

The image features a central graphic of two men in business suits shaking hands. They are silhouetted against a golden-yellow world map. The map is set within a curved, white-bordered frame. The background is a gradient of yellow and gold, with a vertical pattern of diagonal lines on the left side. The overall design is professional and global in theme.

THE WORLD OF WORK

Challenges for South African students

MC Lebitso

sb



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sb **SUNBONANI
CONFERENCE**

The world of work:

Challenges for South African students

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Preface



Work has always been part of man's history and a crucial factor in social organisation. According to the traditional career development perspective, work is viewed as having many dimensions or functions. Firstly, work has an economic function: people work to earn some sort of wage or are involved in activities to be rewarded in such a way that they can sustain themselves and their dependents in order to fulfil certain primary needs.

Secondly, there is a social dimension to work: the occupation or work that individuals are involved in determines to a large extent where and how they live, the community and organisations in which they participate and many other social aspects of their lives. Social status has long been associated with individuals' jobs. Thirdly, work has a personal or psychological dimension. It is an essential source of identity and provides people with the feeling of self-worth and self-esteem as they experience a feeling of mastery and self-fulfillment when they successfully engage in work activities.

The World of Work can also bring about challenges especially amongst the youth of our country, South Africa, who are statistically speaking in majority. The intention of this book is to highlight challenges faced by students after dropping out from school, finishing Grade 12 or tertiary education and are 'ready' to enter the world of work.

C

hapter 1 CHOOSING A CAREER

1. Introduction

The world of work is forever changing. Just like single farmers evolved to survival economies, villages to cities, cities to states and eventually a global village, the time has come to realise that the place of work has changed into a new paradigm and context. Traditional employer/employee relationships have changed over the years. Expectations in the workplace continue to change.

Throughout one's life one has to make choices, and choosing a career is one of the most important and crucial choice to be made. Making a career choice can influence one's attitude, motivation, career satisfaction and even one's health – hence the need to obtain all possible help on commencing a suitable career path (Maslow, 1998).

In the new political dispensation and the implementation of democracy in South Africa, it is important that people in all communities empower themselves so that career opportunities as well as community needs may be addressed in such a way that people choose careers that bring satisfaction and serve the community and the country as a whole.

Career education stresses education as a preparation for work and should begin during the pre-primary years and continue with greater differentiation as the learner goes into primary and high school. According to Maslow's theory¹, basic needs cannot be satisfied without work and unless this happens, higher needs cannot be addressed. The beginning of a working career is a turning point in any person's life because it endows the person with adult status, for example.

People devote a great deal of time to work. It is therefore important that one gets job satisfaction, has sound interpersonal and working relations with one's supervisor, boss and colleagues. In South Africa an adult spends between 2 000 to 3 500 hours per year in a working environment.

1 See Maslow (1998) *Towards the psychology of being*, 3rd ed.

According to Turner & Helms (1995), the following are some of the functions fulfilled by work:

- Work is a means of survival. It provides people with money to feed, clothe and shelter themselves and their families/next of kin.
- Work provides opportunities to be creative and productive. Work is, therefore, a form of self-expression.
- Work determines an individual's place and status in society, e.g. the chief executive officer of a big company, the principal of a school, the DJ at a radio station, the president of a country, the governor of a bank, and the coach of a sports team.
- Work contributes to the individual's feeling of self-esteem and therefore contributes to the formation of his/her self-concept.
- Work defines our daily schedules and outlines the days, weeks and months of the year (appointment for corporate meetings, school festivities, appointment with your dentist, etc.).
- Work provides opportunities for social interactions outside the family (retirement of a colleague, a baby shower, a funeral of a colleague's mother, etc.).
- Work provides opportunities for personal development (promotions, performance rewards, etc.).
- Work provides opportunities for intellectual growth (work assignments/mandates to be fulfilled, strategic meetings, etc.).

2. Subject choice/Choice of Learning Areas

The choice of an occupation begins with the choice of subjects. But, in choosing subjects, many learners have little knowledge of the requirements for the different types of jobs available, and many types of career options that exist. For this reason it is even more important for every educator/teacher and parent to be involved and to be informed about the occupational choice process.

The choice of subjects/learning areas must be considered as early as a learner's Grade 9 year (previously Standard 7). The selection of subjects not only affects academic performance during the last three years of school, but also has serious ramifications for admission to university or technikon (university of technology) or for the future career of a learner. Future career choices could depend on matric subjects and the results that learners achieve in them. The learner should seek help from professionals, e.g. educators, career counsellors or psychologists when choosing their subjects. Learners may also take aptitude tests to see whether their interests and abilities match their subject choices.

When selecting subjects/learning areas, educators should stress that learners should not be tempted to take the easy route and drop Mathematics and Science. These subjects will

open many career opportunities. Most universities and technikons require Mathematics as a compulsory subject for entry into many of their courses. Mathematics and Science are the keys that will unlock doors to self-enrichment, future work and training opportunities. The subjects that learners choose for matric will determine their career possibilities.

It is therefore important for learners to know themselves; they need to know what their strengths and weaknesses are and, at this stage at least, know in which direction they would like to direct their energies. Learners should choose subjects and careers in such a way that they have various options, as well as the possibility of self-employment available.

3. Career choice

From an early age children wonder what they will become one day, but as they grow older they start to think about it in a different way. Their choice of careers can be influenced by their choice of subjects, their educators, their parents and relatives, as well as their interests and aptitude. To make a realistic career choice, several factors should be taken into consideration:

3.1 Self-knowledge

Children acquire self-knowledge from birth by observing, being told, noticing other people's reaction to them, comparing, picking up clues every day, psychological assessment, etc. The educator, therefore, has a mammoth task to fulfil in accompanying the learner to authentic self-knowledge. Individual learners should know themselves: where their strengths and weaknesses are, what they like and dislike, and what their fears are, before making a career choice. For the learner, self-knowledge consists of the following components, which are undifferentiated in practice because people are totalities-in-function:

3.1.1 Body knowledge

“Bodiliness” comprises the inheritable characteristics with which a person is born (Biehler & Snowman, 1993). It also refers to all the objectively observable aspects of the body. People become familiar with their bodies from birth through (a) self-discovery, e.g. the realisation that “I am too tall for a boy of 14 years.” (b) and other people's perceptions, e.g. “A skinny girl would make a good model.”

Learners may acquire self-knowledge by becoming familiar with bodily attributes such as the following: appearance, body movement, body proportions, health, fitness and physical strength, and fine and gross motor co-ordination. It is important for individual learners who have to make a career choice to become aware of their bodily attributes and deficiencies since their career choice will be significantly influence by this knowledge. Think of a question such as, “Can I become an air hostess if I am short?”

3.1.2 Aptitude

Aptitude may be described as a person's potential to attain a particular level of competence. It therefore pertains to whatever we can do with ease. Our aptitude develops from birth, for example, a child who can draw may become an adolescent who can be an artist.

The subjects/learning areas in which an adolescent attains the highest performance levels are an indication of his/her aptitude. Aptitude is one of the determinants of a career choice. The learner must be guided towards realistic and correct knowledge and understanding of and insight into his/her own intellectual capabilities; and it is important to determine whether these are consistent with requirements of a chosen career. It is also important not to choose a career with requirements beyond our capabilities, but at the same time a chosen career must not be devoid of challenges.

People have varying aptitudes and different types of work require different aptitudes. For example, a bricklayer must be endowed with manual dexterity while a bank teller must be good at sums/figures. The knowledge may also be transformed into either a *verbal* or *nonverbal* aptitude profile. If individuals have a strong verbal aptitude (which includes verbal abilities such as word fluency, memory and deductive reasoning), it is advisable for them to enter the field of Human Sciences (HS) where people are the focus. Three groupings of people under the field of Human Sciences can be found:

- a. There are activities where one is among people and has *social contact*. The emphasis is on contact with people without getting involved in their personal problems. Possible career options would be a public relations officer, journalist, editor, shop assistant, bus driver, tour guide, etc.
- b. There is social contact which entails other people's personal problems and where the emphasis is on *assistance and guidance to people* who have personal problems. All lawyers, psychologists, doctors, educators, police officers, social workers, ministers of religion, bank managers, *sangomas* and radiographers work with people.
- c. The last group refers to a group of occupations where *social contact plays a relatively small role*, for example, translator, historian, copywriter, proof reader. Their work needs the ability to use words accurately and correctly.

If, on the other hand, you have a strong nonverbal aptitude (which includes abilities such as numerical ability, perceptual speed, inductive reasoning two and/or three-dimensional spatial perception), you typically move into the field of Natural Sciences (NS). If you have a strong verbal as well as nonverbal aptitude, you could consider a career in the study fields of Commercial Sciences or Economic Sciences. The following abilities indicate an aptitude for Economic Sciences: numerical and perceptual speed and reasoning. Careers in this field include: accountant, auditor, econometrist, bank manager and economist.

3.1.3 Interest

Interest is a personal attribute that develops and changes as one matures; it is that which one wants and likes to do. One person enjoys the outdoors in natural surroundings, while another

prefers collecting artefacts. Having an interest in an activity does not necessarily mean that an adolescent will be able to perform the activity well or better than other people.

A realistic career choice is virtually unthinkable without career interest. A learner must develop well-defined career interests and must reconcile these with his/her career choice. Note that a person cannot always accommodate all his/her interests in a chosen career, but that activities that people dislike must be avoided if possible. An employee who follows a career that he/she finds interesting is usually a motivated and productive employee.

3.1.4 Sociality

Sociality refers to people's attitude towards and relationships with others. Sociality is co-determined by cultivation of the following attributes, among others: facility at communication, basic behaviour patterns, common sense or shrewdness, personal affectivity, contributory relationships and social accomplishment. Because every human being is unique, individual learners should know the sociality component of themselves and the demands that would be made on their sociality by the career they have in mind. These demands may be identified by asking questions such as, "Do I feel comfortable about appearing in public?" or "Do I want to take care of animals?" Different kinds of careers require different kinds of relationships with people, e.g. being a social worker requires a great deal of care, love, compassion and empathy towards others, as well as very good relationships with people.

3.1.5 Higher intellect

This category encompasses people's values and norms and their conception of right and wrong. In order to make realistic career choices, adolescents must have a strongly developed sense of values, and of the hierarchical order in which they arrange them. The following labour values and norms could be *reciprocity* and *social values*. These values could be instanced by questions such as, "Can I reconcile my career choice with my religious values?" or "Is money so important to me that I would even be prepared to earn it dishonestly?" Among the values that adolescents often take account of in choosing a career are *security, remuneration, status, independence, and intellectual and aesthetic values*.

Cilliers (1993:46-47) provides us with the following classification of values by creating six different groups, namely: *security, status, money, independence, sociability* and *creativity*.

- **Security:** A person who values security might well reject bigger opportunities in life in favour of the safety of a secure monthly income, a guaranteed pension pay-out, housing subsidy and medical benefits. This could be accomplished by working for a large institution such as a leading bank, insurance company, the broadcasting corporation or work in the public service.
- **Status:** Status may be achieved in several ways. Your profession may give you automatic status in the community, e.g. the status that doctors, sports heroes, ministers of religion and television personalities enjoy. Or it may be derived from your level of power and influence such as being the president of a political party.

Alternatively, status could be sought through symbols such as designer clothes, designer watches, expensive cars and dining at exclusive restaurants.

- **Money:** Money, as a value, often increases in priority as we advance through life. As a tertiary institution student, one's financial needs are less than when one becomes a parent. A large salary may be viewed as a reflection of an employee's value to a company. But to some people money is an end in itself, to be invested, but seldom enjoyed. If money is your highest priority, you should try to define "how much" money would suffice. An amount which seems like a great deal of money to a poor man could be seen as a paltry amount by someone accustomed to wealth all his life.
- **Independence:** Some people find it difficult to work under constant supervision. They are never happy in large organisations with many rules and regulations. They are not lazy or unmotivated and will often work extremely long hours in their own businesses.
- **Sociability:** People with high social values enjoy working with people. They are likely to be happy in doing charity work, nursing, police service, teaching, social work, etc. However, most of these professions might not be well paid.
- **Creativity:** Creative individuals must find an outlet for their creativity. They could be creative in the arts and sciences. They are often deeply drawn to nature and actively involved in conservation. Many artistic/creative people live a precarious existence from a financial and job perspective, but are willing to pay this price for the deep satisfaction they derive from pursuing their specific talent.

