and confirm a desire or need for learning events / courses which are applicable to the actual daily work of the Platoon Commanders who are by nature of their job descriptions are expected to interact with, supervise and manage the Fire Fighters on their shift. Neither of the Platoon Commanders interviewed felt that these types of learning outcomes were adequately catered for in the Fire Fighter I, Fire Fighter II, and BAA / AEA courses they had already completed. *“..there is not much emphasis on human relations, people management, that type of thing, administration, that type of stuff..” (PC2I; 1). “If you do your courses for example BAA and stuff, you are going to interact with people and you are going to pick up people skills but it might not necessarily the right people skills” (PC2; 1).*

As mentioned above the Fire Fighters interviewed indicated a desire for development in specific areas or disciplines related to their operational activities within the service *“...in our department right now we don’t have the rescue technicians we have mostly guys doing fire fighting, ambulance EMT ambulance assistants so I think if I can develop myself there we can have rescue, rescue technicians.. Maybe we can man our own station...” (FF4; 1).*

Although the desired areas for development varied between the Fire Fighters, the motivations for development seemed more common and centred around frustrations and challenges experienced by being limited in the level of service they are able to deliver to the public. *“...well you know in our work we got different departments, we got different departments. Different challenges..” (FFI; 1) and “..I think they get more challenge in the medical..” (FFII; 2).* There was also a strong desire expressed to undergo learning events which would ensure that they are kept up to date with new technologies, trends and procedures. *“I still need to develop myself according to the way that technology is growing” (FFI; 1).*

4.2.2 Question Two: *What do you feel are the motivating factors and reasons why people within the service undertake further studies?*

This question was aimed at exploring what motivated the participants to study further and attempted to establish if the motivating factors were in anyway related to increased or improved vocational function.

Responses to this question were in many ways similar to those noted for question one with participants citing the desire to meet the challenges faced when on the job as a motivation to study further. *"..challenges that we meet will definitely push us for more studies.." (FF1; 2)*

The Fire Fighters appeared to be more motivated by a desire to increase their level of knowledge, skills and expertise relating to specific areas of service delivery than general development in terms of promotion: *"..like when we are BAC and as a fire fighter we cannot put an IV line and when we get to a patient you feel you can help them; you know how to put an IV line but because of your protocol does not allow me to do that" (FF2; 2).*

It was interesting to note that the Platoon Commanders' responses to this question indicated that they seemed to be more motivated by desires for self-development and they did not provide the same concrete and pragmatic examples of service delivery to the public as referred to by the Fire Fighters. *"Well, personally myself, to further myself..." (PC1; 2)* *"..Nobody can take away my knowledge, that's one thing I know for sure and that's why I would do it, make myself a better person.." (PC1; 2).* *"Personal development, personal achievement..., even going private ...we all want self realisation at the end of the day" (PC2; 2).*

4.2.3 *Question Three: Do you feel that your current level of education and training empowers you to confidently function within your daily work environment? Are there any types of call or incidents, which you feel you would like to be better prepared to deal with?*

Question three above, although similar to question one, was purposefully more closed and attempted to elicit from the participants responses that were more direct and definite regarding their views on both their current level of competence and on their perceived need for development in a specific vocational activity or area.

Five of the six participants were of the opinion that their level of education and training did not empower them to confidently manage all types of calls and / or incidents. This seemed to indicate a need amongst the Fire Fighters for more extensive training in the areas of tactical fire fighting specifically in large structures, medical care and technical rescue. Mentioned by more than one Fire Fighter was the need for aquatic and swift water rescue training as well as specialised rescue courses, such as heavy vehicle rescue which is not currently offered by the service. Responses included: *"I feel that I still lack a lot"* (FF1; 3) *"most of the structures or houses if there's a fire you will see there is more water damage to them for the actual fire actually, you see, so things like that can be avoided.."* (FF1; 3) (Reference to structural fire fighting) *"we are not dealing with heavy motor vehicles rescue so we need to do things like that."* (FF1; 4) *"..incidences do happen whereby accidentally not awaiting it now you go with these people knowing you are a medic and fire fighter already know they rely on you because they saw other people in the same uniform you are wearing have rescued other people somewhere, now they don't know there is a limitation and there is a training one has to go through , now those things are forces you to study more.."* (FF3; 2) (Comment made in relation to water rescue); *"..large building fires, the only thing to see this buildings going to collapse, you must at least have ...at least have a knowledge how ...how... what signs that the building can collapse you must look at the signs before you can even send the guys inside."* (FF4; 3) *" at the*

level of AEA there is not much you can do for paediatrics under 12 years,” (FF3; 3).

Only one participant, a Platoon Commander indicated that in their opinion their current level of education and training was adequate and in fact in his opinion exceeded that required for his current position. *“My personal qualifications, yes, although as I’ve said...I’m far more overqualified than anyone else.” (PC2; 2)*

4.2.4 Question four: *Of the courses / qualifications you have completed, which, in your opinion do you perceive as being most applicable to your current daily functioning as a Platoon Commander / Fire Fighter EMT? Why do you say so?*

Question four was central to the topic of vocational applicability linked to the rank and position of the participants within the service and required not only a response but also attempted to establish the rationale behind the answers given.

All of the Fire Fighters were of the opinion that the medical courses such as BAC and AEA were the most applicable to their current functioning. When asked why, they indicated the reason was that most of their daily work was ambulance work and that they attended far more ambulance related calls than fire / rescue callouts. *“ Oh because mostly the call that I get is medical calls... but most of my working days I spend on the ambulance” (FF2; 3); “more ambulance calls than rescues and so on” (FF4; 4).*

One of the Platoon Commanders on the other hand felt that it was quite difficult to make such a decision as they felt all the courses they had done were necessary for their daily functioning; when pushed for an answer they chose fire and rescue as more important. (Platoon Commanders do not normally spend large amounts of time on ambulance duty.) *“I think they are all valuable, but the most valuable would be my fire qualifications because we*

get called out to fire and rescue a lot.” (PC1; 6) The other selected personnel management and relations. (Not a course offered in house by the service.)

