PUBLIC SECTOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING AUTHORITY (PSETA)
TRAINING AND NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR TRANSVERSALS SKILLS IN RESPECT OF PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

THEORY OF CHANGE & LOG-FRAME REPORT

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1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Background to the PSETA Study conducted by the HSRC

In January 2020, the PSETA released a request for proposals for conducting a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) of Transversal skills in the public sector. The Terms of Reference (ToR) called for service providers to provide research services for assistance with Training Needs Analysis Of Transversal Skills in partnership with the National School of Government. The purpose of this assignment was to conduct the training needs analysis with selected public institutions in order to identify the transervals skills of personnel within these institutions and to support them to appropriately respond to the identified training needs

The HSRC proposal submitted in response to the request was successful and a Service Level Agreement for the HSRC to undertake the TNA was subsequently signed. One of public institutions identified for this study was the National Department of Social Development which had requested a TNA to be conducted across all provincial departments in respect of personnel in selected functional areas in these provincial departments. The eleven functional areas identified for this study are as follows:

- Human Capital
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Customer Care
- General Administration
- Legal Services
- Auxiliary Services
- Communication
- Chief Information Office
- Policy Administration
- Financial Management and Auditing
- Information Management

1.2 Study Objectives

The following are the overarching objectives of the research study as per terms of reference:

- To conduct a Training Needs Analysis of Transversal skills for four (4) selected government institutions identified by PSETA in partnership with National School of Government (NSG);
- To support utilisation of the already developed appropriate instruments by NSG to support implementation of the TNA e.g. questionnaire;
- To assist the four institutions to develop skills` training plans based on the identified needs from the TNA;
- To incorporate the existing methodology and findings into the TNA reports and its toolkits.

1.3 Inclusion of a Theory of Change approach to the TNA Study

Explicit in the proposal submitted by the HSRC was for the Training Needs Analysis to be underpinned by the reconstitution of intervention theories of change (ToC), a requirement that is consistent with the drive for the greater use of ToCs within the PSET sector.

2 CONTEXT FOR HUMAN RESOURCE PLANNING (HRD) AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE SECTOR (PSS)

It is widely accepted that the performance of the Public Service Sector is a foundation of a country's economic and social development planning. This is also the case in South Africa, where public service is central, first for the government to fulfil its constitutional obligation of ensure access to quality public services and, second, to overcome developmental challenges of inequality, poverty and unemployment (DPSA, 2015). However, the capacity to deliver lies not only in the organisational capacity of the individual state entities, but also in the skills and capabilities of public servants to deliver services. Public service sector employees, at all levels, therefore, require a right mix of skills and competencies in order to ensure efficient service delivery. Having up to date and accurate information on the current and future skills needs, and training requirements is therefore critical (Fourie, 2004) particularly for stakeholders concerned with human resource planning as well as capacity development in the sector.

The skills required for effective public service are continually evolving due to regular policy direction changes, an evolving state and shifting service delivery models, as well as political changes at various levels. While traditional models of public service formerly separated policy and administration, with officials only required to implement policy, newer public management approaches introduced professional and efficiency-oriented values to the sector (Bourgon, 2011; Powell, 2012). This requires that public sector employees should possess a set of core competencies, like critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Other generic skills are also essential in the sector, such as those integral to everyday tasks and functioning, for example management, administration and planning abilities. These are referred to as "transversal skills, i.e. the business of government" (PSETA, SSP 2019-20), describing them as the competencies needed for administration, management and planning, as well as the ability to develop legislation and policy. In addition to these general skills, the public service requires access to a range of more specific professional competencies, such as those related to information technology, accounting, the law and human resource management. Besides the generic and more specific professional skills required by individuals in the public sector, understanding which key competencies are most relevant for organisational performance and the efficacy of a capable state is another substantial challenge.

Addressing the legacy of the past and moving towards a transformed, efficient and effective Public Service that is fit for purpose (Schwella, 2001), the importance of the national systems of Human Resource Development, and particularly, within the public service sector has been amplified in a number of legislative and policy frameworks. These frameworks also guide human resource development activities in the sector.

The foundations of the basic values and principles that guide public administration are embodied within the *Constitution* (Republic of South Africa, 1996), Section 195(1) of the Constitution, 1996 supports the following:

- a high standard of professional ethics must be sustained;
- efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be sought;
- public administration must be development-oriented;
- services must be delivered in an impartial, fair, equitable and unbiased manner;
- public administration must be accountable;
- transparency must be encouraged and enforced;
- good human resource management and career development to augment human potential must be refined; and
- public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people.

The constitutional values and principles were elaborated in detail starting with the Public Service White Paper (DPSA, 1995). This, in turn, was implemented by means of a number of executive, legislative and administrative provisions that deal with a range of matters including the code of conduct for public servants, the Batho Pele (People First) principles, and Public Service legislation and regulations that deal with public finance management, planning and organising work, performance management and capacity building; human resource management and labour relations; and information management and reporting requirements (updated from Schwella, 2001, p. 375).