3.1.6 Personality

According to Nelson (1993:19), "... personality is the set of characteristics that makes one different from all other people and determines how one behaves". For instance, people are careful, others careless and take risks; some people have self-confidence; others would be described as shy and introverted. Personality types include the following: *realistic, investigative, artistic and creative, social and service-tendering, entrepreneurial and conventional*.

It is essential for learners to be informed about their own personality because there is a close link between individual learners' choice of a future career and their personality. A common tendency to associate career choices with personality types is exemplified in people's observations such as, "She has a lawyer's personality" or "She is a born businesswoman".

4. Career knowledge

In order to make a realistic career/occupational choice, adolescents must know what is going on in the occupational world. When people are faced with a career choice, one of the main problems is that they do not know what kinds of jobs are available in a particular

career. They also do not know the day-to-day work that every specific job entails. For instance, the work of an actor/actress sounds glamorous and interesting, but you do not take into account that they work long hours every day and work is not always guaranteed.

Career knowledge refers to insight into the world of various careers. Similar to the acquisition of self-knowledge, the acquisition of career knowledge has two components, namely: the learners' share or own initiative, and the assistance, advice and guidance they receive from parents, educators, peers, relatives, career counsellors and psychologists.

Career knowledge consists of the following components:

- a. **Job description (nature of the work):** A job description is an outline of an employee's actual activities in a specific occupation, and probably contains some of the most vital information required. A job description has the following subheadings:
 - The title of the occupation
 - Job purpose/brief description of the occupation
 - Performance work plan (key result areas and performance standards)
 - An inventory of apparatus and material used
- b. **Working conditions:** Every occupation is practiced in a specific place, under specific conditions and at specific times. Physical working conditions very frequently determine the choice of an occupation. Working conditions are, however, merely a matter of personal preference as factors such as health and physical characteristics also play a role in determining an employee's most suitable working environment. Four aspects are of special importance in working conditions:
 - The physical environment in which the person has to work;
 - The psychological atmosphere in the working situation;
 - The working hours; and
 - The length of the period of rest from work (leave).
- c. **Individual characteristics:** To determine whether an individual will be able to adapt to and succeed in a specific occupation, it is essential to establish the demands made by the occupation in relation to the worker's personality. The following individual characteristics of an employee are important to determine whether he/she will succeed in a specific job/career/occupation:
 - intelligent functioning at a certain level
 - a combination of specific aptitudes
 - character and other personality traits
 - physical requirements
 - requirements relating to gender
 - age requirements (e.g. 18-35 for the South African Police Service currently)
 - requirements concerning citizenship
 - restrictions due to membership of specific organisations, movements or groups

- d. **Preparatory requirements:** After selecting the occupation in accordance with one's abilities, interests, and other considerations, the next important step is to prepare for the occupation in question. Apart from the length of the training period, the following factors are important:
- general training requirements
 - training which is considered necessary – for instance, a national senior certificate from an academic high school could be a valid requirement for admission to an engineering faculty, but a technical school grade 12 certificate may constitute a better form of preparatory training
 - specialised training required
 - specialised training regarded as desirable
 - conditions required for admission to specialised training
 - restrictions on the number of persons admitted to specialised training
 - practical experience required
 - practical experience regarded as desirable
 - different types of educational institutions

Barkia & Yeo (1992:11-12) provide a brief overview of the different types of tertiary and post-school educational institutions:

- a. **Universities:** Universities are autonomous educational institutions which with the exception of academic training for specific occupations, such as medicine, provide broad-based tertiary education in a variety of academic disciplines. Academic criteria for entry to university courses are carefully controlled and normally require matriculation exemption or equivalent. Minimum pass mark standards are often required and universities operate a point's entry system based on matriculation results. University qualifications include bachelor degrees, honours degrees, master's degrees, doctorates and postgraduate diplomas and certificates.
- b. **University business schools:** Many universities have business schools attached to them, which offer postgraduate courses and qualifications, or specialist courses usually with a management, leadership or a business orientation. A university degree or equivalent is the normal entry qualification for postgraduate courses.
- c. **Technikons/Universities of technology:** Technikons are independent institutions which provide courses aimed at equipping students with immediate skills for the job situation. Academic and practical studies are often combined within the same course. Entry criteria for technikon courses vary according to the course applied for. Technikons offer courses leading to internal certificates and national diploma qualifications in a wide range of occupational fields, bachelor's degrees in technology (equivalent of honours degree), master's degrees in technology and doctorates in technology.
- d. **Professional bodies:** Many professional institutes offer recognised qualifications in their particular field. Courses leading to such qualifications are often offered by

recognised tertiary or post-school educational institutions, or may be offered solely through the education department of the institutions concerned, e.g. nursing colleges, institute for chartered accountants, etc.

- e. **Industrial training schemes:** Many industries have their own training bodies which set standards of qualification within the relevant industry, supervise training facilities and, in many cases, offer specialist training to employees within the industry concerned, e.g. hotel and management schools.
- f. **Correspondence colleges:** There are a number of private correspondence colleges offering a variety of educational, professional and vocational courses through the medium of distance education. Correspondence studies allow students, who are in full-time employment or who reside in remote areas, the opportunity to upgrade their educational standards or obtain a recognised qualification.
- g. **Colleges of education and educators' training colleges:** Colleges of education offer courses leading to a higher diploma qualification in pre-primary, junior primary, senior primary and specialist secondary education (e.g. Home Economics, Mathematics Education, Physical Education, and Remedial Education). A number of colleges offer further training for educators wishing to upgrade their existing qualifications (e.g. ACE – Advanced Certificate in Education). Minimum entry requirements for colleges of education range from a school-leaving certificate to full matriculation exemption, depending on the qualification sought.
- h. **Further Education and Training (FET) colleges:** FET colleges are autonomous institutions under the auspices of the Departments of Education in the nine provinces. They provide matric-bridging courses, post-school technical, trades, and commercial and enrichment education in a wide variety of occupational subjects. For many courses, a Grade 9 or Grade 10 pass or equivalent is the minimum required entry criterion for N1, but higher level studies may require the passing of previous National Certificate levels or a Senior Certificate to qualify for entry to a course. Technical college courses may lead to qualifications such as National Certificate, National Technical Certificates and National Technical Diploma, by writing national examinations. Students at technical colleges may be private individuals or apprentices or trainees sponsored by their employers. Tuition may be available in full time, part time, through correspondence or on block release, depending on the specific course, available facilities and demand.
- i. **Adult education centres:** For adults who have not had the benefit of a full school education and who wish to upgrade their educational standard. The National Department of Education has established centres throughout the country which offer free academic courses ranging from basic literacy to Grade 12 studies. These centres normally operate during afternoons and evenings at central local venues. Short courses in commercial and technical subjects and a variety of personal enrichment courses are also offered, subject to demand.

- j. Private post-school educational institutions:** In most major centres there are private training institutions that offer instruction in a variety of skills and knowledge areas, such as secretarial skills, bookkeeping or basic computer skills.
- k. Special admission requirements:** Besides training, there may be other minor admission requirements which are nevertheless important, since inability to comply with them may force one to relinquish one's choice of a particular occupation. Essential information about special admission requirements revolves around the following:
- Obtaining a specific certificate or a license;
 - Membership of a trade union, workers union or professional association (e.g. South African Council for Educators (SACE), Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA), Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), etc.; and
 - The placement aspect of the occupation.
- l. The number and distribution of workers:** The requirements of the work itself are the most crucial consideration in the choice of an occupation, because unless a person is able to comply with these, the occupation is not for him/her. Again, assuming he/she does meet the specific requirements, he/she may begin to examine other aspects of an occupation or group of occupations. The first question he/she will ask him-/herself is, "What opportunities exist in that occupation?" The answer to this is bound up with the number of workers in the occupation and their distribution. The supply and demand within the occupation is thus of utmost importance. Closely allied to this is remuneration. In an occupation where the demand for workers is great, but the supply small, remuneration is normally high. In a case like this, the counsellor should obtain information on the following:
- The number of workers in a specific occupation;
 - The number of workers in each specialised field;
 - Potential places of employment; and
 - The geographical distribution of such places of employment.
- m. The future of the occupation:** Often the first and most significant question asked is, "What future has the occupation and what prospects does it hold for me?" Closely linked with this is the degree of competition that exists in the occupation. Although research into the future of occupations is still in its infancy, reasonably good forecasts have already been made in this field. This type of information deals mainly with:
- The period for which the forecast is made;
 - The size of the labour force;
 - Past trends and tendencies;
 - The demand for workers resulting from retirements, deaths or transfers;
 - Overall demand for workers; and
 - The extent of the provision made for new or existing workers.

- n. Remuneration and financial aspects:** Remuneration which stems from practicing an occupation is one of many facets, but a major one. Particularly at times when the demand for workers is greater than the supply, salary and other financial considerations assume great importance. Apart from salary, however, there are further financial aspects of consequence, namely:
- The regular nature of the work, for instance being employed at a fixed salary, in contrast to working on a commission basis.
 - Salaries may be paid at different intervals – for instance, on an hourly, weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis.
 - Assessment of income in relation to other factors, such as experience, educational level, size of the community, functions to be carried out, gender and the type of organisation.
- o. Level of skills:** The level of skills training of the population and the productivity of labour feature prominently in a country's ability to satisfy the needs of its inhabitants. When selecting an occupation it is also important to bear in mind the level of skill required to do the job.

There are four (4) levels of skill involved in work, each depending on the difficulty of the work and the training required. Remember to take the personal aspects (e.g. personality, aptitude, and interests) into consideration when choosing a career because the level of skill will definitely be influenced by a person's abilities. You cannot be a pharmacist if you are not good at mathematics nor can you become a psychologist if your hearing is poor.

The following levels of skills for the job market are distinguished in South Africa:

- A professional and managerial occupation normally requires high qualifications (either for a technikon, university or technical college) and specialisation in a certain area, such as medicine, engineering, teaching, and psychology.
 - A skilled occupation is one for which several years of training are necessary, such as that of an electrician, plumber, carpenter, motor-mechanic. During training, people become aware of the commitment which is expected if they are to maintain the expected standard of service.
 - A semiskilled occupation requires a certain amount of basic training. Occupations include that of factory machine operator, typist or barman. At this level refresher courses are given so that employees may improve their capabilities when necessary.
 - An unskilled occupation such as that of a domestic worker, cleaner, labourer, hospital porter, taxi conductor requires no training, for example. On-the-job training is done when it is required in order to maintain standards and to keep abreast of changes.
- p. The world of work:** the entire work scenario is changing and learners preparing for the world of work are facing many challenges such as shortage of rare skills, future of the occupation, job saturation, new inventions and discoveries, retrenchments, etc.

The Government of the Republic of South Africa has committed itself to fight poverty and to create approximately 5 million jobs by 2020 (*Sunday Times*, 19 December 2010).

5. Career information

Due to the fact that there is a lack of information about careers education in South Africa or ignorance thereof, young people have been flocking to the so-called traditional careers, such as nursing, social work, teaching, law and medicine. Most young people have landed in careers that are quite out of keeping with what they would have chosen for themselves had they received proper career guidance. Career decisions have always been influenced by parents and teachers who themselves had limited scope for choosing careers and careers education whereby students are guided to make informed career decisions that will benefit not only themselves, but also the country. This shift is also meant to introduce students to the hidden careers that in the past were only known to the enlightened few and the financially able. Amongst these careers are technical, engineering and commerce-related careers.

Another key aspect of guiding learners towards a suitable career choice is having adequate knowledge and information about careers. Information may be obtained in various ways. Even if a school is situated in a rural area, far away from major cities with libraries and universities, the collection of career information is still possible. Career counsellors, educators, parents, learners and persons in our community can aid in our information collection. Information about careers can also be obtained from sources such as the labour centres, the *Student's Guide to Higher & Further Education* published by Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), *Career Guide 2008-2010* published by the Services SETA (www.serviceseta.org.za), *Infinite Career Options* by Gwiji, B. (2007), *Planning my future: A strategy for successful careers* by Don Nelson Publishers, *Encyclopaedia of Careers and Vocational Guidance*, *Info 21*, etc.