4.2.5 Question Five: Are there any courses / qualifications and / or learning events that you feel did not, or will not, really add value to your current daily functioning as a Platoon Commander / Fire Fighter EMT ? Why do you say so?

Question five attempted to elicit specific responses and provide concrete examples of particular courses and / or qualifications which the participants felt encompassed learning outcomes which were not applicable to or did not improve the daily functioning of the participants. In addition the participants were also required to provide substantiating arguments clarifying why they held a particular perception.

Responses however also indicated that there were very few specific courses that were seen as having limited value; those that were, appeared to be viewed as not adding value simply because their learning outcomes would not be used very frequently, if at all. In this regard two of the Fire Fighters mentioned that the Peace Officers course they were sent on was not adding value and they felt it was a waste of time because they are not able to practice any of those skills. *“So it (peace officers course) was just nice to know and to acquire that because if you cannot practice what you have been taught apparently then it doesn’t have that much value I suppose...” (FF3; 4)* The same problem was mentioned by another Fire Fighter when he commented that he had done certain specialised rescue courses but he was sent to a station where they did not have the equipment , nor did they respond to those type of calls for which he was trained. *“I am saying even since one has qualified on 2002 on the very same course none of the events that we went to needed much of the hazmat operations but only the oil spillages that we do every day like by covering with absorbents, like even fire fighter I, fire fighter II person can do as well” (FF3; 4)“ ...we are prepared but we are not*

doing what we went for at school, like we went to school for being rescue technicians but we are still doing fire fighting courses..” (FF4;1)

4.2.6 Question Six: Are there any new skills that you would like to develop which you feel are not adequately catered for by the current courses and or qualifications that are on offer? How would these skills make you a better Platoon Commander / Fire Fighter EMT ?

This question, which has a strong link to question three, required each participant to indicate and reconfirm their perceived developmental areas. In addition to this they were also required to provide some insight as to why they felt development in a particular area would impact positively on their current operational functioning.

The Fire Fighters interviewed were of the opinion that the Fire Fighter I, Fire Fighter II , BAA and AEA courses, which form the backbone of their training, were indeed vocationally applicable. However they indicated they felt they still lacked the following skills which they hoped to develop and which would make them better at their jobs:

- Specialised Rescue Skills (Water Rescue, Trench Rescue, High angle Rescue, Heavy Vehicle Rescue)
- Communication and Public Relation skills
- Disaster management skills
- Tactical structural Fire Fighting knowledge and skills

The Platoon Commanders mentioned the following areas which seemed to be more focused on generic management type development:

- Administrative skills
- Management skills
- Leadership skills

4.2.7 *Question Seven: Your service renders a fire fighting, rescue as well as emergency medical service. Do you feel that there are equal opportunities for staff to study either medical, rescue and or fire related courses? Why do you say so?*

Question seven is the final question of those focused on the area of vocational applicability. The participants, having spoken about vocational applicability of courses and or qualifications as well as their personal desires for development in certain disciplines and or areas are finally required to share their views on the extent to which they believe the service actively supporting such further education, training and or development.

All of the Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders interviewed indicated that they felt that there was not an equal opportunity for staff to study fire, rescue and medical courses within the service. With the exception of one platoon commander who felt medical was more emphasised at present all the others felt that there was a major problem furthering the medical qualifications because their in-house academy had lost its accreditation and the service was not seen to be supporting staff who wished to study outside of the in-house training structures. *“we don’t have some accreditation for medical courses and then it end up people being stuck with a BAC if you want to do AEA it’s going to take you some time some years and then it end up demoralising some people”* (FF3; 6) It was also felt that the opportunity to study further into the rescue field was limited as more emphasis was placed on fire training. *“most of the training is in the fire..”* (FF1; 7) In addition it appears as if persons at different stations are not offered the same or similar opportunities to study in a particular direction. *“..so I wouldn’t really say that’s equal chances depending on the station you are based at..”* (FF1; 7). There is also a perception that the rescue courses are at the bottom of the list of training opportunities. *“they are not, they are not equal... especially when coming on the rescue side. like when you join this department...the only thing that they are looking for is fire and ambulance..”* (FF4; 7)

4.3 Interpretation of analysis on vocational applicability

Responses to the above questions aimed at exploring the area of vocational applicability seemed to be linked to two main areas (a) the respondent's position within the service, and (b) a personal preference for a particular discipline within the service such as either Fire, Medical or Rescue. This was specifically evidenced by the responses to questions one and three. Questions two, four and six which seem to indicate that the Fire Fighters interviewed generally sought development that could be linked to operational activities and keeping abreast of technological advancements. The Platoon Commanders on the other hand sought more generic development along the lines of management. Either way a general need for courses and learning events with a high level of vocational applicability was expressed.

In line with the above, the responses of the Fire Fighters to question two, which dealt with the motivation to undertake further study, seemed to indicate that their motivation to study further was more often linked to a desire to increase their technical proficiency and / or scopes of practice and in so doing empower themselves to render a more specialised Fire / Rescue service and / or to provide higher level of medical care for their patients. Platoon Commanders on the other hand seemed more motivated by a general desire for self-development. It was also interesting to note that although two participants mentioned promotion it did not seem to feature as a major motivating factor for further study. This is in contrast to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 where it is argued that promotion and the desire for more money and benefits are seen as playing a major role in motivating people to study further (Snyder 1988). This difference may be attributed to the very nature of emergency services work and the type of personality that chooses to engage in such a career within the public sector, where it is generally accepted that one enters the profession as a calling and the focus is more on job satisfaction than accumulating wealth.

An obvious and expected linkage was noted between how frequently one utilises a learning outcome or outcomes in one's job and the degree of vocational applicability attributed to such outcomes. Simply put, since most of their time is spent on ambulance duty and there are far more ambulance / medical calls than Fire and / or Rescue calls, the Fire Fighters rated their medical courses as being more vocationally applicable than the Fire or Rescue courses. Platoon Commanders, who due to their rank and position do not spend as much time on ambulance and / or with medical duties, did not highlight the medical courses as being more vocationally applicable than the others; rather they appeared to attributed a higher rating to fire and rescue and management courses. The participant's overall responses seem to indicate that there were in fact relatively few courses which were perceived as being of no value. Those that were mentioned such as the peace officers course seem to be viewed as not adding value mainly due (as mentioned above) to the fact that the participants are not in a position to actually utilize the learning outcomes.