The National Development Plan (NDP, 2012) captures the developmental vision for South Africa towards 2030 as a developmental state. Particularly important for skills development in the Public Service is that the NDP calls for the building of a "capable state" – underpinned by "effectively coordinated state institutions with skilled public servants who are committed to the public good and capable of delivering consistently high-quality services, while prioritising the nation's developmental objectives" (NDP, 2012). Capability is defined as "the capacity to formulate and implement policies that serve the national interest" (NPC, 2012). The state is developmental when "these policies focus on overcoming the root causes of poverty and inequality and building the state's capacity to fulfil this role" (NPC, 2012). A capable and developmental state is therefore one that has the means to identify and deal with the causes of poverty and inequality in South Africa. Therefore, appropriately identifying current and future skills demand as accurately as possible is critical if the goals of the NDP are to be achieved within the Public Service sector.

Moreover, of specific relevance to Public Service sector skills development are the Ministerial Outcomes that were published as annexures to the MTSF 2014–2019, particularly Outcome 5: 'A skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path', and Outcome 12: 'An efficient, effective and development oriented Public Service'. The Public Sector Skills Committee (PSSC) integrated Ministerial Outcomes 5 and 12 as the goal for its work, i.e. developing the "skilled and capable workforce required to achieve a more efficient, effective, professional and development-oriented state" (DPSA, 2013). In "opening up the Public Service sector to function as a training space," the Public Service sector became a mechanism for capacity building.

To ensure the implementation of the NDP, the HRDC first developed in 2013 the National Integrated Human Resource Development Plan (NIHRDP), 2014-2018, and in 2017, it published a revision of a new HRDSA 2030. As far as skills development within the Public Service is concerned, the most important NIHRDP goal relates to developing a "capable Public sector with effective and efficient planning and implementation capabilities." The NIHRDP emphasises again the need to professionalise the Public Service, opening it up as a training space, and promoting the Public Service as a career of choice.

3 ROLE AND MANDATE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING AUTHORITY (PSETA) IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR

PSETA oversees and aims to facilitate the provision of quality public service education and training that meets the current and future needs of its stakeholders i.e. government departments, parliament, provincial legislatures, public entities and parastatals. It is also responsible for the development of a Sector Skills Plan (SSP), quality assurance of training conducted in the public service, accreditation of training providers, development of qualifications and learning programmes amongst other functions as provided for in the Skills Development Act (Republic of South Africa, 2008).

Skills planning in the Public Service sector provides the strategic direction needed to guide the development of human capital that is required by the state in order to deliver on its developmental goals and objectives. This SETA thus plays a critical intermediary role in that it has to ensure that skills planning supports the development of human capital within the sector to align with societal needs, but also to do so within the context of national growth and development goals as espoused through a range of key policy documents.

3.1 PSETA Composition

PSETA is comprised of all national departments, provincial departments, national and provincial public entities, national parliament and provincial legislatures. The Sector Skills Plan (SSP) (2019/20) indicated that there are thirty-eight national departments and 112 provincial departments registered with PSETA. Of these departments, about thirty-six national and 108 provincial departments submitted their Workplace Skills Plan (WSP) and Annual Training Reports (ATRs) for 2018.

Nine Legislatures and the National Parliament are registered with PSETA, and in 2018, the national parliament and seven provincial legislatures submitted their WSPs to PSETA. PSETA's scope of coverage within the Legislative sub-sector is however only limited to the administrative component.

Public entities forming the smallest sub-sector within the PSETA scope, have different mandates but share common transversal skills which cut across these entities. There are twenty-four public entities registered with PSETA, and twenty-one are currently active on the SETA Management Information System (MIS).

More specifically, the PSETA is responsible for the provision of transversal skills to national and provincial government, national and provincial public entities, national parliament and provincial legislatures. These are foundational skills to ensure effective and efficient delivery of the business of government (hence often referred to as the 'business of government'), and they include administration, management, planning, legislation and policy development.

The South African public sector employs 71 417 000 people across national and provincial government departments, legislatures and state-owned entities (PSETA, 2019/20). About 73% of the workforce is employed within national and provincial departments.

Furthermore, PSETA works alongside a wide range of partners and oversight bodies, details of which are broadly outlined in the Table 1 below. Its work is embedded within and parallel to a set of institutions and processes that are spread across a number of different sectors, including organised labour, educational institutions and various arms of government. Arising thereof research on skills needs within the sector, needs to take these multi-faceted and intersecting contexts into account.