The Department of Labour can help learners who have matriculated to have a better chance of finding a job and skills development opportunities in the labour market. The Employment Services of South Africa (ESSA) is a service for all South Africans aiming to provide benefits to job seekers, employers, the youth, people with disabilities and many other people. The employment services are provided free of charge.

The ESSA consists of the following six (6) services:

- a. **Registration Services:** The Department of Labour has available a computerised system, on which one can register one's contact details and work experience plus skills (www.labour.gov.za). After you have registered as a job seeker, officials will do their best to help you find a suitable job or other placement and/or skills development opportunities, according to the supply and demand in the labour market. They will consider placement opportunities which will match your qualifications, interests and skills and will also identify whether you will benefit from further training courses. You

can also receive a copy of your Curriculum Vitae (CV) which is usually necessary when you apply for a job and should be attached to your application form.

Registration services are, however, not limited to job seekers. Employers can register their placement and skills development opportunities with Employment Services. In this way job seekers and employers can be put into direct contact with each other, which makes job placement so much easier.

- b. Career Guidance Services:** Career guidance includes the provision of career, labour market and scarce and critical skills information, as well as guidance on accessing placement opportunities. Career counsellors will also look at your qualifications, interests and skills to help you in choosing a career and finding a suitable job. Your career choice is one of the most important choices that you can make in your life, since you will spend much money to be trained and invest much energy and time in your job. Career guidance will ensure that you are really happy in your job. Ask your nearest Provincial Labour Office to refer you to a career counsellor that can assist you in this regard.
- c. Recruitment and Selection Services:** Recruitment and selection services include the identification of opportunities through networking with stakeholders and the matching of individuals to specific placement opportunities. These opportunities could be for training in a specific short course, a learnership or job opportunities with companies, which could lead to placement in a specific job.
- d. Referral to Skills Development:** We all know that one's chances of getting a job are higher when you are equipped with better skills. Employment Services have a wealth of information on skills development available. If you are an unemployed person, register on ESSA and request advice on a skills development opportunity.
- e. Information Services:** Information Services include the producing of pamphlets about the Department's Employment Services that will be distributed to all interested parties. Advocacy on how to access Public Employment Services is also an important function of the Department of Labour.
- f. Special Services:** Special services include services provided for designated groups or special target groups, especially services for people with disabilities, youth, retrenched workers and ex-offenders. If you qualify for special services, do not hesitate to contact your nearest labour centre to enquire what the Department can do for you.

Who are the beneficiaries?

- Unemployed people – people who are actively looking for employment;
- Under-employed people – these are people who are in unsuitable employment and whose skills and expertise are under-utilised;
- Learners – school-leavers and people who need further education and training;
- Employed people who are actively involved in work; and

- Providers of placement or skills development opportunities. Providers include, but are not limited to, employers in the public and private sectors.

Education Support Services (ESS) which renders psychological and remedial services to learners in schools, assist in most education departments in the country in running programmes aimed at assisting high school learners with career guidance as one of their core functions. ESS also runs annual career exhibitions mostly in mathematics, commerce and science fields in most provinces.

The following methods can be used to collect information on various careers:

- a. **The interview:** The interview is probably one of the oldest methods of collecting information on a career/occupation. The person seeking information speaks to people in a specific occupation about their jobs. The information thus obtained is then systematised and an overview of the occupation formed.

The advantage of this method is that the person interviewed usually gives the most salient aspects of the specific occupation. The disadvantages are that the process, to be thoroughly carried out, is time consuming, and that one interview only does not suffice. Finally, the information is generally given orally and the interviewer does not gain a clear picture of the processes or specialised techniques involved in the practice of a specific occupation.

- b. **Reading up:** This method is usually tied up with work and job description. The descriptions, often given by industrial psychologists or even industrial engineers, are analysed systematically and the interested person has to use his/her own judgment to identify the elements that will yield a total picture of the occupation. The advantage of this method lies in the fact that it can be made available extensively and uniformly. One of its major disadvantages, however, is that the information soon becomes obsolete and it is precisely the broad base of its presentation that makes it difficult to keep it up to date in practice.
- c. **Visits to enterprises:** These visits learners the opportunity to see how work is done in the work situation and to ask the workers questions. The function of these group visits is to make learners more occupationally aware. Observing the workers in action with the added opportunity of asking questions, constitutes one of the best methods of collecting information on occupations. Here the learner is able to see, smell, hear and feel the environment where the occupation is practiced. The questions asked provide information on the advantages and disadvantages of the occupation as seen by the workers themselves and may form part of the learner's practical experience.
- d. **Occupational literature:** This can be classified as follows:
 - Brochures: Due to cost implications in producing them, brochures tend to give incomplete information about careers.

- **Periodicals:** Periodicals contain a wide variety of occupation descriptions useful to the counsellor, parent or educator. The main objectives are that most of the descriptions are of low-level occupations as regards both training and status.
- **University calendars and publications by tertiary institutions and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC):** University calendars may also be consulted for information on training opportunities, which is an integral part of vocational information. This information is being supplemented and extended by the HSRC publications distributed to university libraries, school psychological services and school counsellors.

This is essential literature which must be acquired by anyone involved in school guidance. The publications are regularly revised and published by the HSRC. Educational magazines and newspapers may also be used as sources of information because they usually have columns and articles on educational matters. These could be magazines such as *Soul City*, *Educamus*, *Learn & Teach*, *Up Beat*, *In Focus*, and newspapers such as *Sowetan*, *Diamond Field Advertiser (DFA)*, *City Press*, etc.

- **Embassies:** Sometimes learners want to know about overseas studies; therefore it is safe to keep information on overseas institutions. This information can only be supplied by the embassies of the respective countries.
- **Television and the Internet:** There are various programmes about career information on television. Learners can also obtain information on careers via the Internet.

It is obvious from the discussions in this chapter that it is not an easy task to make a career or occupation decision. We should support learners in their difficult decisions of choosing a career. A realistic approach entails supporting learners from a very early age by means of a career education programme. This task is a difficult one for the educator and is further complicated by the fact that the workplace is changing all the time. Every new invention means that a new occupation is created or an old one is no longer necessary. People's needs are also changing, technology is advancing drastically and so is the nature of occupations in order to supply those needs.

However, when you assist learners to choose a career, it is important to lead them in such a way that they can really get to know themselves before attempting to select a job within a specific career field. Always remember that people have unlimited potential which develops as they come into contact with the world of work. A casual job can lead to more permanent work or to a career within a specific career field. People can create unique careers around themselves and, as they mature, move along their path, enjoying new challenges and thriving on change.

C

hapter 2

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

1. What is self-knowledge?

According to Linhard & Dlamini (1990), "... self-knowledge is the insight that people have into their own personalities that enable them to know what they are capable or incapable of doing or reaching." A self-concept is the picture we have of ourselves – everything we think and know about ourselves (Who am I?). It can be realistic and true or unrealistic and false. It can be positive or negative.

Self-knowledge is the basis of self-reliance, maturity and confidence, and it is crucial to making decisions. Each person is unique, but there are similarities between us. We need to know who we as individuals are and in what ways we are similar to others.

During their adolescent years young people are engaged in a quest to discover their own identity. Biological, intellectual and emotional changes occur in adolescence. These changes compel individual learners to deal with abstract ideas such as values; to experience a wide range of emotions; and to explore psychological aspects such as personal strengths and weaknesses. "From their interactions with adults and peers, as well as from increased self-insight, youngsters begin to develop a more definite self-concept and to become aware that who they are is strongly related to their sense of self-esteem" (Morganett, 1990:85).

Self-knowledge leads to self-identity formation which hinges on the question, "Who am I?" and therefore, on the learner's cognitive attribution of meaning to the self. According to Erikson (1968) the choices a person makes throughout his/her life depend significantly on the answer that person gives in response to the question "Who am I?" Answers to the question "Who am I" will differ from one person to another because every person is a unique being.

A person's self-knowledge consists of certain components, (physical, cognitive, emotional, etc.) which are undifferentiated in practice because people are "totalities in function". People are present as a totality in all their actions and thoughts. To know themselves they must take due cognisance of all the features in themselves. To equip learners with the life skills necessary to enable them to realise their potential and be able to answer the question

“Who am I”, we need to help them practice this skill. Here are two methods counsellors/parents/educators could use to help learners/students answer the question. “Who am I?” They are SWEAT analysis and Johari’s window.

1.1 SWEAT analysis

SWEAT analysis is our guideline to take stock of our skills, knowledge, abilities and accomplishments and to set and review our goals. It helps us to compile a positive personal profile that highlights our strengths and helps us to cope with our weaknesses.

SWEAT is the abbreviation for the following:

- Strengths, skills (S)
- Weaknesses (W)
- Education, experience (E)
- Accomplishments, affiliations, activities (A)
- Target (T)

- a. S-TEST: STRENGTHS. Your strengths are the outstanding skills, knowledge and abilities you have honed (sharpened) through your education, training and practical experiences.

Example: Public Protector Adv. Thuli Madonsela’s strength has been to deal head on with corruption matters facing the public service.

Make a list of all the strengths you think you have. Name all the things that you are good at and also name the skills that you have acquired. Write down next to each strength, a situation in which you demonstrate this particular strength.

- b. W-TEST: WEAKNESSES. Everybody has weaknesses. How people react to and address their weaknesses distinguishes winners from losers. Acknowledge your weaknesses honestly.

Example: Former Minister of Transport, Mr Sbu Ndebele now Minister of Correctional Services flaw was to procrastinate and with little consultation address the E-tolling system in the Gauteng Province.

Make a list of all your weaknesses. Next to each weakness, see if you can make suggestions on how to improve this particular aspect of your life.

- c. E-TEST: EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE: Education encompasses all the opportunities you have had to learn something new. Experience is the unique bundle of skills that you have acquired in your personal, social and academic life.

Make a list of all the experiences and the educational qualifications that you have. Do not be modest. Specify all experiences, e.g. attending workshops, taking certificate courses, planning a welfare project or raising money for a new health clinic.

- d. A-TEST: AFFILIATIONS: Most of us are active in some or other organisation. The affiliation test will help you reflect on some of your significant memberships and contributions to your community.

Make a list of all organisations that you belong to. Membership of and active participation in an organisation directly or indirectly develop several skills which often help us succeed in our personal endeavours.

- e. T-TEST: TARGET: If you have established clear goals for your life, you will be able to spend time on planning strategies to realise these goals. If you have no goals, you will probably end up nowhere.

Make a list of all those goals that you still want to realise.

1.2 Johari's window

Another way of helping learners/students to look at themselves will be to use the Johari's window. Two American psychologists, Joe Luft and Harry Ingham (Jo + Harri = Johari) made a useful diagram, the Johari's window to illustrate what we know and do not know about ourselves (Steinberg, 1993).

The extent of a person's self-knowledge may be clearly demonstrated with this model which provides information about different aspects of the self in the four (4) quadrants of the window. Applying the models also represents a process whereby a person can acquire self-knowledge.

The window is represented by a square which is subdivided into four smaller squares. Everything a person knows about him-/herself is on the left-hand side of the square (Windows A + B), while the unknown information is on the right-hand side (Windows C + D). The first part (Window A) (**called open**) represents the aspects of the individual known by the self and others. The first quadrant is the basis for establishing interpersonal relations.

Windows A + B have to be expanded to address the question "Who am I?" No one can know him-/herself fully, but the greater the amount of realistic self-knowledge the adolescent acquires about him-/herself, the better the self-concept.

The second part (Window B) (**called hidden**) represents those aspects known by the self, but not by others. How to expand or contract Window B: It is important that the person discloses information about him-/herself that other people need to know, for example, fear of taking risks. If the information is kept secret, Window B remains unchanged, but if the person discloses it, he/she enlarges Window A. This area may include information about our failures and successes, peer pressure, issues of conformity, problems with boyfriend or girlfriend, weight loss problems, etc.

The third part (Window C) (**called blind**) represents that part of the individual known by others, but not by the self. Steinberg (1993:86) states: "This may vary from the way you twitch your nose during communication to the way you tend to monopolise a conversation

or react aggressively when people do not agree with your views.” Communication and interpersonal relationships are generally enhanced as the blind area becomes smaller.