A similar perception appears to be held about certain of the specialised rescue courses, where participants indicate that, after completion of a particular specialised course such as hazmat, trench rescue; etc they are often unable to apply the learning outcomes. This inability to apply and practice their newfound knowledge and skills seems to be either because there are very few calls or incidents that require such skills or because they are placed at stations and / or areas which lack the specialised equipment thereby preventing them practicing those skills. Again it seems as if the perception and assigning of vocational value to certain courses appears to be linked to the desires of the participants to function within a certain domain or environment i.e. Fire Ambulance or Rescue.

Analysis of the responses to questions three, four and six appear to indicate that although the existing courses offered by the service were perceived to be vocationally applicable, all of the participants continue to perceive a need for development in areas which they felt were not adequately catered for in the existing courses that are on offer. In addressing question three many of the

participants shared the perception that their current level of education and training is insufficient in providing them with the confidence to manage certain types of incidents. Responses to question seven seemed to indicate that there was a general perception that the participants are not afforded an equal opportunity to further their education in the Fire, Medical or Rescue fields. In this regard it was interesting to note that in a service such as JHB EMS, where the vast majority of the daily work and calls are allegedly of a medical nature, the participants felt there are in fact more opportunities and greater emphasis is placed on studying fire related courses. One must accept that by its very nature, work within the emergency services is varied and both the type and scale of incidents that workers are expected to deal with varies and cannot always be predicted. It should also be accepted that education and training in such an environment will never be able to fully prepare workers for all eventualities. However it was concerning to note that responses to question three appear to indicate that certain of the participants lacked confidence and perceived deficiencies in their current education and training in areas that may be linked to fairly common types of incidents and calls, e.g. structural fires, water rescues and paediatric emergency calls. Assuming that confidence in dealing with such situations goes beyond simply having completed training in that area and also requires a certain amount of operational experience, feedback and / or mentoring on one's performance, there may well be a deficiency in this area which could be contributing to the formation of the above perceptions. This, as mentioned in Chapter 1, may be possibly be linked to the amalgamation and transformation of the service which has seen the exodus of a vast number of experienced staff who are no longer able to provide operational mentorship and guidance.

4.4 Analysis of questions on promotion

4.4.1 Question One: Do you have a clear idea of where you see yourself in the service five years from now? What informed this "idea"?

This question was used in an attempt to establish to what degree the participants had planned their careers within the service, what were their

ambitions and aspirations and also what type of factors played a role in informing these views.

All of the responses to this question appeared to lack confidence, clarity and specificity. *"I've thought about being someone...maybe a leader..."* (FF4; 9). None of the responses indicated some form of linear promotion, e.g. to station commander or platoon commander. *"I don't see myself as a station commander what I want to do..... my main ambition is that I want to work on the air on the chopper.."* (FF3; 6). Responses from the Fire Fighters were all somewhat negative in terms of their future prospects for promotion within the service. One mentioned that they felt they would have to leave the service or apply elsewhere if they wanted promotion. *"..I think I will stay in the same position if I stay in the department I will have to apply somewhere else.."* (FF2; 7).

Only one respondent, a Platoon Commander was slightly more direct mentioning that they saw themselves as being head of a section at the training academy; *"..now I do see myself in five years being the head of a section in the academy.."* (PC1; 12). The other stated that they saw themselves in exactly the same position as they were at the time of the interview. *"..I don't know, at the end of the day I still see myself where I am..."* (PC2; 7)

4.4.2 Question Two: *What are the reasons why you would like to be promoted?*

This question attempted to establish why the participants would like to be promoted and what benefits they associated with promotion.

In the responses to this question the participants focused more on a personal need for recognition and respect by the service for hard work, competency, knowledge and or experience. *"It's a sign that people recognise how hard you work and they are giving you that opportunity to progress..... you do feel respected and valued"* (PC1; 13) *"..why? Because I feel that I'm doing my job*

to the best of my ability and I need to be recognised for that... I need the recognition...” (FF1; 8) *“Well I work very hard...”* (PC1; 13)

Not one of the participants mentioned material benefits such as more money; it is interesting to note that this is in direct opposition to certain of the literature reviewed that argues that the desire for material benefits is a major motivation for promotion: *“... recognition, but not so much financial enrichment, that’s totally a different story...”* (PC2; 7).

Questions three and four are linked and were aimed at exploring the participants’ views on how the completion of courses and further study impacts on their promotability within the service. Responses to the two questions were found to be similar and, for that reason the analysis has been consolidated and is discussed below.

4.4.3 *Question three: Do you perceive any link between the completion of courses and / or qualifications and promotion in your service?*

4.4.4 *Question four: How confident are you that by undertaking further studies you will stand a better chance of being promoted?*

There was general agreement from the participants that there should be a strong link between qualifications and promotion: *“study should definitely contribute in terms of my promotion.”* (FF1; 8) *“I wouldn’t like to be promoted without having the qualifications, I would like to have the qualifications to know if I am promoted to this level I can really do what I am promoted to do”* (FF2; 6). However, only one of the participants (a Fire Fighter) perceived such a link; all of the other participants felt that such a link was currently not evident in this service: *“Not in this current service”* (PC2;8), *“..Nowadays no..”* (PC1; 14), *“Not exactly..”* (FF1; 8), *“No I don’t think so.”* (FF2; 9) Instead they felt that studying further was not currently leading to any better chance of being promoted. *“...lots of people want that – they want the qualification so they can*

get promoted...I've done 3 courses this year, and I'm still sitting where I am..." (PC1; 14). *".. Presently we got lots of guys in our department, qualified guys that have not been promoted.."* (FF1; 9), *"actually for now to be promoted is as I've said you can study what, what ,what but it depends on who you are you can have the qualifications but if they don't recognise you then that when you get a challenge in this department to get promoted."*

Responses also indicated that the participants felt in many instances that people who were less qualified than them were being promoted above them. *"I've seen most of the people with higher qualifications - some of them have done Fire Technology and have applied for Platoon Commanders positions, they have never been appointed, they have only appointed people with AEA and PUMP course mostly"* (FF2; 7).