Table 1: Key Role Players

Role player	Role in the Sector
The Department of Higher Education and Training	DHET provides the overall policy framework for skills development, articulated in the National Skills Development Strategy III, and oversees the implementation of the grants regulations by the SETAs.
The Department of Public Service and Administration	DPSA plays a key role in the establishment of norms and standards relating to the functions of the Public Service; organisational structures and establishment of departments and other organisational and governance arrangements in the Public Service. The department is responsible for managing; labour relations, conditions of service and other employment practices for employees; the health and wellness of employees; information management; electronic government in the Public Service; integrity, ethics, conduct and anti-corruption; transformation, reform, innovation and any other matter to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Public Service and its service delivery to the public.
The National School of Government	The National School of Government (NSG) provides education and training for public employees or servants and also facilitates the provision of training which is either outsourced to training providers or provided in-house
Provincial and State Academies	Some provinces and a number of departments within the Public Service sector have their own training academies. For example, the Department of Home Affairs has a learning academy whose function is to provide learning and development interventions, maintain quality and effectiveness of learning and development interventions and to administer, manage, and support core learning functions
Human Resource Development Council	The Human Resource Development Council of South Africa (HRDCSA) is a multiple stakeholder body comprising of representatives from government, business, civil society, labour and training and education within the Public Service sector. It was established in 2010 to create an enabling, coordinated and integrated environment to focus on improving the human resource development base and skills of the South African people.
Public Service Commission	The Public Service Commission (PSC) is empowered and mandated by Section 196 of the Constitution, to monitor and evaluate the organization and administration of the Public Service, enhance accountability and ethics in public administration and it plays a significant role in dispute resolution.
Government SETA Forum	The Government SETA (GSETA) Forum comprises of representatives from government SETAs of whom public sector bodies are members and coordinates skills development for government employees across sectors.
Public Sector Skills Committee	The Public Sector Skills Committee (PSSC) was established to coordinate an approach to skills development across the Public Service. It includes representatives from provider and workplace constituencies and includes DHET, DPSA, the GSETA Forum and others.
Labour Unions	Trade union representation is an accepted facet of the workforce. Almost all sectors of the economy, including the Public Service sector, have representative unions which engage employers over issues affecting their workforce including

Role player	Role in the Sector
	skills development issues. In line with the SETA Grants Regulations, WSPs must be consulted with labour representatives for endorsement and sign off before submission to PSETA.
The State Information Technology Agency	The purpose of the State Information Technology Agency (SITA) is to enable government to improve service delivery to the public by providing information technology and related services. For PSETA, the role played by SITA in providing support to the sector during the submission of WSPs which is done online, is pivotal.

Source: PSETA SSP (2019/20), p 15

4 Conceptualising a Transversal Skills Theory of Change for the Public Sector

4.1 Training Needs Analysis (TNA)

Training activities are aimed at changing the knowledge or skills level of a group of people from a specific state to a more enhanced level towards the realisation of a specific goal relevant for that institution. Training needs analysis (TNA) is undertaken as a systematic approach to identifying knowledge or skills deficits, which constrain the ability of the institution to realise specific goals and to define activities, which would thus remedy the situation. An important consideration in the design of a TNA is that while it should identify the target audience and the content of training it must importantly be able to articulate clearly whether the educational intervention will assist in shifting towards a desirable state that is being aspired to.

The *most common 'group' of people* being measured in a TNA are the employees in an organisation. The purpose of the TNA in this context is to identify gaps in employees' competencies with the intention of targeting training and other interventions to improve performance. The benefit to the organisation of generating this intelligence extends beyond training to recruitment, operational planning and even restructuring (Cognology n.d., Hayton 1989).

The *second most common group of people* to form part of a TNA are members of a specific functional area operating in different organisations and sometimes different sectors, depending on the skills. These TNA assessments are usually undertaken by umbrella bodies responsible for the functioning of a particular field of study. The purpose therefore is usually closely linked to the development of the profession. Questions regarding the relevance of qualifications and their impact on the workplace are often key. The difficulties in cutting across organisations are therefore minimised by focusing on the specific functional field.

The final group of people represent a more macro view of a specific segment of the labour market. A TNA in this environment cuts across institutions and functional areas to assess transversal skills needs. The purpose of an assessment in this environment is to generate labour market intelligence to feed into macro level skills planning. This is the most complex environment and as a result of these complexities, assessments are usually done by means of a survey methodology as opposed to a traditional skills audit. The current TNA falls into this category.

TNA findings identify who must be trained, on what, to what extent and for what purpose or outcome. The TNA may identify the beliefs held by a specific group of employees about their training needs as well as their desire for training. It may also identify the extent to which the training may result in achieving a desirable state

4.2 The context and content of Transversal Skills (TS) focus for the Public Sector

A discussion on transversal skills must include an understanding of what this refers to. A number of definitions have been proposed and there is consensus among these that this refers to generic, foundational or soft skills.