The fourth part (Window D) (**called unknown**) represents aspects not known to the self or to others. How to contract Window D: This partition is reduced mainly by means of exploration media (IQ tests, aptitude test, etc.).

Learners/students may discover what they do not know about themselves through observation, being told by others, noticing other people’s reactions, comparison, clues picked up in everyday life and tests (e.g. IQ, aptitude and personality tests).

Table 1: Diagrammatic illustration of Johari’s window.

OPEN (Window A) Aspects of the individual known by the self and others	BLIND (Window C) Aspects of the individual known by others, but not the self
HIDDEN (Window B) Aspects known by the self, but not by others	UNKNOWN (Window D) Aspects not know to the self or to others

The Johari’s window has many educational uses, e.g.:

- It enhances communication and interpersonal relationships.
- It answers the question, “Who am I?” The larger window A becomes, the better a person’s self-knowledge, and the better position he/she is in to answer the question, “Who am I?”
- It gives more information about other people: The more you know about them, the easier it is to understand their strengths, weaknesses and desires, and their motives for doing things. This is also true of other’s perceptions about us.
- Window D can be a fountain of untapped latent abilities.
- Educators/teachers can help to expand adolescents’ Window A by making them aware of their skills and aptitudes, qualities and personality, attitudes, values and interests by decreasing the other areas (Windows B, C and D).
- Career knowledge may also cause change in the different quadrants of the Johari’s window. It is true that the more career information learners/students have, the more their self-knowledge will improve. For example: Andrew wants to become dietician and regards this as his primary goal in life. Then, on gaining information about the nutrition profession, he discovers a personal distaste for some aspects of the profession. Previously he was totally unaware of any such preference or antipathy. As he gains this information his window A expands.

By assessing and becoming aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, learners/students may create the desire to build on existing qualities, to develop latent ones, or to eliminate those qualities that may be harmful to them.

C

hapter 3

TOWARDS SERVICE EXCELLENCE

1. Introduction

There was once a good builder who had worked for years in a large company and who had reached the age of retirement. His employer asked him to build one more house; it was to be his last. The builder took the job, but his heart was not in it. He used inferior materials and he let pass errors which he would not have done had he shown his normal interest in this work.

When the house was eventually completed, his employer said to him: “The house is yours. Here are the keys to the house. It is a present from me to you.” The builder immediately regretted that he had not used the best materials and engaged the most capable and skilful workers. If only he had known that the house was for him.

The moral of the story is: the regrets one might have for not having put one’s heart into a job/task.

In his State of the Nation Address, former President of the Republic of South Africa Thabo Mbeki (6 February 2004) said:

We must be impatient with those in the Public Service who see themselves as pen-pushers and guardians of rubber stamps, thieves intent on self-enrichment, bureaucrats who think they have a right to ignore the vision of Batho Pele, who come to work as late as possible, work as little as possible and knock off as early as possible.

In this chapter, we will discuss the importance of wholeheartedly pursuing service excellence in our jobs. Anything less would be a disappointment not only to our clients/customers, but also to ourselves.

2. Corporate image

Many organisations today have a corporate mission that focuses on the customer. “To be number one in delivering value to customers” is a typical mission statement. How a company is performing from its customers’ perspective has become, therefore, a priority for top management.

Think of any well-known business (e.g. a construction company, bank, and retail shop or meat market) and a particular image will come to mind. The name of one business may conjure up an image of expensive products, luxurious surroundings and exceptionally good service. Another name may be associated with bargains, discounts, self-service, average quality and down-scaled surroundings. This mental picture which we have of any organisation is known as its **corporate image**. It may contain positive and/or negative elements.

A(n) institution/company/organisation/business enterprise’s image is the result of the combined effect of a number of factors, including:

- **Corporate symbols:** These are the symbols, logos and colours which the institution has chosen. In time, these become the visual cues by which an organisation is immediately identified. Of importance here is that colours, symbols and logos should be chosen with sensitivity to the meaning which these might have for customers so as not to estrange any group. Language policy is also important. To be able to serve customers in the language of their choice, opens doors.
- **Service rendered:** The nature of the service and the efficiency and effectiveness with which it is rendered also serve to create a particular image. Think, for instance, of the image that the public service has had for many years, namely that of a colossal, slow and absurdly rigid dinosaur. This image was the result of government institutions’ mode (or lack of) service delivery.

Example: The soccer player, Kaka, has the ability to render a service to his country and his team by scoring crucial goals.

- **Facilities:** The location and appearance of offices and other buildings also contribute towards the public image of an institution. Are the buildings well looked after, neat, decorated and warm? Are they user-friendly to the disabled and to mothers with children? Do customers find their way in these buildings (available signage) thanks to clear indicators or do they find themselves roaming from office to office like lost sheep?
- **The people:** The people who render the services are probably the most important link in the chain. Their *attitude, professionalism, friendliness, sensitivity to diversity, commitment* and *efficiency* are vital in ensuring a positive corporate image. A customer often needs only one personal or telephonic contact with one official (service provider) to form a lasting impression of the whole company/enterprise.

Many aspects of customer service such as courtesy, respect, clear communication of correct information, a smile or an apology, do not require additional funds or other resources. It is rather a question of adopting the right attitude.

3. Who are our clients/customers?

Every organisation/institution/business/company whether it is a private or public institution, depends on its customers for existence. Customers are therefore an indispensable asset to organisations. They deserve to have us “build houses for them as we would build for ourselves”.

3.1 Internal customers

An often neglected customer is the internal customer. Our colleagues from other branches/stores, directorates, sections or offices within the organisation/company are our internal customers and deserve to be treated as professionally as the external customer. How would you feel if you require the services of another division of your company and the phone rings on end without being answered?

3.2 External customers

These are customers we do business with and have the potential to sustain or to destroy the company, e.g. suppliers, manufacturers, our debtors and creditors as well as other companies involved in the same trade/business as us. Private companies usually define their market and target certain sectors of the population. Their services are then tailor made to suit the needs of that sector of the population.

One business may cater more for females and children, while the other targets the male market; the working class, unemployed or pensioners. One may be geared towards the needs of young persons while the other caters more for older people. Within the Public Service this is different. The Public Service does not target certain groups within the South African community. It caters and serves the whole South African community.

4. What is service excellence?

Service excellence is as the result of the combined effort of all staff members in the organisation to consistently meet and even exceed the needs and expectations of the internal and external client/customers. Meeting these needs require effective systems and procedures efficiently implemented by trained and committed staff in a human, friendly and impartial way.

According to Theron, Bothma & Du Toit (2003:4), “... good customer service means going beyond what customers expect and giving them what they actually want.” Good customer service means exceeding the customers’ expectations and impressing them with empathy and understanding. Good customer service can be legendary. Consider the following example:

The story is told of a businessman who often travelled overseas on business. On his first flight with a new carrier, when the flight attendant asked for his drink order, he ordered a very special single-malt scotch whisky. The flight attendant

informed him that they did not carry that brand, and he settled for something else. Many months later the same man was flying on the same airline when a different flight attendant approached him for a drinks order. Before he could even order, she offered him the exact same whisky that he had requested months before. The airline required that all flight attendants report any out of the order requests after each flight, and his specific order had been recorded alongside his name. When he had booked his next flight, the whisky had been stocked especially for him.

Customers rate service quality on five factors:

- a. Reliability – the ability to provide what was promised, dependably and accurately.
- b. Assurance – the knowledge and courtesy shown to customers and the ability to convey trust and confidence.
- c. Tangibles – the physical facilities and appearance of the service provider.
- d. Empathy – the degree of caring and individual attention shown.
- e. Responsiveness – the willingness to help customers promptly.

All five factors are important to customers, some more than others. Certain customers will rank reliability much higher than assurance or even empathy, while others will value empathy more than responsiveness. Excellent customer service will require extraordinary performance in each factor (Theron *et al.*, 2003).

4.1 Reliability

Reliability means doing what you say you do, to and for the customer. Customers are generally faced with three distinct categories of promises:

- a. **Organisational promises:** These are the promises made to the customer by the company as a whole, namely marketing promises. Customers can and will hold a company to its promised guarantees. For example:
 - The Department of Roads and Transport promises a zero tolerance policy towards traffic offenders.
 - Spur promises a “taste for life” on the meals they serve.
 - BMW promises “sheer driving pleasure”.
 - Mondi Rotatrim promises “better performance paper”.
- b. **Common expectations:** Customers bring new expectations to your doorstep with every transaction and encounter. If their last experience with your organisation was pleasant and prompt, they will expect the same this time. Customers’ common expectations are elevated by experiences with your own organisation and your competitors.

- c. **Personal promises:** Customers are faced with promises made by the customer service personnel. Promises such as “I will call you in five minutes.” Reliable customer service providers keep their promises.

4.2 Assurance

Assurance is about managing your customer’s feeling of trust. Being a reassuring customer service provider comes in four packages:

- a. **Product knowledge:** Customers expect you to know the product’s features, advantages and benefits. There is no substitute for good training.

Example: “Qualified Technician”

I recently required the services of an electrical technician to fix a problem with my electrical gate. I called a reputable company whose number I obtained from the Yellow Pages. I informed the technician of the make and model of my gate motor and asked if he could fix the problem. Naturally, I received a resounding “yes” followed by an in-depth explanation of his call-out fees and his hourly rate. Upon arrival, this “qualified technician” stared at the motor for a while, pulled out the user’s manual and he proceeded to tinker and fiddle with the electronic circuit board unsuccessfully. After almost half an hour of bemused observation, I grabbed the manual and proceeded to fix the gate myself. Needless to say, I will never use that firm again (adapted from Theron *et al.*, 2003).

- b. **Company knowledge:** Customers expect you to know the organisation and the various sections’ responsibilities. If you are unable to assist the customer, you should know who can. Your role is that of a navigator, to guide the customer through the maze that is your business.
- c. **Listening skills:** Customers expect you to listen, understand and respond to their specific needs as they explain them to you. They expect you to ask pertinent questions that will help them to do a better job of giving the correct information needed to solve their problem. They expect you to pay attention and get it right, so that they do not have to repeat anything.
- d. **Problem-solving skills:** Customers expect you to be able to solve their problem and to do it quickly. If you cannot provide a solution, they expect you to direct them to someone who can.

4.3 Tangibles

In every service encounter there are tangible aspects that enhance the service experience. Before eating at a restaurant, you first evaluate the tangibles. Does the restaurant look appealing? Does it look clean? What smells are wafting down to you? Do you smell sizzling steak or rotting food? Remember that you as a service provider are also one of the tangibles! Your appearance is an indicator of what the service will be like.

4.4 Empathy

Empathy means acknowledging and affirming another's emotional state. Empathising with customer's means instantly sizing up their emotional state and deciding on an appropriate course of action. It is important to see and treat each customer as an individual; this helps you to meet each of their needs as individuals.

4.5 Responsiveness

Timeliness is always important. Excellent customer service means taking care of customers immediately. Excellent customer service means setting and meeting deadlines. Excellent customer service means informing customers of exactly how long they will be waiting. How many times have you explained your case to the customer service provider and then waited an interminably long time for the person to return from some unknown source of information "at the back".

The public sector has adopted what is referred to as "Batho Pele Principles" in order to improve service delivery. Batho Pele is an initiative of government to get public servants to be service orientated, to strive for excellence in service delivery and to commit to continuous service delivery improvement.

It is a simple, transparent mechanism, which allows customers to hold public servants accountable for the type of services they deliver. The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) was also responsible for compiling the White Paper on transforming Public Service delivery. An outflow of this was the Batho Pele White Paper. Batho Pele is a SeSotho word for "people first" and was chosen because it reminds us that the sole purpose of the public service is to serve the people.

The eight principles, which all government departments were required to introduce, are set out below, namely:

- a. **Consultation:** Consultation must take place between public servants and citizens about the level and quality of the services that the public will receive. It also implies that citizens must have a say regarding the services delivered to them.
- b. **Service standards:** Citizens must be informed about the level and quality of the services they will receive in order for them to know what to expect. This implies that public servant must deliver the level and quality of services they have undertaken to provide. Failing to do so means that citizens have the right to complain and demand quality services.
- c. **Access:** Citizens have a legitimate right to equal access to services and public servants must not withhold that right from them.
- d. **Courtesy:** According to this principle, public servants must treat every citizen with courtesy and consideration, irrespective of the social status of the person.