Similarly certain participants indicated that in their opinion a number of individuals within the service were presently occupying positions and posts without the minimum qualifications that the service itself requires for such posts. *"...people with fire fighter I with BAC have been promoted recently to become station commanders."* (FF3; 8), *"...management does not have all the necessary tertiary qualifications perhaps, and that's just my personal opinion.. there's not that understanding of the need for tertiary qualifications"* (PC2; 8). *"Human Resources Development policies are all in place, and that's the way it should be, and the literature that you speak of, that's all in place, but policy and practice, that's two different things."* (PC2; 8).

4.4.5 Question Five: Which specific courses and or qualifications would you recommend to a young person starting in the service if they wished to be promoted as soon as possible? Why do you say so?

This question was used to try and highlight which courses the participants regarded as being recognised by the service and valuable for promotion. Their answers were thus not limited to courses they had completed but could also encompass any courses or qualifications that they were aware of.

In line with the responses seen for questions three and four most of the participants indicated that it did not really matter what course one studied as they did not seem to link further study to promotion. The answers were divergent with no clear pattern being identifiable regarding which courses were actually seen as best for promotion. However, when pressed for answers it was the Fire Courses, specifically the Fire Technology course studied at the Tswane University of Technology that seemed to be more recognised by management for promotion. *“ It is the Fire Technology” (FF4; 10), “the fire course at the university, they are doing that, but once they finished with that...it takes a long time to get it, but once they have it, yes they’ll have opportunities to become Station Commanders, and District Chiefs...” (PC1;16).* It was interesting to note that after only completing one year of this course an individual is apparently eligible for promotion. The Critical Care Assistant course, N Dip and Professional Degree’s in Emergency Medical Care were seen as good qualifications to reach Station Commander level rapidly *“.. N Dip Definitely....” (FF2; 8) (Refers to the N Dip EMC);* however it appears as if there is a perception of somewhat of a glass ceiling for persons holding both medical and fire qualifications when it comes to promotion beyond the station commander level. *“They all more or less carry the same weight, there is some emphasis but once again it is just a mindset of people that if you study medical, CCA or National Diploma, that type of thing, you will go up much quicker. In practice, it works up to a certain level, and that’s when unfortunately where it stops...about Station Commander Level...other vocational courses, human resource courses, other let’s say non-relevant courses will get me up to top management.” (PC2; 9). “The medical qualifications brings you up to lets say Station Commander level which is middle management. Fire qualifications are supposed to bring you up to top management, but yet it doesn’t – it brings you up to, let’s also say Station Commander level if you’re lucky, ...” (PC2; 10).*

The rescue courses were not seen by any of the participants as receiving any form of recognition whatsoever for promotion.” *Rescue for promotion? I don’t think so...” (PC1; 16).*

4.4.6 Question Six: To what extent do you feel that the courses / qualifications required by your service for promotion to Platoon or Station Commander really provide a person with the necessary skills to function at the higher level?

This question was used to try and establish if the participants felt that the courses the service prescribed for promotion were actually relevant and would indeed prepare and empower staff to function in their new role after they have been promoted.

Responses to this question seemed vague and were quite varied. As they had not yet been promoted one may argue that the responses from the Fire Fighters would be less insightful and valuable than those of the Platoon Commanders who have already experienced promotion and work at the higher level.

One of the Fire Fighters mentioned that in his opinion there were no requirements for promotion? One said yes to this question, the other two answered no. Both Platoon Commanders agreed with the two Fire Fighters who said no; they cited lack of management, communication, interpersonal skills training and issues already covered in the previous set of questions. *“...If you get promoted to Station Commander, they don’t really ...it’s more managerial...”* (PC1; 17).

4.4.7 Question Seven: Do you feel that medical, fire and rescue courses all carry the same weight and receive the same recognition when it comes to promotion? Why do you say so?

This question attempts to establish to what extent participants perceive the service recognising further study in each of the three vocational disciplines for purposes of promotion. Such perceptions are important as they impact on the promotion and career planning processes.

Both the Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders were of the opinion that Fire, Rescue and Medical Course / qualifications did not seem to carry the same weight in terms of promotion. In line with the above, they all felt that, in general Fire courses and qualifications were seen by management as more important than the Medical qualifications. The rescue qualifications were seen to be of no value in relation to promotion and currently received very little recognition in the service. *“ They are really highly qualified, but there is no real recognition for the rescue expertise.” (PC2; 11). (Reference to rescue technicians within the service). “Rescue, let me start with rescue, it is not recognised at all...” (FF4; 12).*

4.5 Interpretation of data relating on promotion

Responses to questions one, five and seven seem to indicate a general lack of confidence and clarity regarding their future development and career pathing within the service. This is evidenced by the fact that none of the participants even referred to being promoted into a specific rank or clearly defined position. As apposed to simply earning higher wages, participants seem to cite more a desire for respect and recognition as reasons why they would like to be promoted. They appear to feel that the service would be acknowledging their hard work by promoting them. This would in turn make them feel more valued.

Responses to question four indicate that all the participants were of the opinion that there should indeed be a strong connection between qualifications and promotion and that further study should play a significant role in preparing for, becoming and ultimately being promoted. Their responses seem to indicate a general perception that such linkages within the service remain unclear and or are poorly defined. Answers linked to this area of enquiry seem to lack clarity, consistency and direction. There were divergent views and a lack of clarity on how the various short courses and tertiary qualifications link to the issue of promotion. Again the general perception appears to be that promotion is dependent on factors other than qualifications. Based on the responses to question seven it would appear as if

the Fire, Rescue and Medical courses do not receive equal recognition within the service. Fire courses appear to be more recognised with Rescue training receiving very little recognition.