Whitmore (Whittemore, 2018) defines TS as

> *"…personal attributes that go beyond knowledge, they help people better adapt with changing environment collaborating with others. These skills are transversal because they can be developed and are useful in any sector, position and also personal life."*

In the context of transversal skills for the public service the following definition pertains;

> *"Transversal skills refer to business of government, such skills and functions include administration, management, planning, legislation and policy development, which form the focus to drive the development of skills and competencies in areas that will make the delivery of the business of government more effective and efficient"* (PSETA, 2019). .

4.3 Relevance of Transversals skills in the Public Sector

Public service is critical for government to fulfil its constitutional mandate of ensuring access to quality public services and, to overcome historical developmental challenges of inequality, poverty and unemployment. The overarching framework informing quality public service is the Batho Pele Principles which outline the expectations that the public will have of how public services are delivered and will need to be delivered as we transition to the 4IR.

Whilst the motivation for TS training that arises from increased automation might be true for some sectors, the reality is that the need has always been a fact for the public sector whose core business is to deliver services to the citizens of the country. This requires the full battery of transversal skills as outlined in UNESCO's Transversal Skills and Competencies Framework (UNESCO, 2015) (Refer to Table 2 below). This framework together with local frameworks, provides the orientation for transversal skills for the public sector and informs the basis of the TNA for this study.

Table 2: Key skills and competencies from the UNESCO Transversal Skills & Competencies Framework

Transverse Competencies	***Key Skills and Competencies***
Critical Innovative Thinking	creativity, entrepreneurship, resourcefulness, application skills, reflective thinking, decision-making

Interpersonal Skills	presentation skills, communication skills, leadership. organisational skills, teamwork, collaboration, initiative, sociability, collegiality, empathy, compassion
Interpersonal Skills	self-discipline, independent learning, flexibility, adaptability, self-awareness, perseverance, self-motivation, compassion, integrity, risk taking, sell-respect, sense of belonging
Global Citizenship	awareness, tolerance, openness, respect for diversity, intercultural understanding, conflict resolution, civic/political participation, respect to the environment, national identity
Media and Information Literacy	accessing information, locating information, communicating ideas, participating in democratic processes, analysing information and media, evaluating information and media content

UNESCO, Bangkok (2014)

The capacity to deliver partly lies in the skills and capabilities of public servants to deliver services and as such public sector employees, across all levels, require a right mix of skills and competencies to ensure efficient and quality service delivery. In addition to public servants having specific professional skills, they are required to possess a set of core transversal competencies such as critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

The World Economic Forum (2020) (Schwab & Zahidi, 2020) noted that the major obstacle to the adoption of new technologies, which the transition to 4IR requires, is the inability to attract the right talent due to significant skills gaps in the market, particularly in respect of transversal skills, also referred to as generic or foundational skills.

This was further amplified in the words of Mazzucato (Mazzucato et al., 2021) in the context of the current COVID 19 "*governments require dynamic capabilities and capacity … too often missing. These include the capacity to adapt and learn, capacity to align public services and citizen needs, capacity to govern resilient production systems and capacity to govern data and digital platforms.*"

4.4 A Transversal Skills Theory of Change for the Public Sector

The primary responsibility for enhancing transversal skills is explicitly identified as a priority for the public service, and specifically for the PSETA as outlined in Strategic Objective 3 of the HRD Strategy for South Africa (Republic of South Africa, n.d.).

Mcilvenny (2019) identifies three challenges with the implementation of TS, which are **definitional**, **operational** and **systemic** in nature, details of which are elaborated in Table 3. Whilst some of these might not hold in the context of South Africa, we believe that some can be avoided by explicitly constructing a, **Transversal Skills Theory of Change for the Public Sector (TSTOCPS)**, as part of this study. This will allow for the clarification of the need for and importance of TS in the public sector, and importantly it will allow for the formulation of the assumptions and desired outcomes around the mainstreaming of TS in the public sector.

The rationale for a TOC arises from the understanding that whilst the TNA might identify the requisite TS deficits, the successful closing of these gaps will only arise when there is a clear understanding of TS across an institution (definitional challenges), and once the operational and systemic challenges have been identified and planned for.

More importantly, formulating a **TSTOCPS** will give both the Department of Public Services and PSETA a monitoring tool for the on-going tracking of efforts to mainstream TS in the public sector.

Table 3: Challenges to the implementation of Transverse Skills & Competencies

Definitional	*Operational*	*Systemic*
• Lack of, or a vague definition of transversal competencies in policy documents. • Lack of clarity in scope of transversal competencies • Lack of clarity in the desired outcomes of the training of transversal competencies	• Lack of ongoing TS needs assessment • Insufficient training/ learning materials and training guides • Lack of incentives to promote capacity building around TS • Insufficient capacity of training providers • Lack of budget (policy-budget inconsistency) • Additional burden on departments	• Large public services sector • Inconsistency with high-stake exams • Lack of understanding among key stakeholders • Overall public services/ institutional culture

Source: Adapted from Mcilvenny (2019)

It is posited that the absence of a Theory of Change for the public sector will contribute to three types of problems namely