- e. **Information:** Citizens have the right to accurate information regarding the public services they are legitimately entitled to. Public servants must therefore provide them with full and accurate information.
- f. **Openness and transparency:** In terms of openness and transparency, public servants are obliged to inform citizens about the administration and management of national and provincial departments; what it cost to run them and who is responsible for running them, etc.
- g. **Redress:** In the context of the White Paper, redress means that should public servants not deliver the promised standard of service, they have to explain why the service is below standard. Furthermore, when this occurs, it is first their duty to apologise to the citizens and second to undertake to remedy the situation. Complaints from citizens should receive a sympathetic ear and a quick positive response.
- h. **Value for money:** This principle gives citizens the right to demand that the services they receive are real value for money paid for them. This makes public servants responsible for providing efficient, effective and economic services.

The eight principles have more to do with human values and dignity, than operational processes. Batho Pele is a way of conducting oneself in the presence of others; it is a preparedness to acknowledge their rights and needs and a willingness to help them add value to their lives. Batho Pele is not about additional resources, but about ensuring that the resources which we already have are used effectively in service delivery. Wasteful and expensive procedures should be eliminated.

Batho Pele acknowledges the fundamental vulnerability of the human condition, which unites the end-user with the service provider in their mutual quest for recognition, which can only be achieved through respect for the other's dignity as a person. This is the real power and beauty of Batho Pele: it embodies the values that are enshrined in the Bill of Rights, namely each person's inalienable right to their dignity as human beings. From this fundamental right to be treated with dignity, come all other rights, such as the right to information, the right to access the right to service, etc.

5. Perceptions

Perception is the way we see something on the basis of our experience. Perception is important to customer service providers because the delivered service must be perceived by the customer to be more than satisfactory. The customer's perception is however based on his/her experience, knowledge, expectations, influences and interpretation.

What is perceived by one customer as outstanding, legendary service is perceived by another as barely satisfactory. Perceptions are unfortunately not based on pure rational logic. According to Sheth, Mittal & Newman (1999), the following three factors shape perception:

- a. **Stimulus characteristics:** These have to do with the nature of the information from the environment that is the characteristics of the service encounter. How much information is displayed in the store? How clearly is the customer service department demarcated? How many customer service personnel are on duty?
- b. **Context:** This concerns the setting in which the information is received. In a customer service context, this would imply the situation at present. Is the customer complaining? Does the customer require information about a specific product? Does the customer want information about the company?
- c. **Customer characteristics:** These involve personal knowledge and experience. Has the customer purchased from the organisation before? Was the customer's previous experience positive or negative?

This means that perceptions can change from day to day and from experience to experience. The customer service provider must always be aware of the power of perception. Luckily perceptions are less rigid than attitudes; they can be changed or at least influence. Each experience with the organisation will modify the customer's perception and will ultimately, hopefully, create a positive attitude towards the organisation.

According to Gallagher (2000) in Theron *et al.* (2003:12), research has shown that one unhappy customer will probably tell between 10 – 20 people about his/her negative experience. The same study has shown that those people will tell an average of five people about the experience. Conservatively speaking, one unhappy customer can influence about 50 people. Worst case scenario means that one unhappy customer can influence 100 other potential customers.

Companies never lose only one customer. Companies in fact lose the following:

- **Current profits:** The company will lose whatever monies that customer was intending to spend right now.
- **Jobs:** Retrenchments are a way of life in South Africa and indeed all over the globe. One less customer = one less job.
- **Reputation:** If one unhappy customer can influence 50 – 100 people negatively, image the damage the brand incurs.
- **Future profits:** Customers who are loyal tend to spend increasingly more money in a single store over time. This implies that customers who walk out do not only take their current spending with them, but also their future rand.

In conclusion, customer service may be just the support or ancillary activities to the physical goods being sold or service being rendered, but excellent customer service means going the extra mile to satisfy the customer or consumer.

C

hapter 4

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

1. Introduction

The success of a business, institution or organisation depends on good business relationships. Good business relationship depends on clear communication. When communicating, one needs to have clear intentions in order to give clear messages. Communication with others can consume a huge portion of one's workday. Consider how effective you would be if you were not allowed to communicate in any manner.

Without communication skills, how would you train a new employee on organisation procedures, customer expectations, and proper equipment or even secure a business deal? As an employee you will be required to be a proactive communicator, a true professional at initiating conversations and discussions about work process problems, facilitating team meetings, explaining production efficiency reports, and perhaps conducting customer satisfaction focus groups.

Communication is the interactive process between at least two people whereby one person is able to express what he/she means in a clear, unambiguous way and the other person(s) is able to understand the meaning of the message fully.

Dealing with customers in today's competitive world is no longer simply part of the job, but also something on which large corporations, organisations, government departments and even small businesses base their competitive marketing strategies. It is not surprising to find organisations incorporating the term "service" in their advertising and promotional campaigns. The reason is simple – customers and clients today not only require, but also demand good quality customer service. In our modern competitive world, customer service alone may not win you more business – it is the minimum requirement. However, poor or ordinary customer service will almost certainly lose your business.

This chapter will look at what effective communication in the world of work entails, namely types of communication, communication modes, communication skills as well as telephone etiquette and telephone techniques.

2. The quality of service rendered and customer satisfaction

Effective customer service is about providing both service quality and customer satisfaction at the point of contact between employee and customer. Service quality is the customer's overall impression of the relative inferiority or superiority of the organisation and its services, while customer satisfaction is the outcome of individual service transactions, irrespective of which communication channel has been used, be it written, telephonic, face-to-face or technology-based.

According to Edwards (2002) in Theron *et al.* (2003:94), from the very first exchange, the customer's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the outcome of the exchange contributes directly to his/her overall perception of the firm's service quality. If the customer's first interaction with the firm's service staff is positive, then his/her perception of the firm's service quality will also be positive. What is more, this first impression is almost always the most important and lasting of the exchanges between firm and customer.

Subsequent interactions with the firm's service division will either add to or detract from this first impression. A good first impression followed by poor service the second time round, may leave the customer still positively disposed towards the firm, but less so than before. A good first impression followed by equally good service on the second occasion, will help reinforce the customer's positive impression of the firm. However, a particularly bad second experience could completely wipe out the initial positive impression the customer has of the firm. Also a negative first impression immediately places the firm in a negative position, and, in this instance, there may not be a second chance to set things right because the customer may never return. It is therefore essential to set the stage with a solid first impression and to follow this up with good service thereafter. In this instance, the odd lapse in customer service will probably be forgiven as long as it is not repeated.

3. Frontline and back-end personnel

In delivering customer service, there are those staff members who deal directly with customers. They are the organisation's *frontline staff*. They include customer service personnel, technical staff assigned to help customers with technical problem, sales personnel, the receptionist, your call centre staff (or the telephonist, is a small company), your accounts staff who handle enquiries and cashiers.

These frontline employees need to be carefully selected. Not only should they know their job well, but they should also have the personality and ability to deal with customers on a

regular basis. Besides for the firm's frontline staff, there are also the back-end personnel. They are employees who seldom have contact with customers. They represent the "engine" that drives the organisation.

It is important to ensure that all staff – including back-end staff have basic people-handling skills. They should at least know how to greet customers; be able to tell the customer to be patient while they help him/her; know how to transfer the customer; have the answers to common questions easily at hand; have a telephone list available of their colleagues in order to be able to easily transfer customers; be able to smile and be friendly and patient.

4. Face-to-face customer service

Face-to-face customer service is perhaps the most difficult of all forms of interpersonal contact because one is in direct contact with the customer. It is not possible to hide behind the facelessness of a telephone or written document. Face-to-face communication is more confrontational, because the customer can see the expressions on the employee's face and can also read his/her body language. An aggressive customer may seem much more threatening in a face-to-face situation than in a telephone or written communication situation. This may result in an undesirable outcome as the customer bullies the employee into a certain course of action or the employee may react equally aggressively to the customer's approach resulting in a quick deterioration of the communication process.

For this reason, only employees who can handle a face-to-face situation should be used at the frontline. Unfortunately, this is not everyone. In fact, many workers are not good frontline employees, and to ensure success in this type of face-to-face environment, the first step is to select and screen employees that can "handle the heat or get out of the kitchen".

5. Dealing with telephone calls

When the telephone rings, you never know who the caller would be. For this reason, always come across as cheerful, helpful, patient and as polite as you possibly can. That will put the caller at ease and will reflect an image, not only of your effectiveness, but of the effectiveness of your business as a whole.

On the telephone, courtesy and good manners are essential. The consideration shown to a caller in person is just as desirable when he/she is at the other end of the telephone. Telephone etiquette is not only about being polite over the phone; it is about dialling the correct number, being patient, and knowing what you want to communicate. The telephone denies you the advantages of face-to-face communication factors such as appearance, gestures and other forms of nonverbal communication. Make each caller feel that his/her call is the most important.

How often have you had to say to the caller?

- “Hold on, let me get a pen.”
- “Oh, by the way what did you say your name is ...?”
- “Oh! No! This pen does not write.”

How often have you had to put the receiver on the table (without saying anything to the caller) to borrow a pen from the next office; held the receiver (without covering the mouth-piece) while you shouted for someone to bring you a pen? This situation leads to the caller having to wait longer and pay more for a service that he/she could have got cheaper had the call been managed properly.

Here are some hints:

a. Be prepared: Have the following ready at all times:

- Note pad
- Message pad
- Pen (that writes) and pencil
- Internal directory (ease of reference and/or transfer calls)

b. The telephonist/switchboard operator should have the following available:

- Index book (kept for list of telephone numbers frequently used)
- Telephone directory
- Yellow pages (this lists all business subscribers under their trade or profession)

When the phone rings, reach for the pen and the note pad before you reach for the telephone.

c. Answer promptly: When the telephone rings answer promptly and greet the caller correctly. A number of stray calls are received on a daily basis. Correct answering helps the caller to know whether he/she has reached his/her destination.

Example: “Good morning, Modimolle Magistrate Office, Victoria speaking, how may I assist you?”

“You have reached the office of the Manager: Marketing & Sales at Stuttaford Van Lines Bloemfontein Branch, Lerato Kammies speaking, good afternoon.”

“Yes, we do stock tyres for Corollas. In fact, we’ve just received a consignment of Pirelli tyres at a very attractive price. Let me have your fax number or e-mail address and I’ll quickly forward you a brochure.”

“It was a pleasure! Do call on us again soon.”

All other telephone users on extensions identify the division or section; identify yourself and offer help.

It is essential that all telephonists be given, or work out for themselves, a script that they can use to answer the phone. A *script* is a list of pre-prepared statements that a person can use when answering calls on a telephone or cell-phone, for example to welcome the caller, enquire what his/her problem is, to direct the caller to a specific person, to clarify a point or to end the conversation. The exact list of statements will differ from business to business depending on what products are being sold and what services are on offer. In addition, the statements will not always follow on logically from one another, since they are used to deal with ad hoc queries from the caller.

- d. **Speak clearly, naturally and distinctly:** This is so obvious and yet so often ignored. How many times have you called a company and not even understood the first sentence that came across the telephone line? That is because people answer the phone with a memorised, patented line, often the name of their department within the company. Enunciate your words and speak into the telephone. This may seem obvious, but most of us have never heard what we sound like on the telephone. Often, people who speak in normal tones in a face-to-face situation, sound too quiet over the telephone. If you are providing information that the caller is probably writing down, such as the extension number of another person who can help him/her out, slow down to allow him/her time to mentally receive the information and transfer it to his/her pencil. Repeat the information, if necessary.
- e. **Listen:** Listening is just as important in a telephone situation as in a face-to-face situation, perhaps even more so. It is the best way to clearly understand a customer's needs. In fact, you should be listening more than you speak; listen at least 70% of the time and speak 30% of the time. Unfortunately, some call-centre operators seem to think that this is their time and space to talk and they may dominate the conversation, overwhelming the customer. In the process of listening, you may also need to ask short questions for the sake of clarification. Try to evaluate the urgency of the customer's problem or query by asking questions. Find out the implications. Do not draw a conclusion until all of the information has been presented (Theron *et al.*, 2003:121).