The data analysis of the responses to questions four, five and six furthermore yielded an indication that a general perception amongst participants exists that all of the vocationally orientated Fire, Rescue and Medical courses appear to fall short of what is required to move into a senior management position and that completing the required courses the service stipulates for more senior positions will not necessarily provide one with all of the necessary skills to function at that higher level. This is with particular reference to personnel management, leadership, communication and administrative skills.

4.6 Summary

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with four purposefully selected Fire Fighters and two Platoon Commanders. The interviews mainly focused on two areas, the first dealing with the issue of vocational applicability and the second dealing with promotion, each section comprising of seven specifically designed questions aimed at exploring the participants' perceptions and views on that particular area. The interviews were audio recorded and these recordings were used to produce transcripts. The transcripts were analysed using deductive reasoning in an attempt to identify, gather and document valuable information linked to the aim and objectives of the study. The results of this analysis and interpretation are documented above and will be reflected on, summarised and presented as findings in the next Chapter. These findings are then used to derive recommendations relating to further enquiry and or future practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Whilst the previous chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the interviews, this Chapter deals with the findings, recommendations and conclusions derived from those processes in an attempt to provide answers to the research objectives stated in Chapter 1.

The findings will be documented, discussed and commented on before being used as a basis to inform, support and derive recommendations relating to the need for additional enquiry and / or suggestions for modifications of future practices.

As mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4 use was made of specifically designed questions which were posed to participants during in depth interviews with the researcher. These questions were aimed at exploring prevailing views and perceptions relating to the two main areas of enquiry: vocational applicability and promotion. The findings are therefore presented in two sections, the first dealing with the area of vocational applicability of courses and qualifications followed by a second section dealing with the area related to the issues of learning and promotion within the service.

5.2 Vocational applicability of qualifications

5.2.1 Perceptions on which courses and / or qualifications had a higher level of vocational applicability seemed to be closely linked to the participant's position within the service and their own personal preference for a particular discipline.

Analysis of the responses to questions in this area show that both the Fire Fighter's and Platoon Commander's perceptions of which qualifications and / or courses were most vocationally applicable and their degree of perceived vocational applicability remained largely informed by: (a) their position within the service and thus their daily tasks that they perform more regularly within the service and; (b) their personal preference for a particular discipline / area of work and desires for future development or specialisation in that area. Theories of adult learning and higher education highlight the link between a learner's interest (arousal) in the subject matter and their perceptions of the personal value of the learning experience (Knowles, 1998:48-54). Thus a Fire Fighter EMT who enjoys and prefers activities associated with the medical side of the service is more likely to attempt to arrange his shifts to include more ambulance duties than fire or rescue duties and subsequently his or her desires for development in that area will be higher. Such an individual would naturally perceive medical courses as being more vocationally applicable than Fire and Rescue Training. Educational literature indicates that this finding becomes significant when one considers that in order to be successful programme planners must be able to design offerings that are not only consistent with the mandate of the sponsor (employer) but which are also considered to be of value by the learner (Cooksen, 1998: 274-275).

5.2.2 The frequency with which the participants utilise a learning outcome or skill appears to play a significant role in determining their perception regarding the vocational applicability of such learning events.

As alluded to previously, the issue of how frequently particular learning outcomes are required and applied within the normal working environment also seemed to play a significant role in the forming of perceptions relating to the degree of vocational applicability. Thus, the more focused and specialised courses such as the HAZMAT operations / technician, the Trench and Structural Collapse Rescue and Peace Officer courses appear to have been assigned a lower rating regarding their vocational applicability due to the fact that the learning outcomes from those courses are very infrequently if at all required and applied. Medical courses such as the BAA, AEA, CCA , N Dip /

Professional degree in Emergency Medical Care) received the highest vocational applicability rating from members as there was a general perception that most of the work performed by the service was actually medically orientated with many more ambulance calls being serviced than fire and rescue calls.

On the fire side, the Fire Fighter I, Fire Fighter II, and Appliance / Pump operator's courses were seen as also being very vocationally applicable in relation to the daily Fire Fighting activities of the members. Whilst on the rescue side, certain of the technical rescue modules were seen as having a low vocational applicability due to the fact that those types of call, e.g. Hazmat, Structural Collapse and Trench Rescue do not happen very often and not all stations have the equipment and resources to service such a call. It was noted that the inability for what-ever reason to practise and apply knowledge and / or skills gained from a particular course or learning events created frustration which appeared specifically to be affecting the area of rescue training and education. Aquatic and swift water rescue was seen as more vocationally applicable due to the number of incidents during the summer months and an expectation from the public that emergency service workers are able to perform this type of rescue. In support of the above Cloete and Bunting (2000: 43-44) note that employers, when assessing educational offerings, invariably focus on work-related skills.

5.2.3 Although the courses currently on offer were seen as being vocationally applicable there was a perception that significant deficits exist in their levels of training and preparation for particular incidents and / or components of the participants' vocational activities.

Although as mentioned above there were only a small number of courses which were perceived to have little or no relevance to the activities of the service, what did come across was a perception that not all of the important activities associated with the participants' daily functioning were adequately catered for by the courses currently on offer within the service.

The following areas were viewed as lacking or as being inadequately addressed by training structured within the service and courses that are currently on offer:

- Continued Professional Development (CPD) with specific reference to new Technological Advancements and Protocols. This point is supported locally by the White Paper on Education, which specifically mentions that graduate, and knowledge outputs of higher education must to an increasing extent meet the needs of a modernising economy (DoE, 1997: 2.91).
- Teamwork skills
- Leadership skills
- Management especially human resource and / or personnel
- Administration
- Specialised Medical Rescue Skills (Water rescue, Trench Rescue, High Angle Rescue)
- Communication and Public Relations skills
- Disaster management skills
- Tactical structural fire fighting knowledge and skills

Furthermore the BAA scope of practice was seen as being inadequate for the type of calls that staff are being exposed to and level of care they are expected to deliver. This is also supported by the Department of Health's revitalisation and restructuring plan for the Emergency Care Profession. [Health Profession Council of South Africa], October 2006; EC News: Professional Board for Emergency Care Practitioners).