- **Planning is too vague**:
  - Poor/unknown link between **outputs** and intend **outcomes/impacts**. Why are you training?
  - No picture of what training success looks like.
  - Not possible to assess planned training vs. realized training goals
- **Poorly defined management responsibility:**
  - HR often reluctant to take responsibility of impacts that draw on the training they facilitate. Too many factors deemed to be out of their control
  - Executives often frustrated at not knowing whether training is contributing to strategic goals
- **Complicates evaluation:**
  - Absence of clear outcome and impact indicators means M&E won't know whether transversal skills training outcomes are making a difference in the organisation
  - Evaluators end up using their own discretion to assess whether an intervention is making an impact or not

4.5 Approach to the reconstruction of a Transversal Skills Theory of Change

The methodology for this TNA is a theory-based mixed methods approach with greater emphasis on a systematic desktop review of available documentary evidence and administrative data sources both current and historical.

A theory-based design seeks to understand the causal pathways through which change is expected to occur. This approach places emphasis on detailing the assumptions on which the TS intervention in the public sector logic is premised. The ToC provides a roadmap that describes how a set of activities are understood to produce a series of results that are meant to produce the outcomes and final impacts. It maps out the causal pathway of what is required from a programme (inputs, activities) in order to achieve planned outputs and

bring about change (outcomes) towards achieving a given long-term goal or impact (unemployment reduction). There is often a commonly understood vision of the long-term goals, how they will be reached and what will be used to measure progress along the way. This is referred to as the ***"pathway," "logic model or "theory of change"*** *(*ISPC, 2012).

As a ToC was not constructed prior to the establishment of the various institutions and their unique skills needs the research study proposed the retrospective construction of the Transversal Skills ToC. The objective would be to reconstitute the ToC that captures the causal pathways that lead to the goal intent of the PSETA's mandate to strengthen transversal skills. The rationale behind the training interventions to be implemented will be defined by a set of contextual factors that define the problem context, that the training programmes to be implemented will have an impact on in the long term.

5 COMPONENTS OF A THEORY OF CHANGE?

5.1 What is a theory of change?

A theory of change, also known as a ToC, seeks to understand how a policy/programme/intervention functions and how they create their ultimate impacts. It explores questions such as:

> "A 'theory of change' is a model of the process that policy makers and programme designers (like DHET and SETAs) believe will lead to desired changes in their spheres of influence."
> - Rhodes University (2020)

- Is there an explicit theory behind an intervention? For the SETA's a lot of their programmes are based on post schooling theories of why it's important to have interventions in the post school education and training sector.
- If there is a theory, does that theory describe the inherent logic of how change will be affected - how the interventions will realise the overarching objectives of the policy/programme/intervention?

All development interventions are designed to address some problem or need. To achieve this, organisations use resources to fund activities that generate outputs, which are meant to achieve positive outcomes and impacts that resolve the problem. The pathway from what resources are needed to the desired outcomes and impacts, is underpinned by some logic and a set of assumptions, that are called a Theory of Change, simply known as a ToC. In simple terms a ToC can be defined in several ways;

- It is a story of how change will happen.
- It is a description of the pathways through which change is anticipated.
- It is an explanation of why this change should occur.
- It is a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why, a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context.

Implicit in all these definitions of a ToC is the explanation of the process of change which is outlined by causal linkages in an initiative, i.e., its shorter-term, intermediate, and longer-term OUTCOMES. The identified changes are mapped as the "outcomes pathway" showing each outcome in logical relationship to all the others, as well as, as a chronological flow. The links between outcomes are explained by "ASSUMPTIONS" of why one outcome is thought to be a prerequisite for another.

5.2 Why do we construct a theory of change?

The theory of change is often described as both a process and a product. The process which is often participatory and collaborative is just as important as the product it produces. Policy, programme designers and implementers all have an implicit individualised theory of change in mind, and without going through the process of producing a ToC, these implicit ways of understanding how an intervention works might not be the same. Seen as a process and a product, theories of change are therefore also constructed to facilitate a shared understanding of what an intervention seeks to achieve.

> "More important to consider here, is why there is so much emphasis on theories of change these days, and how DHET, NSA and SETAs could work with them."
> - Rhodes University (2020)