Good listening skills involve hearing and understanding the intent of what the caller is saying. Give the caller your undivided attention, listen carefully and ask appropriate questions. Take the caller's full name and name of the company/department he/she is calling from. Take the telephone numbers correctly and if necessary, repeat them to the caller.

- f. **Create the right impression:** No one in business wants to be rude and ill-mannered, yet it is all too easy on the telephone to sound as if you are when you are not. You have three things with which to convey a cheerful, helpful image over the telephone: **your attitude, your voice** and **your words**. Make sure you come across as professional as

possible. Vary your voice. Do not talk in a flat monotone with the same emphasis on all words. Use plain simple words whenever possible and avoid jargon.

6. Call centres

Companies with large numbers of customers are increasingly establishing call centres or outsourcing their telephonic customer contact to a third-party call centre. Examples are banks (ABSA, FNB, Standard Bank, etc.) insurance companies (OUTsurance, MiWay, Dial Direct, ASSUPOL, First for Women, etc.), some national government departments, chain stores, BMW, etc. A call centre is generally any operation that involves the company interfacing with external (or internal) customers. In some cases call centres are also referred to as “help desks” (Theron *et al.*, 2003).

More commonly, call centres and help desks are large physical office environments equipped with computers and telephone lines. At each computer sits a call-centre operator (also referred to as an agent). This operator is responsible for a particular company. When a customer calls that company’s customer care line or help desk, the operator takes the call. The call is automatically logged on the computer, as is the conversation. The operator records the customer’s name, contact details and problem(s) onto special software. In some case, the operator may be able to help the customer immediately, or more commonly he/she may only refer the customer to someone else.

When customers dial into the call centre, their calls may be answered by an automated service called an interactive voice response facility (known as **ivr**), welcoming them to the company call centre or hotline. This automated voice will generally inform them that their call is important to the company and that it will be attended to as soon as an operator becomes available and that their patience is appreciated. In larger companies, the customer may have to select one or more options such as technical assistance, sales assistance, account assistance or a general enquiry by pressing a corresponding number on the phone given by the automated voice operator. While the customer waits, music is often played in the background to compensate the waiting.

In the case of **third-party call centres**, it is not uncommon for operators to handle more than one company. In these instances, unless operators are specially trained, they can do little more than refer the customer’s call to another person within the company (even if the company is located across the city or in another town). They will probably have a comprehensive list of employees at the company in question on their computers and will only need to enter a keyword or two to describe the problem the customer has and the software will then link an employee within the company to the keywords entered.

Alternatively, the operators may have access to certain corporate information that they can use to assist the customer – account enquiries is one example. Should the customer contact the call centre regarding their account, the operator would then access the customer’s account information on the computer and may be able to provide him/her with

certain information about the status of his/her account. It is unlikely that the operator will be permitted to do more than this and he/she will also need to be specially trained to handle such enquiries.

7. Written contact with the client

Another way of reaching the customer is by means of the written word. This means putting pen to paper or fingers to the keyboard (computer). While verbal and face-to-face contact is usually quick and quite personal, written communication is a little different. It tends to be less personal, more formal and is certainly much slower. However, with written communication there is proof of what has been aided or done and this record may be important to the company. After all, one cannot deny what has been said in a document and the documentation also serves as proof that the communication was made (especially if it is backed up with proof of delivery, such as a registered mail slip or sent/receive e-mail notification).

Generally, all types of formal business correspondence, such as a product notification, a follow-up sales letter, a survey or thank you letter or any reply to correspondence initiated by a customer, will be typewritten (to foster professionalism). What is more, similar to written communication, face-to-face contact or telephone conversation can also create expectations amongst customers. A well-written document will be seen as an indication of the level of professionalism of the company/department. Similarly, a courteous, understanding and clear (unambiguous) letter is likely to be well received, even if it carries with it a negative message (e.g. your account is overdue/your account has been suspended/unless you pay within 30 days we will be forced to hand your account to our legal department).

8. Global changes and customer service

The telephone, fax and computer are example of technology used in the world of business. The modern computer-driven call centre is a further example of technology that is being used to support the customer, but there are many more.

Other technologies that can be used to support a company/department's customer service activities include the following:

- a. **The cell-phone:** The power of the cell-phone/mobile phone is embodied in its reach, speed and directness (you can get to anyone, even in remote areas and the target recipient almost always has his/her cell-phone at hand, which he/she generally answers him-/herself – there is no “gatekeeper” in the form of a personal assistant/secretary keeping you out). The technology also makes it possible to leave messages, which the recipient can return to later.

Cell phones/mobile phones can be used to provide urgent information and will generally be used instead of the telephone, when it is urgent to get hold of the customer and he/she is not near his/her normal landline telephone. It is also possible to send short text messages (SMSs) using the cell phone. The use of SMSs is increasing dramatically as a communication medium.

- b. **Fax-on-demand:** Fax-on-demand (FOD) makes it possible for a customer to call a particular number and then by leaving a message, have the remote fax machine fax them a document (or brochure, monthly crime statistics or whatever the information is that one is looking for). It can be used to provide customers with the latest price lists, product specifications, product guides, account information or similar information; the benefit of FOD from a customer service point of view is that it makes it possible for the customer to access information without having to go through one or more telephone conversations. It is quicker and more direct.
- c. **Touch-screen kiosks:** Automated kiosks can provide customer with a host of information, again without having to interact with frontline staff (Theron *et al.* 2003:150). It is a form of “self-help” and can be used in a building for example, when the customer wants to find the right person to visit. It can even provide the information that the customer wants without even having to visit a staff member – especially if it is connected to a printer. Most universities use touch-screen kiosks for quicker access of one’s exam results, fees owed, etc.
- d. **E-mail:** Electronic mail or e-mail is perhaps one of the most widely used forms of communication today. It is a relatively new technology and has its own unique features. It is easy to prepare and send, but the danger is that people give little thought to their e-mail messages. This is a serious shortcoming. Many e-mails are unclear, badly written, contain spelling errors and poor grammar, do not indicate what they are in connection with, are ambiguous, etc. E-mail is a form of written communication and there is no reason why it should contribute to poor communication.

E-mail has in many cases eliminated the need for the paper memoranda that clutter employee’s mailboxes, desks and trash-bins. It has also shortened the time spent on communication between people and departments. A response that would previously have taken a few days to flow through the company mail system can now be delivered in seconds.

- e. **Websites:** The World Wide Web (www) has become a powerful tool to use in the customer service arena. As increasingly more customers gain access to the Internet and the Web, so does this channel increase in importance as a means of facilitating customer service.

Websites are very useful because they are always available and incorporate multimedia features, including text, graphics, sound, animation, games and video. They can also be updated quickly and can reach customers wherever they may be, even overseas (as long as the customer has a connection to the Internet. What is more, websites are

interactive services, which mean that they allow the customer to submit information back to the company. This makes it possible to put a complaint forum on a website where a customer can lodge a complaint. It is also possible to store the various company/departmental policies on the website and direct the customer's attention to these policies.

The website will also provide a place where the customer can obtain information about the company/department (its products, what services it render and contact details). There will be an e-mail list available, making it easy for the customer to contact the firm and submit or request information. Websites should be user-friendly and should enhance the communication between client and service provider.

- f. **Newspapers:** Companies/organisations can also make use of newspapers to advertise their services. Consult the daily and Sunday newspapers for these advertisements. Newspapers are also available at all libraries for consultation.

The provincial offices and Labour Centres of the Department of Labour have a computerised job-matching system called the Employment Services System of South Africa (ESSA), which makes job-searching much easier. Your personal details, skills, qualifications and work experience will be captured on the ESSA. If you meet the requirements of the vacancies, the employment services officer will gladly refer you to employers where vacant posts exist. This service is free of charge. You can also receive career advice if you need more clarity about a future career path, free of charge. The website for the Department of Labour is www.labour.gov.za.

In conclusion, although future technologies will continue to shape customer service processes, there will always be a need for human intervention. Technologies in use today should not be designed to take away people's individuality, but to enhance their job performance.

C

hapter 5

JOB HUNTING

1. Introduction

Looking for a job or job hunting, is one of the harsh realities that learners/students will have to face once they complete high school, tertiary education or simply qualify after enrolling at a vocational college. This chapter aims at equipping job seekers with skills that will make them more marketable when looking for a job.

2. Completing job application forms

It is very important to complete job application forms correctly and neatly, since this makes a good first impression. Before completing the job application form, read through the application form carefully. Take your time to ensure that you understand all questions entailed in the form. If you do not understand all the questions, ask someone else to help you. Do not answer a question before you are sure that you understand it.

- You may start by completing the form in pencil, so that you can rub out any mistakes. Where possible and permissible, ask for the duplication of the form before you complete it. Make sure that when you are ready to complete the form in ink, the pen writes well and does not smudge (leave blurred marks). Use the same pen for the whole form, and write in block letters.
- Keep your form clean and do not crumple it.
- Answer all the questions unless they are optional.
- Keep your answer short and to the point. Remember that the person reading your application form has to read many others as well.
- If you have special work experience and there is no space to mention it on the form, write or type it on a sheet of plain white paper and attach it to the application form.

- After completing the form, check the form thoroughly for mistakes or omissions.
- Check that you have given the correct and complete information.
- Check that you have mentioned which job you are applying for.
- Ensure that your application form reaches the intended destination in time (before the closing date on the job advertisement).
- Remember not all application forms look the same. Below is a standard application form used by government departments (form Z. 83).²

3. A good Curriculum Vitae (CV) or resumé sets up the perfect match

It is very important to recruit people who “match” an organisation’s corporate culture. Time and again we have seen how important it is for an organisation to employ the “right” people. A resonance of values among the individuals working at a company makes for a happy, productive, mutually beneficial relationship.

We may receive a brilliant CV that demonstrates incredible capabilities, but if there isn’t a shared philosophy, it is very likely that the match is wrong. As much as this is true when hiring someone, it is also true for the job seeker. Taking time to research the story a company/organisation has to tell, is invaluable in choosing a place of work where you will have the best opportunity to grow and shine.

Job seekers should ensure that their CVs work for them. They need to articulate who they are and what they want, with honesty and clarity. The self-insight that comes from taking the time to ask some tough questions – Who am I? What is important to me? What am I prepared to do to get there? – will result in a document that illustrates a clear ownership of your career direction.

When organisations receive a CV, among other things, they scan it for qualifications, last place of work and average length of time spent in previous roles. They also look at what the author has chosen to share and what he/she has not. The story will provide the recruitment officer with insights to the motivation behind career-path choices – be it climbing or avoiding the corporate ladder, personal growth or career development or simply an “aha moment” – and recruitment officers look at whether the pattern of those choices indicate decisions made by design or default. The tone can be as enlightening as the career choices.

How else can candidates make sure that their CVs get them to the interview stage? Content is king – but looks do count. Your CV is an important tool in your personal branding arsenal, and the design and layout has a critical impact on the reader. Experts should take extra care – if you are a designer, the visual impact of your CV is obviously crucial and if you are a typist an error-free CV is non-negotiable. Always mention if you have an online portfolio, or your own website, where your work can speak for itself.

² This can be obtained from any government department in the Republic of South Africa (www.gov.za).

What should candidates take into account when sending a job application? Remember that your e-mail is one of many arriving in the recruiter's inbox. Research who is the right person to contact and craft a clear subject line and introductory note. If your social network extends to someone in the company, make the necessary connections to get a personal introduction. And always follow up with a call.

4. How can organisations ensure that they attract the best talent?

There are various recruitment methodologies that enable organisations/companies to ensure they are recruiting the best talent there is in the market. These include:

- Advertising in the media;
- Internal succession planning;
- Database searches and using search firms.

Advertising tends to attract job seekers and not necessarily the best candidates. Internal candidates should be included in the process to benchmark them against external candidates. Databases change often and need to be updated constantly. Search firms are ideal because they utilise a scientific process of research and head-hunting to ensure that they have covered the market thoroughly and will present to the organisation a shortlist of the best from which they can select their ideal candidate.