The National Training Board (NTB) in its strategy initiative document mentions that education and training should be, and remain relevant to the national needs, industry and sectoral needs and also individual development needs.

5.2.4 A perception exists that participants are not afforded an equal opportunity to study further in each of the three main vocational disciplines.

Although the above finding does not relate directly to the area of vocational applicability it is felt that it remains significant in terms of career pathing and promotion which are dealt with more extensively in the next section. The study discovered that an overwhelming perception existed amongst all participants that inequality exists within the service when it comes to the selection of staff to attend training including the support and motivation by management for training in the Fire, Medical or Rescue vocational disciplines. This may well be only a perception however this type of perception remains concerning and may possibly be attributed to a lack of clarity in how career pathing within the service is managed and at what level specialisation is supported and encouraged. This encouragement and recognition for further study appears to be in place for the medical and fire side of the service but features to a much lesser extent for the rescue discipline.

5.3 Perceptions of the value of qualifications for promotion

5.3.1 The participants did not perceive a clearly identifiable link between further study and promotion and a desire for promotion did not appear to be the main motivation for further study.

Analysis of the responses to questions in this area show that both the Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders interviewed appeared not to perceive any meaningful link between further study, qualifications and being promoted. Their perception is that promotion within the service appears to be based on other criteria, which seem to carry more weight than qualifications. This is in direct opposition to the literature that was reviewed in Chapter 2 where it is suggested that further study is strongly linked to promotion. *Additional training and further education are important to prepare for work and promotion.*

(Wanat, et al: 1999: 261). Furthermore participants indicated that they were more motivated to study further by issues of personal recognition and being appreciated and / or valued than simply for purposes of promotion.

5.3.2 There appears to be confusion about which courses are best for promotion.

The diverse operational activities within the service seem to make it difficult for the staff to clearly establish what courses and / or qualifications should be pursued if one wishes to be promoted. There were significantly divergent views amongst the group about which qualifications one should be pursuing for promotion within the service. However, Fire qualifications were deemed by the majority of the participants to be generally more recognised by management for promotion; this is only up until a certain level (station commander) - beyond this level it appears as if none of the vocational qualifications (Fire, Medical and Rescue) are not good enough and that other qualifications from outside of the profession seem to be required. Such views may well be created and reinforced by the perception that senior members from top management do not always hold any of the vocational qualifications that are required by the service for operational staff at the lower level.

5.3.3 Rescue courses receive little recognition from the service in terms of promotion.

It appears as if rescue courses and qualifications receive little recognition and play no role in promotion. Participants who wish to specialize or have already completed specialised rescue courses such as the Special Operations Rescue Training (SORT) course are being de-motivated and disillusioned by the fact that they are not being placed in a position to utilise their newly acquired knowledge and skills regularly enough. The issue of motivation is discussed in Chapter 2. One of the important factors affecting motivation is, as discussed, the expectancy theory (Vroom 1964; Statt 1994; Parsons 2001). This theory if applied to the above situation implies that the learners who complete those specialised courses have an expectation that on

completion of their training their efforts would be recognised and that they would be able to practise those learning outcomes. When this does not happen it negatively impacts on their level of motivation to engage in further study.

5.4 Conclusion

Analysis and interpretation of the data gathered during interviews with the Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders indicated that their perceptions of the degree of vocational applicability of courses and / or qualifications within the service were informed largely by their current rank, post or position within the service as well as their own personal preference for a particular discipline. The frequency with which the participants utilise a learning outcome or skill during their average daily activities also appears to play a significant role in determining their perceptions regarding the vocational applicability of such learning events. Although the courses currently on offer were seen as being vocationally applicable there was still a perception that significant deficits do exist in their current levels of training and preparation for particular incidents and or components of the participant's vocational activities.

Regarding the issue of qualifications and promotion; there appears to be confusion about which courses are best for promotion. The participants did not perceive a clearly identifiable link between further study and promotion. Rescue courses receive little recognition from the service in terms of promotion and a perception exists that participants are not afforded an equal opportunity to study further in each of the three main disciplines.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions presented above it has become clear that in a combined emergency service, such as the JHB Emergency Management Service, education and training needs to be viewed in an integrated and holistic fashion. As part of this study the researcher would like to make some recommendations on possible ways educators and managers

within the service may begin to address certain of the issues highlighted above.

The following recommendations are also intended to stimulate further thought and debate around the role education and training plays within a large multidisciplinary service and how further study is integrated into career planning for staff within the service:

5.5.1 The service should consider investigate the issue of career pathing by recognising, managing and allowing for specialisation.

Education and training is often seen as a servant to operations. One can appreciate the fact that as a combined service JHB renders both a fire, medical and rescue service to the public and thus it is necessary for all operational staff to have a basic grounding in each discipline. However there must surely come a time and opportunity within the career path of an individual where some sort of specialisation is supported and encouraged. The findings of this study indicate that staff do not share a common perception about which courses are indeed most vocationally applicable and it would appear at present as if staff are haphazardly aligning themselves to one or other of these disciplines on their own volition and in many cases without the coordination and support of management. Each area of specialty should have its own clearly defined education and training structure / pathway which should be recognised and managed in a coordinated fashion. Currently, resources are being wasted by training people in a particular area that they have little or no interest in. Frustration is also being experienced when individuals, who do manage to receive training in the area of their interest, are subsequently placed in a position where they are unable to practise or perform those skills they have learnt. The conducting of regular realistic scenarios with feedback sessions may to an extent address this problem.

5.5.2 The service needs to explore ways other than just promotion, of giving recognition to individuals who have completed courses and additional studies.

The results of this study indicate that there is a strong desire for persons to be recognised especially when they have furthered themselves by successfully completing additional courses and / or qualifications. This type of recognition need not always be linear upward promotion; in fact in this study the desire to be recognised and valued was greater than that for promotion. Promotion is only one way of recognising an individual. The service may look toward the implementation of salary notches within a band that are linked to the completion of specific courses and qualifications. Such a system of payment for qualification and expertise as apposed to just a rank is in the process of being implemented by the South African Defence Force at present. Additional ways must be explored and utilised to show staff that they are valued and respected and that their attempts to better themselves in ways that can improve the level of efficiency within the service are truly appreciated.