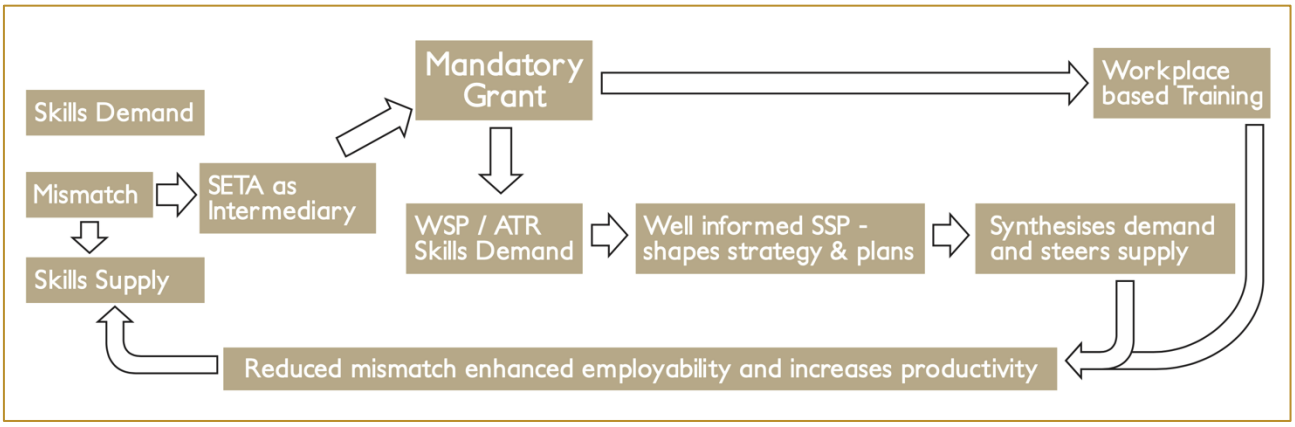
As will be discussed below, a ToC is a powerful strategic tool that can play an important part in the planning process of an organisation. The ToC is also a critical part of theory base evaluations and therefore assists the evaluation process by giving us a framework for validating the extent to which intervention impacts were realised. This means that the ToC forms the basis upon which the evaluation framework is constructed, and upon which the results of the evaluation will be assessed.

5.3 Imperatives driving the development of theories of change by SETA's

Within the SETA landscape there is an effort that is currently underway that is aimed at mainstreaming the use of ToCs within the PSET sector. This effort is being driven by DHET, Services SETA, Bank SETA and Rhodes University. In a discussion briefing this consortium highlights the reason why *"…there is so much emphasis on theories of change these days and how DHET, NSA and SETAs could work with them."* (*Rhodes University, 2020, p. 1)*

According to Rhodes University (2020) each development programme such as a skills plan and all the PSET policies are underpinned by one or more theories that influence the way in which the SETAs programmes are designed. *"For example, the overarching PSET theory could be that access to relevant, high quality post-school education and training is unequal in South Africa and that this contributes to both skills shortages and gaps, and unemployment,"* which can be worsened by skills gaps. Using the example of the Mandatory Grant, a theory of change of how the grant can be used to reduce skills mismatches, and improve employability, is sketched out, and the resulting schematic is shown in Figure 1, below (Rhodes University, 2020).

Figure 1: Example of a Schematic Theory of Change for SETAs' Mandatory Grant



Source: Rhodes University (2020)

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5.4 Components of a Theory of Change

5.4.1 Problem Statement

Often a ToC will have an accompanying problem statement that is meant to highlight the fact that most development interventions are non-trivial. That is to say, most programmes are designed to address real world problems. With respect to the SETAs, these problems are related to issues within the post skills and education sector. Each intervention will thus have a problem statement of its own, to also highlight the fact that whilst multiple programmes can have overlapping impacts, their core development targets are often best addressed by having unique purpose-built interventions. In the ToC section of each intervention, further below, the problem context of the intervention will precede the articulation of the ToC, this is meant to foreground an appreciation of why the intervention and the ToC that underpins it, is needed.

The idea of including the problem statement is also meant to give an analysis of the context. The problem statement is meant to be written in a way that summarises *"the fit between the theory of change and the contextual conditions"* that the intervention is attempting to address (Vogel, 2012).

5.4.2 ToC Narrative Statement

According to Clark (2012) a ToC narrative is a short plain language summary that is short and tells a compelling story that explains an interventions logic. Clark goes on to explain that it, *"can have different versions to emphasize different points, level of detail, etc. [It] can be as little as an "elevator" speech, or a one-page handout."* Taplin et al., (2013) also highlight the summative nature of a ToC narrative, whilst highlighting its two main objectives, which are to convey as quickly as possible the main elements of the theory, and to communicate how these elements work in a sequential logic of **how each precondition leads to the next**. Typically, the narrative is captured in a series of IF THEN statements, with the **IF** capturing the preconditions necessary to achieve the **THEN** outcome, see Anderson (2004) p. 21, for an example of the outcomes framework for changes in learning for a community based intervention.

5.4.3 ToC Schematic

The ToC schematic is a graphical representation that captures and highlights the process and product nature of a ToC by sketching out the causal pathways that will deliver the intended outcomes and impact. Whilst a theory of change need not be represented graphically it has become the norm and best practice to produce a ToC schematic that accompanies the ToC narrative. It is an integral component of the process of developing a theory of change and is seen by some as non-negotiable. See Figure 1 above for an example of a ToC schematic.