5. What qualities make a job seeker more employable?

Typically, a recruiter is guided by the specifications provided by the employer in terms of what candidate to look for. The obvious attributes would be **quantitative**, in other words, *qualifications, and length of experience in the field and a track record of delivery*. Some of the aspects that might be looked into include the organisations' employment equity plan as well as affirmative action (whether a candidate comes from a historically disadvantaged background). However, also of importance, would be the **qualitative aspects** such as culture fit, which a recruiter would assess by personality attributes, energy, passion, priorities and aspirations.

6. How do candidates show potential employers that they also have the softer skills?

Soft skills are everything. Technical competence alone will not crack it. One needs to be able to communicate effectively, listen to people, and demonstrate that you care about people's wellbeing in terms of work and personal matters, and have the ability to work in teams and achieve results jointly (Matentji Zinhle, 30 May 2010: page 3).

If the role is a leadership one, then the candidate has to demonstrate an ability to achieve results through people. Should one be unable to achieve the balance and only focus on hard skills, this could very well break off one's success in the organisation. There is also the issue of presentation, both physical and verbal. How one projects oneself sends a message about who the person is and if he/she will be professional. Most experienced recruiters would say they are able to establish in the first 10 minutes of meeting a candidate whether they will be the best fit.

7. How can candidates improve their chances during an interview?

If you have the requisite skills and experience for the job, you should be confident. However there are various factors that can put one ahead of the pack. Organisations/companies will often be impressed by the fact that a candidate has taken the trouble to understand who they are. So preparation is very important. Depending on the role, they may need to understand the reporting structures and how they work, general knowledge of the company's image in the market, current events affecting them and how they are responding, demonstrate a broader understanding of the sector in which they operate and how they can impact the rest of the industry and market. They may also need to be proactive and engage the panel in discussion.

Speak as if you already have the job and show what an asset you would be if they gave you the opportunity to join the company/organisation.

8. Skills they do not teach at school

Put the books away and step into the real world. Many of South Africa's job seekers and even graduates are battling to adapt to the demands of the world of work. Most employers are often unwilling to hire matriculants straight out of school or recent graduates because they often lack the necessary social and basic workplace skills that are a prerequisite for workplace success. This is very short-sighted, given the small skills pool in South Africa.

Hiring recent school-leavers or graduates provides organisations with a wonderful opportunity to develop existing staff, by compelling even fairly junior staff to mentor a school-leaver. There is a growing pool of school drop-outs, matriculants and graduates seeking work and companies need to look 10 years ahead and find ways to tap this pool, provide training, and ensure the transfer of skills so recruits can see a future career path.

Matriculants very often do not have a clear career plan. They rather see the future as a series of little steps that they can take until they get to where they might want to be. Graduates are often in the same predicament, but believe that their degree will guarantee them a job. We often see an attitude of entitlement, particularly from candidates with degrees. What they need to understand is that they have to do the work and achieve a standard to receive the reward. This sense of entitlement can complicate the problem.

The concept that a matric pass, a diploma or a degree provides entitlement to a job or an opportunity has truly made the youth market as a whole a market that is lacking the motivation to become better individuals, and in that case, a better employee/worker.

Matriculations and graduates do not have a clear understanding of what having a job involves. School-leavers and recent graduates need to know how to conduct themselves appropriately for work, workplace etiquette, proper time management, conflict management, management of work stress and good telephone and communication skills.

These critical skills should ideally be taught at schools or at tertiary institutions.

Universities, universities of technology and further education and training colleges should introduce a compulsory module which prepares undergraduates for the world of work. This could be done in the final year of every qualification. In addition to addressing issues such as workplace etiquette, the module should include interview skills, presentation skills, minute-taking and basic office administration skills.

The government of the Republic of South Africa has taken steps to address the shortage of skills needed by the labour markets. Among the initiatives being considered are a wage subsidy scheme and a two-year cash reimbursement scheme. The wage subsidy scheme would be aimed at people aged 18-24 and would encourage employers to take first-time job seekers by lowering the cost of doing so. A cash reimbursement to employers for a two-year period is under consideration for implementation in 2011, with the aim of raising employment of school-leavers by 500 000 by 2013.

One of the solutions for individuals to become better prepared for the workplace environment is to work in their spare time while they are studying. Gap years, earning while you study and even sport play a key role in individuals' preparation for the workplace. Internships also prepare job seekers for what to expect in the world of work and empower them with skills needed when a vacancy becomes available and at the same time offering them stipends to cover their travelling costs, meals, etc.

9. Hints for preparing for a job interview

- Make sure of the time, date and venue of the interview.
- Obtain as much information as possible about the job you have applied for.
- Do some research about the company/organisation that offers the vacancy.
- Develop a list of possible questions to be asked during the interview and rehearse them with a friend or colleague.
- Remember to take your Curriculum Vitae (CV) with you to familiarise yourself with its content. Some companies ask questions based on information contained in your CV.
- Never arrive late. Be at least 15 minutes early. Arriving late sends a negative message, "You don't care".

- Be well dressed. If it is a management position, a tie and a jacket or a tie and a suit for a man are appropriate.
- During the interview, always maintain eye contact with the interviewer.
- Do not sit down before you are asked to do so and remember to switch off your mobile phone before you enter the interview room.
- Be polite, confident about yourself and enthusiastic about the work.
- If you do not understand a question, ask for clarity.
- Answer questions honestly and to the best of your ability.
- If you have the relevant experience needed for the post, tell the interviewer about it.
- Never ask about remuneration during the interview (rather let the company mention it).
- Ask for the scope for growth.

10. Questions which might be asked during the interview

- What do you know about this company?
- Why are you interested to work for this company?
- Tell us what you know about the post you are applying for. How do you see your role in the post?
- What are your career goals and ambitions?
- Why do you intend leaving your current job?
- Do you like working on your own or in a group? Please elaborate.
- What are your strong and weak points?
- Tell us of an incident you were involved in conflict at work and how did you handle the conflict.
- The company is currently experiencing staffing problems, financial problems as well as low staff morale. What would be your turn-around strategy?
- What do you understand by “knowledge management” and how will you infuse it in the position you are applying for?
- Why do you think you are the most suitable candidate for this post?

In conclusion, reading as much as possible about the interview process and the kind of questions you may be asked will help keep you calm during an interview.

C

hapter 6

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

1. Introduction

In many cases conflict in the workplace just seems to be a fact of life. We have all seen situations where different people with different goals and needs have come into conflict. And we have all seen the often-intense personal animosity that can result. The fact that conflict exists, however, is not necessarily a bad thing: As long as it is resolved effectively, it can lead to personal and professional growth.

In many cases, effective conflict resolution can make the difference between positive and negative outcomes. The good news is that by resolving conflict successfully, you can solve many of the problems that it has brought to the surface, as well as getting benefits that you might not at first expect:

- **Increased understanding:** The discussion needed to resolve conflict expands people's awareness of the situation, giving them an insight into how they can achieve their own goals without undermining those of other people.
- **Increased group cohesion:** When conflict is resolved effectively, team members can develop stronger mutual respect and a renewed faith in their ability to work together.
- **Improved self-knowledge:** Conflict pushes individuals to examine their goals in close detail, helping them understand the things that are most important to them, sharpening their focus, and enhancing their effectiveness.

However, if conflict is not handled effectively, the results can be damaging. Conflicting goals can quickly turn into personal dislike. Teamwork breaks down. Talent is wasted as people disengage from their work. And it is easy to end up in a vicious downward spiral of negativity and recrimination.

This chapter will look at what conflict entails, types of conflict, how to manage conflict, how to resolve conflict, theories of conflict, as well as managing conflict within a team.

2. What is conflict?

According to Lambert & Meyers (1999), conflict may be defined as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals. Conflict occurs when individuals or groups are not obtaining what they need or want and are seeking their own self-interest. Sometimes the individual is not aware of the need and unconsciously starts to act out. Other times, the individual is very aware of what he/she wants and actively works at achieving the goal.

Conflict on teams is inevitable; however, the results of conflict are not predetermined. Conflict might escalate and lead to non-productive results, or conflict can be beneficially resolved and lead to quality final products. Therefore, learning to manage conflict is integral to a high-performance team. Although very few people go looking for conflict, more often than not, conflict results because of miscommunication between people with regard to their needs, ideas, beliefs, goals or values.

3. The difference between “competition” and “conflict”

“Competition” usually brings out the best in people, as they strive to be top in their field, whether in sport, community affairs, politics or work. In fact, fair and friendly competition often leads to new sporting achievements, scientific inventions or outstanding effort in solving a community problem. When competition becomes unfriendly or bitter, though, conflict can begin – and this can bring out the worst in people.

4. About conflict

- Conflict is inevitable.
- Conflict develops because we are dealing with people’s lives, jobs, children, pride, self-concept, ego and sense of mission or purpose.
- Early indicators of conflict can be recognised.
- There are strategies for resolution that are available and DO work.
- Although inevitable, conflict can be minimised, diverted and/or resolved.

5. Beginnings of conflict (symptoms)

- Poor communication
- Seeking power
- Dissatisfaction with management style

- Low morale expressed as frustration and inefficiency
- Weak leadership
- Interpersonal hostility and jealousy
- Lack of openness
- Lack of support from management
- Operational changes to business
- Lack of resources
- Change in leadership
- Salary negotiation deadlocks

6. Conflict indicators

- Body language
- Disagreements, regardless of the issue
- Withholding bad news
- Surprises
- Strong public statements
- Airing disagreements through the media
- Conflicts in value system
- Desire for power
- Increasing lack of respect
- Open disagreement
- Lack of candour on budget problems or other sensitive issues
- Lack of clear goals
- No discussion of progress, failure relative to goals

Listening, oral communication, interpersonal communication, and teamwork rank near the top of skills that employers seek in their new hires. When you learn to effectively manage and resolve conflicts with others, then more opportunities for successful team memberships are available to you. Although conflict may be misunderstood and unappreciated, research shows that unresolved conflict can lead to aggression (Algert, 1996:123-127). Most of us use conflict skills that we observed growing up, unless we have a conscious effort to change our conflict management style. Some of us observed good

conflict management, while others observed faulty conflict management. Most of us have several reasons to improve our conflict-management skills.

7. Types of conflict

- a. **Intra-personal conflict:** Conflict that occurs within an individual as a result of factors such as conflict of interests.
- b. **Interpersonal conflict:** Refers to conflict between individuals, e.g. an employee and his/her supervisor.
- c. **Intra-group conflict:** Refers to conflict that takes place within a group, e.g. a group has been assigned a project to complete, but very few individuals participate with ideas on how to go about with the project.
- d. **Inter-group conflict:** Refers to conflict that exists between groups, e.g. a group competing against scarce resources.

8. When is conflict destructive?

- When it takes attention away from other important activities.
- Undermines morale or self-concept.
- Polarises people and groups, reducing cooperation.
- Increases or sharpens difference.
- Leads to irresponsible and harmful behaviour, such as fighting, name-calling, etc.

9. When is conflict constructive?

- It results in clarification of important problems and issues.
- Results in solutions to problems.
- Involves people in resolving issues important to them.
- Causes authentic communication.
- Helps release emotion, anxiety and stress.
- Helps individuals develop understanding and skills.
- Builds cooperation among people through learning more about each other.

10. How do people respond to conflict?

Physiologically we respond to conflict in one of two ways – we want to “get away from the conflict” (flight) or we are ready to “take on anyone who comes our way” (fight). Think for a moment about when you are in conflict. Do you want to leave or do you want to fight when a conflict presents itself? Neither physiological response is good or bad – it’s personal response. What is important to learn, regardless of our initial physiological response to conflict, is that we should intentionally choose our response to conflict.

Whether we feel like we want to fight or flee when a conflict arises, we can deliberately choose a conflict mode. By consciously choosing a conflict mode instead of to conflict, we are more likely to productively contribute to solving the problem at hand.

11. Conflict theories

The following theories of conflict will be addressed:

- Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument
- The Interest-Based Relational Approach

11.1 Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument

In the 1970s Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann identified five main styles of dealing with conflict that vary in their degrees of cooperativeness and assertiveness. They argued that people typically have a preferred conflict resolution style. However, they also noted that different styles were more useful in different situations. They developed the **Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI)** which helps you to identify which style you tend towards when conflict arises (Thomas & Kilmann, 1997).