5.5.3 The service might revisit and explore fully the issue of how qualifications are linked to promotion, positions and / or posts.

The findings of this study seem to indicate that the Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders do not perceive a clear link between further study and promotion. Rather they feel that promotion is taking place using criteria other than qualifications. It seems to remain confusing for staff as to how tertiary qualifications interact and articulate with short courses completed in-house. For these reasons it is therefore suggested that management and educators within the service comprehensively unpack the learning outcomes of the various courses and qualifications, some of which appear to have been historically linked to posts and positions without the necessary cognitive reflection. By undertaking such an activity it may become clearer for all concerned as to why certain courses and qualifications are needed for certain positions and why others are not. At present the staff do not appear to have a

clear understanding of how the different courses from the various disciplines interact with each other and with the issue of promotion within the service.

5.5.4 The service might consider designing and implementing learning events and / or programmes that will assist Fire Fighters and Platoon Commanders in the following areas:

- Managing large structural fires with specific reference to the tactical side of approaching and extinguishing the fire including ways of limiting damage to the structure and surrounding structures during the fire fighting operation.
- Personnel management and supervisory skills- this included communication, conflict resolution, teamwork and leadership.
- General administrative skills.
- Managing incidents where water is involved such as swift water rescue.
- Managing incidents where heavy motor vehicles are involved.
- Managing medical incidents at a minimum of an Intermediate Life Support Level.

5.6 Summary

The broad aim of this study was to explore the perceived value emergency services personnel place on qualifications, courses and / or learning events in relation to their vocational applicability and link to promotion. A literature review was conducted, which amongst other things indicated that adult learners are far more likely to assign value to learning events that they perceive as having a vocationally linked benefit or useful outcome. In addition

there is a general expectation that success in further studies will lead to career advancement and promotion. These factors in turn play a significant role in motivating the adult learner to select and engage meaningfully in further studies.

A generic qualitative research design and suitable methodology were selected for the study. Data was gathered through the use of in-depth interviews with a purposefully selected sample of operational staff. The researcher conducted six such interviews comprising of four Fire Fighters and two Platoon Commanders. These interviews were audio recorded and the recordings were used to produce transcripts. The transcripts were analysed and interpreted using deductive logic and reasoning in order to identify and gather valuable information linked to the aim and objectives of the study. The results of this study seem to indicate that there are indeed a vast array of learning programmes and events most of which were perceived by the participants as being vocationally applicable. These courses which are available to staff within the JHB emergency service range from short courses such as the BAA, AEA, FFI, FFII, Hazmat and Rescue courses that are offered in-house at the JHB Training Academy and which run over a period of days and weeks to four-year professional degrees offered by higher education institutions. Whilst most of the courses and qualifications were indeed perceived by staff as being vocational applicable, there remained certain selected areas of their daily activities where deficits in knowledge, skills and insights are perceived to exist. It was suggested in the recommendations that these developmental needs may be addressed by creating new learning programmes to supplement the learning outcomes of the existing qualifications and courses. However there is at present much confusion and a lack of clarity on how all the existing courses from the three operational disciplines contribute to career pathing and promotion within the service. A need was thus established to clearly indicate to staff and provide guidance on how all of these different courses are to be recognised and managed within the service and specifically how they link to operational duties as well issues of specialisation, promotion and career development. In order to address this need it was suggested that management apply their minds to the content of this report and in so doing

devise and adopt a more unified and holistic approach to training and education within the service.



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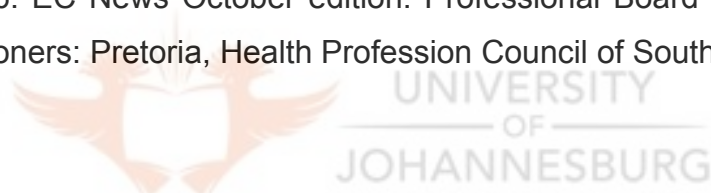
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**THE FACULTY OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
TECHNIKON WITWATERSRAND
BUNTING ROAD
AUCKLAND PARK
JHB**

30 July 2003

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This serves to confirm that approval has been granted for Mr C. Lambert to conduct research within the Johannesburg Emergency Management Services, as documented in the proposal entitled, **Current Qualifications held by Johannesburg Emergency Management personnel and the perceived value of those educational offerings.**

Should you require any further information please feel free to contact Ina Cilliers on 011 758-5249, or e-mail: inac@joburg.org.za, or alternatively contact Mr C. Lambert on 406-2471 e-mail clambert@twrinet.twr.ac.za.

Thank you

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Invitation to Participate in Research Study

Introduction

Dear prospective participant.

My Name is Craig Lambert and I am currently enrolled for a Masters degree in Education at the University of Johannesburg. Part of this programme is a research dissertation. For my dissertation I have chosen to look into the area of Emergency Service Education and Training.

Aim of the study

The broad aim of this study is to establish the views and perceptions of operational staff within the service relating to courses and qualifications held by or linked to the Fire Fighter EMT and Platoon Commander Positions. You are one of a number of individuals from these ranks who have been invited to participate in a structured interview with the researcher.

Procedure

The interviews are scheduled to take place at the JHB Training Academy. The Fire Fighters will be interviewed on Monday 28th August 2006. Platoon Commander interviews are scheduled for Tuesday the 29th August 2006. You will be given a specific time slot for your interview which should take around sixty minutes. During the interview you will be able to provide your views and opinions on training and education within the emergency services. You will at all times remain anonymous, neither your name nor your station will be referred to in the study. Should you at any stage wish to withdraw from the study you are free to do so without any penalties.

It is hoped that the information gathered in this study will be of benefit to your service as they plan for future education and training.

Please could you confirm whether or not you are able to participate by contacting Mr Suren Deonarain (Medical Principal) COJEMS Training Academy

Cell: 0824679499 on or before 16 August 2006.