5.5 Enabling factors in the developing of effective theories of change

A few enabling factors (Vogel, 2012) which have been identified as contributing to the effective development of theories of change relate to the understanding that:

- The theory of change is both a process and product; it should be seen as a process that is continuous and not static once the ToC has been produced;
- The ability to make assumptions as explicit as possible contributes to the quality of the ToC. This requires discussion and debate;
- Dedicating sufficient time and enabling participation of key stakeholders is critical. While it is acknowledged that people are busy and have many other priorities the value of the ToC and its

contribution to effectiveness of design, implementation and evaluation should inform prioritizing participation in ToC process and allowing sufficient time for this to be undertaken.

5.6 Usability of theories of change within an organisation

For the theory of change to be effective in guiding an organisation towards the attainment of its goals, it needs to become the lens through which an organisation plans and evaluates its performance. Dana & Heléne (2012) list four factors that play an important role in determining the use of a theory of change within an organisation. These are;

- **PSETA leadership and decision maker buy-in and support:** This is perhaps the most important of all the factors that determine usability. Its importance is non-trivial, it goes beyond the champion rhetoric in development literature, which at times creates situations where leadership simply rubberstamps the use of the ToC without really endorsing it and embedding it as a tool to be used as the basis for planning, team building, monitoring and evaluation, and communication. The need for buy-in and mainstreaming the use of ToCs arises from the fact that organisational leadership is often the custodians of the strategic outcomes of its interventions, which are critical in the realisation of its mandate. PSETA operational staff are often too busy with implementation and at times might fail to see the importance of the ToC beyond their immediate activities. Given the way in which the ToC links activities to outcomes and the subsequent impacts, it therefore means that the ToC is also a powerful strategic management tool. It therefore goes without saying that PSETA leadership and decision maker buy-in and support cannot be over emphasised, as ToCs should already be in their strategic toolkit.

It therefore goes without saying that PSETA leadership and decision maker buy-in and support cannot be over emphasised, as ToCs should already be in their strategic toolkit.

- **Group ownership**: With respect to each intervention ToC there has to be a core group of people (3 – 4) that own the theory. This group is the one that makes sure that the intervention ToC is well understood, and that the ToC's schematics are comprehensible. This group will comprise at least one member from the M&E unit but must have key individuals responsible for the day-to-day operational life of a given intervention actively involved. The importance of this is to avoid a situation where only one person knows about the intervention ToC and when they leave the organisation, knowledge of the ToC is also lost.
- **Adaptability of the ToC to changes**: An approach for storing and changing ToC (e.g. outcomes and assumptions) information over time is needed to ensure that on-going changes, and adaptations are made as new information comes to light through on-going M&E activities and on-going learning.
- **Linkages with other systems within the organisation**: For on-going usability the ToC has to be embedded into PSETA budgeting, operational planning and M&E systems. In fact, the ToC can be used to highlight how the organisations systems are connected to a given intervention. The more tightly aligned these planning components are, the more unified PSETA's effort can be channelled to the attainment of its goals and mandate.

5.7 Process for developing the ToC

Figure 2 below sets out the process for the ToC construction

Figure 2: Theory of Change Process

In view of the recognition that a Theory of Change did not exist for the training interventions it was agreed that this would require a retrospective reconstruction of the theory of change as a key initial phase of the study. The objective of this exercise being to reconstitute the ToC that capture the causal pathways that lead to the goal intent of PSETA's mandate of upskilling public sector personnel

The process involved the hosting of ToC and Log Frame Workshop with PSETA and the participating institution, which in this instance were the National and provincial Departments of Social Development stakeholders to construct the theory of change. The rationale for the workshop was to ensure a participatory process which would draw on the insights and understandings of a targeted group of personnel from PSETA and the institution for whom the TNA was being undertaken. Personnel targeted include those involved in the design, management, implementation and evaluation of these training interventions as they would be best placed to articulate an understanding of the pathways through which the intervention will achieve its intended outcomes and impacts. Through this process it was expected that a shared and mutually understood perspectives would emerge giving shape to the theories of change.

5.7.1 ToC Workshop with National and Provincial DSD's

A ToC workshop is structured to include an introduction to the workshop which would be provided by the PSETA and which would be followed by an orientation session on understanding ToCs, how they are utilized for programme planning, design, implementation, and evaluation as well as the approach adopted for developing the ToC. This would be followed by a process of taking the participants through a series of questions with the view to completing four worksheets which would enable the construction of the ToC for that institution.

The workshop set out the following objectives namely:

- To familiarize stakeholders with the concept of Theories of Change as both a process and a product;
- To develop a shared understanding of why change happens and how through linking pathways of change to the programme theory;

- Understand the value of developing and utilizing ToCs for designing learning interventions, to assist you in determining whether you have achieved the outcomes you intended and to learn from your results towards improving your interventions;
- To define Theories of Change for training and skills development interventions

A workshop was held with PSETA, National School of Government (NSG) and DSD National and Provincial stakeholders on the 29th January 2021. The workshop was very well attended with approximately fifty-seven people. Of these participants forty-nine were DSD representatives from various provinces and functional areas. Unfortunately not all respondents completed the registration process fully to indicate which province or which functional area they work in and as a result we can only confirm that aside from representatives of the national DSD, there were representatives from five provincial DSD and from various directorates although almost half of the representatives were from the Human Resource departments of national and provincial offices. It was not possible to confirm if representatives of all eleven functional areas were present during the workshop.

A key activity during the workshop was breakaway sessions during which the representatives were allocated to work in one of four breakaway groups. To facilitate the small group sessions, a facilitator was assigned to each group and worksheets were provided to each participant with questions to guide their inputs. The four components of the worksheets were defining the problem statement in respect of training, identification of inputs that were required to make a change to the situation, the elaboration of activities to be implemented towards address a problem, the description of outputs which would be produced as a result of the inputs and activities and finally elaboration of the short and medium term outcomes and impacts of the intervention.

The workshop was however unable to complete the exercise, in retrospect an ambitious goal, given the limited time and the level of detail that was required for the exercise.

5.7.2 Challenges and Limitations

A review of the inputs received on the worksheets revealed the groups experienced some difficulties in making explicit the assumptions underpinning the pathways from outputs to outcomes.

As indicated above the most severe limitation was insufficient time for the group to work through all the worksheets, particularly with respect to the intermediate outcomes and how these link to the impacts as well as the assumptions underpinning this.

5.7.3 Potential Users of the ToC and Results Framework

The PSETA as the custodian of these training interventions is identified as the primary user. However it is posited that the ToC and Results Framework will be of interest and relevance to the NSG and national and provincial DSD's and beyond. The users and the use value of the ToC and Results Framework is outlined in the section below.

5.7.3.1 PSETA

A key user of the Theory of Change and Results framework is PSETA itself. Here reference is made to management of the SETA at national and provincial level, officials responsible for implementation and those responsible for monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes of training interventions. In the first instance it enables those responsible for planning training interventions to articulate how these interventions are expected to achieve their goal and also to make explicit the assumptions underlying the pathways through which the change is expected to occur. It does this by describing the sequence of activities which if effectively

implemented will lead to the desired outcome. Collectively the theories of change for each learning intervention map how these interventions link and relate to each other as they contribute to a larger end goal. The Results Framework also defines the roles that different role players within and external to PSETA must play and therefore enables them to understand how they contribute to the realisation of that goal. The indicators as defined in the Theory of Change importantly enable the PSETA to measure and track changes in competencies and capacity. In summary the ToC and Results Framework contributes to strengthening the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the training interventions it implements. The contribution to strengthening monitoring and evaluation is important as it will assist the PSETA in determining how to sustain or enhance interventions that are working (outcomes are positive) and where the outcomes are negative, it can inform the nature of corrective measures to be taken to improve implementation and enhance quality of outcomes.

5.7.3.2 DHET

DHET has increasingly impressed upon SETA's the need to transcend output monitoring to assessing outcomes. The development of the ToC and the Results Framework is thus important in communicating the logic of the intervention and the assumptions underpinning the pathways through which change is expected to occur. By defining the indicators against which change will be assessed it contributes to generating evidence in respect of intended outcomes and enables DHET to better understand how to enhance skills of the workforce in the public sector. The evidence generated will assist DHET to assess the extent to which the objectives of the National Skills Development Strategy III (DHET, 2011) are being realised. It may also contribute to enhancing the enabling environment through policy or strategy development.

5.7.3.3 National and Provincial level DSD Management

The value of the ToC and Results Framework being made explicit to management of public institutions and particularly their Human Resource Development official is that it serves to communicate the inherent programme logic and the pathways through which change is likely to occur. This enables these stakeholders to understand the factors that contribute to or negatively impact the realisation of outcomes for learners as well as for the "employers themselves." This is likely to motivate greater participation of public institutions in these learning interventions and deepen their understanding of the factors within their control which can enhance competencies and skills development outcomes for employees in those institution. In particular, these employers may wish to make suggestions on how the curriculum or training needs could be adapted to meet the skills demands of the workplace.

5.7.3.4 Training Institutions

The ToC and Results Framework are likely to be of similar value to training service providers as outlined above. It can provide insights and deepen their understanding of the factors that appear to contribute positively to learner outcomes and those that do not, specifically those over which they have control.

6 Conclusion

The process of developing the ToC and Logframe has contributed to the development of the instrument for the TNA. It will further contribute to the future monitoring and evaluation of the training interventions implemented by PSETA to assess its outcomes and impacts as outlined in an earlier section of this report.

Its useful is further amplified if it enables the designers and implementors of training interventions to draw lessons from reflecting on the monitoring and evaluation findings which emerge.