Should you require any further information please feel free to contact me on 082 653 2125

Regards

Craig Lambert





CONSENT TO PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Participant

Thank you for agreeing to give up some of your time to take part in this study. By affixing your name and signature onto this consent form you are confirming that you have both read and understood this document and agree with the content thereof.

Aim of the study

The broad aim of this study is to establish the views and perceptions of operational staff within the service relating to those qualifications that are linked to the Fire Fighter EMT and Platoon Commander Positions. You are one of a number of individuals from these ranks who have been invited to participate in a structured interview with the researcher.

Procedure

The interview will take around sixty minutes. During the interview you will be required to answer questions as openly and honestly as possible. Your responses will be recorded by the researcher using an audio recorder. The researcher may contact you after the interview for further clarification should it be necessary. Should you, for what ever reason, feel unable or unwilling to answer any of the questions, you reserve the right not to do so. The researcher will explain any additional questions you may have prior to you participating in the interview. You will at all times remain anonymous, neither your name nor your station will be referred to in the study. Should you at any stage wish to withdraw from the study you are free to do so without any penalties.

The results and findings of this study will be made available to Johannesburg Emergency Services Management. The information gathered may be used for future planning and offering of learning opportunities.

Consent

I hereby confirm that I have read and understood this document and willingly agree to participate in this study.

Name and Surname.....Signature.....Date.....

Witness (1)Signature.....Date.....

Witness (2).....Signature.....Date.....

INTERVIEW AGENDA

1. **Welcome and Introduction**

1.1 Introduce the researcher, briefly explain the purpose of the study and clarify the structure of the interview. Mention that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions and it is the participant's honest opinions that are sought.

1.2 Allow the participant and opportunity to ask any questions. Highlight the confidential nature of the interview as well as the participant's right to withdraw should they wish.

1.3 Complete the consent form.

2. **Clarification of concepts and terminology**

2.1 Explain to the participant what is meant by the terms *Vocational Applicability and Promotability* which may be referred to during the interview.

3. **Interview Questions (Section A) on Vocational Applicability**

4. **Interview Questions (Section B) on Promotion**

5. **Closure**

Thank the participant for partaking in the study. Explain to the participant that they will be given feedback on completion of the study.

Questions relating to vocational applicability

(1) In keeping with the theory that humans are life long learners, who learn not only from formal educational opportunities but also through daily activities and interactions, which areas linked to your current vocational activities do you feel you would most like to develop and why?

(2) What do you feel are the motivating factors and reasons why people within your service undertake further studies.

(3) Do you feel that your current level of education and training empowers you to confidently function within your daily work environment? Are there any types of call or incidents which you feel you would like to be better prepared to deal with?

(4) Of the courses / qualifications you have completed, which, in your opinion do you perceive as being most applicable to your current daily functioning as a Fire Fighter EMT? Why do you say so?

(5) Are there any courses / qualifications and or learning events that you feel did not, or will not, really add value to your current daily functioning as a Fire Fighter EMT? Why do you say so?

(6) Are there any new skills that you would like to develop which you feel are not not adequately catered for by the current courses and or qualifications that are on offer? How would these skills make you a better Fire Fighter EMT?

(7) Your service renders a fire fighting, rescue as well as emergency medical service. Do you feel that there are equal opportunities for staff to study either medical, rescue and or fire related courses? Why do you say so?

Interview Questions (Fire Fighters)

Questions relating to promotion

(1) Do you have a clear idea of where you see yourself in the service five years from now? What informed this “idea”?

(2) What are the reasons why you would like to be promoted?

(3) Do you perceive any link between the completion of courses and / or qualifications and promotion in your service?

(4) How confident are you that by undertaking further studies you will stand a better chance of being promoted? Why do you say so?

(5) Which specific courses and or qualifications would you recommend to a young person starting in the service if they wished to be promoted as soon as possible. Why do you say so?

(6) To what extent do you feel that the courses / qualifications required by your service for promotion to platoon commander really provide a person with the necessary skills to function at the higher level?

(7) Do you feel that medical, fire and rescue courses all carry the same weight and receive the same recognition when it comes to promotion? Why do you say so?

Questions relating to vocational applicability

(1) In keeping with the theory that humans are life long learners, who learn not only from formal educational opportunities but also through daily activities and interactions, which areas linked to your current vocational activities do you feel you would most like to develop and why?

(2) What do you feel are the motivating factors and reasons why you would undertake further studies?

(3) Do you feel that your current level of education and training empowers you to confidently function within your daily work environment? Are there any types of call or incidents which you feel you would like to be better prepared to deal with?

(4) Of the courses / qualifications you have completed, which, in your opinion do you perceive as being most applicable to your current daily functioning as a Platoon Commander? Why do you say so?

(5) Are there any courses / qualifications and or learning events that you feel did not, or will not, really add value to your current daily functioning as a Platoon Commander? Why do you say so?

(6) Are there any new skills that you would like to develop which you feel are not not adequately catered for by the current courses and or qualifications that are on offer? How would these skills make you a better Platoon Commander ?

(7) Your service renders a fire fighting, rescue as well as emergency medical service. Do you feel that there are equal opportunities for you to study either medical, rescue and or fire related courses? Why do you say so?

Interview Questions (Platoon Commanders)

Questions relating to promotion

(1) Do you have a clear idea of where you see yourself in the service five years from now? What informed this “idea”?

(2) What are the reasons why you would like to be promoted?

(3) Do you perceive any link between the completion of courses and / or qualifications and promotion in your service?

(4) How confident are you that by undertaking further studies you will stand a better chance of being promoted?

(5) Which specific courses and or qualifications would you recommend to a young person starting in the service if they wished to be promoted as soon as possible. Why do you say so?

(6) To what extent do you feel that the courses / qualifications required by your service for promotion to station Commander really provide a person with the necessary skills to function at the higher level?

(7) Do you feel that medical, fire and rescue courses all carry the same weight and receive the same recognition when it comes to promotion? Why do you say so?