Thomas and Kilmann’s styles are:

- a. **Competitive:** People who tend towards a competitive style take a firm stand, and know what they want. They usually operate from a position of power, drawn from things such as position, rank, expertise or persuasive ability. This style can be useful when there is an emergency and a decision needs to be made fast; when the decision is unpopular; or when defending against someone who is trying to exploit the situation selfishly. However, it can leave people feeling bruised, unsatisfied and resentful when used in less urgent situations.
- b. **Collaborative:** People tending towards a collaborative style try to meet the needs of all people involved. These people can be highly assertive, but unlike the competitor, they cooperate effectively and acknowledge that everyone is important. This style is useful when you need to bring together a variety of viewpoints to get the best solution; when

there have been previous conflicts in the group; or when the situation is too important for a simple trade-off.

- c. **Compromising:** People who prefer a compromising style try to find a solution that will at least partially satisfy everyone. Everyone is expected to give up something and the compromiser him-/herself also expects to relinquish something. Compromise is useful when the cost of conflict is higher than the cost of losing ground, when equal strength opponents are at a standstill and when there is a deadline looming.
- d. **Accommodating:** This style indicates a willingness to meet the needs of others at the expense of the person's own needs. The accommodator often knows when to give in to others, but can be persuaded to surrender a position even when it is not warranted. This person is not assertive, but is highly cooperative. Accommodation is appropriate when the issues matter more to the other party, when peace is more valuable than winning, or when you want to be in a position to collect on this "favour" you gave. However, people may not return favours, and overall this approach is unlikely to give the best outcomes.
- e. **Avoiding:** People tending towards this style seek to evade the conflict entirely. This style is typified by delegating controversial decisions, accepting default decisions and not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings. It can be appropriate when victory is impossible, when the controversy is trivial, or when someone else is in a better position to solve the problem. However, in many situations this is a weak and ineffective approach to take. Once you understand the different styles, you can use them to think about the most appropriate approach (or mixture of approaches) for the situation you are in. You can also think about your own instinctive approach and learn how you need to change this if necessary. Ideally you can adopt an approach that meets the situation, resolves the problem, respects people's legitimate interests and mends damaged working relationships.

11.2 The Interest-Based Relational Approach

The second theory is commonly referred to as the "Investment-Based Relational (IBR) Approach". This type of conflict resolution respects individual differences while helping people avoid becoming too entrenched in a fixed position.

In resolving conflict using this approach, you follow these rules:

- **Make sure that good relationships are the first priority:** As far as possible, make sure that you treat others calmly and that you try to build mutual respect. Do your best to be courteous to one-another and remain constructive under pressure.
- **Keep people and problems separate:** Recognise that in many cases the other person is not just "being difficult" – real and valid differences can lie behind conflictive positions. By separating the problem from the person, real issues can be debated without damaging working relationships.

- **Pay attention to the interests that are being presented:** By listening carefully you'll most-likely understand why the person is adopting his/her position.
- **Listen first; talk second:** To solve a problem effectively you have to understand where the other person is coming from before defending your own position.
- **Set out the “facts”:** Agree and establish the objective, observable elements that will have an impact on the decision.
- **Explore options together:** Be open to the idea that a third option may exist, and that you can get to this idea jointly.

By following these rules, you can often keep contentious discussions positive and constructive. This helps to prevent the antagonism and dislike which so-often causes conflict to spin out of control.

12. What factors can affect our conflict modes?

Some factors that can impact how we respond to conflict are listed below with explanations of how these factors might affect us:

- a. **Gender:** Some of us were socialised to use particular conflict modes because of our gender. For example, some males, because they are male, were taught “always stand up to someone, and, if you have to fight, then fight.” If one was socialised this way he/she will be more likely to use assertive conflict modes versus using cooperative modes.
- b. **Self-concept:** How we think and feel about ourselves affect how we approach conflict. Do we think our thoughts, feelings and opinions are worth being heard by the person with whom we are in conflict?
- c. **Expectations:** Do we believe the other person or our team wants to resolve the conflict?
- d. **Situation:** Where is the conflict occurring, do we know the person we are in conflict with, and is the conflict personal or professional?
- e. **Position (power):** What is our power status relationship, (that is, equal, more or less) with the person with whom we are in conflict?
- f. **Practice:** Practice involves being able to use all five conflict modes effectively, being able to determine what conflict mode would be most effective to resolve the conflict, and the ability to change modes as necessary while engaged in conflict.
- g. **Determining the best mode:** Through knowledge about conflict and through practice we develop a “conflict management understanding” and can, with ease and limited energy, determine what conflict mode to use with the particular person with whom we are in conflict.

- h. Communication skills:** The essence of conflict resolution and conflict management is the ability to communicate effectively. People who have and use effective communication will resolve their conflicts with greater ease and success.
- i. Life experiences:** We often practice the conflict modes we saw our primary caretaker(s) use unless we have made a conscious choice as adults to change or adapt our conflict styles. Some of us had great role models teach us to manage our conflicts and others had less-than-great role models. Our life experiences, both personal and professional, have taught us to frame conflict as either something positive that can be worked through or something negative to be avoided and ignored at all (Thomas & Kilmann, 1997).

Discerning how we manage our conflict, why we manage conflict the way we do, and thinking about the value of engaging in conflict with others is important. With better understanding we can make informed choices about how we engage in conflict and when we will engage in conflict.

13. Conflict management

Conflict management refers to the long-term management of intractable conflicts. It is the label for the variety of ways by which people handle grievances – standing up for what they consider to be right and against what they consider to be wrong. Those ways include such diverse phenomena as gossip, ridicule, lynching, terrorism, warfare, feuding, genocide, law, mediation and avoidance. Which forms of conflict management will be used in any given situation can be somewhat predicted and explained by the social structure – or social geometry – of the case.

Conflict management is often considered to be distinct from conflict resolution. In order for actual conflict to occur, there should be an expression of exclusive patterns, and tell why the conflict was expressed the way it was. Conflict is not just about simple inaptness, but is often connected to a previous issue. **Conflict resolution** refers to resolving the dispute to the approval of one or both parties, whereas **conflict management** concerns an on-going process that may never have a resolution. Neither is it considered the same as conflict transformation, which seeks to reframe the positions of the conflict parties.

Conflict management is the process of planning to avoid conflict where possible and organising to resolve conflict where it does happen, as rapidly and smoothly as possible (Thomas & Kilmann, 1997).

14. How to select a conflict management style?

There are times when we have a choice to engage in or avoid conflict. The following six variables should be considered when you decide whether to engage in conflict:

14.1 How invested in the relationship are you?

The importance of the working/personal relationship often dictates whether you will engage in a conflict. If you value the person and/or the relationship, going through the process of conflict resolution is important.

14.2 How important is the issue to you?

Even if the relationship is not of great value to you, one must often engage in conflict if the issue is important to you. For example, if the issue is a belief, value or regulation that you believe in or are hired to enforce, then engaging in the conflict is necessary. If the relationship and the issue are both important to you, there is an even more compelling reason to engage in the conflict.

14.3 Do you have the energy for the conflict?

Many of us say, “There is not time to do all that I want to do in a day.” Often the issue is not how much time is available, but how much energy we have for what we need to do. Even in a track meet, runners are given recovery time before they have to run another race. Energy, not time, is being managed in these situations.

14.4 Are you aware of the potential consequences?

Prior to engaging in a conflict, thinking about anticipated consequences from engaging in the conflict is wise. For example, there may be a risk for your safety, a risk for job loss, or an opportunity for a better working relationship. Many times people will engage in conflict and then be shocked by the outcome or consequence of engaging in the conflict. Thoughtful reflection about the consequences, both positive and negative, is useful before engaging in or avoiding conflict.

14.5 Are you ready for the consequences?

After analysing potential consequences, determine whether you are prepared for the consequences of engaging in the conflict. For example, one employee anticipated a job loss if she continued to engage in the conflict she was having with her boss over a particular issue. After careful consideration, the employee thought and believed strongly enough about the issue that she did engage in the conflict with her boss. Her annual contract was not renewed for the upcoming year. Because this individual had thought through the consequences of engaging in the conflict, she was prepared to be without a job for a while and able to financially and emotionally plan for this outcome. Most consequences of engaging in conflict are not this severe, but this example illustrates the value of thinking through consequences.

14.6 What are the consequences if you do not engage in the conflict?

To avoid losing a sense of self, there are times when you must engage in conflict. Most people have core values, ideas, beliefs, or morals. If a person is going to sacrifice one of their core beliefs by avoiding conflict, personal loss or respect must be considered. In such cases, even if a person is not excited about confronting the conflict, one must carefully consider the consequences of evading the conflict. When the personal consequences of turning away from the conflict outweigh all other factors, then a person usually must take part in the conflict.

15. Using the tool: A conflict resolution process

Based on these approaches, a starting point for dealing with conflict is to identify the overriding conflict style employed by yourself, your team or your organisation. Over time, people's conflict management styles tend to mesh, and a "right" way to solve conflict emerges. It is good to recognise when this style can be used effectively, however make sure that people understand that different styles may suit different situations.

Look at the circumstance, and think about the style that may be appropriate. Then use the process below to resolve the conflict:

a. **Step One:** Set the scene

If appropriate to the situation, agree to the rules of the Interest-Based Relational Approach (IBR) above (or at least consider using the approach yourself). Make sure that people understand that the conflict may be a mutual problem, which may be best resolved through discussion and negotiation rather than through aggression.

If you are involved in the conflict, emphasise the fact that you are presenting your perception of the problem. Use active listening skills to ensure you hear and understand other's positions and perceptions. Restate, paraphrase and summarise and make sure that when you talk, you are using an adult, assertive approach rather than a submissive or aggressive style.

b. **Step Two:** Gather information

Here you are trying to get to the underlying interest, needs and concerns. Ask for the other person's viewpoint and confirm that you respect his/her opinion and need his/her cooperation to solve the problem. Try to understand his/her motivations and goals, and see how your actions may be affecting these. Also, try to understand the conflict in objective terms: Is it affecting work performance? Damaging the delivery to the client? Disrupting team work? Hampering decision-making? And so on. Be sure to focus on work issues and leave personalities out of the discussion.

- Listen with empathy and see the conflict from the other person's point of view.

- Identify issues clearly and concisely.
- Use “I” statements.
- Remain flexible.
- Clarify feelings.

c. Step Three: Agree the problem

This sounds like an obvious step, but often different underlying needs, interests and goals can cause people to perceive problems very differently. You need to agree the problems that you are trying to solve before you can find a mutually acceptable solution. Sometimes different people will see different, but interlocking problems – if you cannot reach a common perception of the problem, then at the very least, you need to understand what the other person sees as the problem.

d. Step Four: Brainstorm possible solutions

If everyone is going to feel satisfied with the resolution, it will help if everyone has had fair input in generating solutions. Brainstorm possible solutions, and be open to all ideas, including ones you never considered before.

e. Step Five: Negotiate a solution

By this stage, the conflict may be resolved. Both sides may better understand the position of the other, and a mutually satisfactory solution may be clear to all. However, you may also have uncovered real differences between your positions. This is where a technique such as **win-win negotiation** can be useful to find a solution that, at least to some extent, satisfies everyone. There are three guiding principles here: **be calm, be patient, have respect**.

16. How to manage and resolve conflict situations

16.1 Collective bargaining

Especially in workplace situations, it is necessary to have agreed mechanisms in place for groups of people who may be antagonistic (e.g. management and workers) to collectively discuss and resolve issues. This process is often called “collective bargaining”, because representatives of each group come together with a mandate to work out a solution collectively. Experience has shown that this is far better than avoidance or withdrawal, and puts democratic processes in place to achieve “integrative problem-solving”, where people or groups who must find ways of co-operating in the same organisation, do so within their own agreed rules and procedures.

16.2 Conciliation

The Oxford Paperback Dictionary (1991) defines conciliation as “... the act of procuring good will or inducing a friendly feeling.” South African labour relations legislation provides for the process of conciliation in the workplace, whereby groups who are in conflict and who have failed to reach agreement, can come together once again to attempt to settle their differences. This is usually attempted before the more serious step of a strike by workers or a lock-out by management is taken; and it has been found useful to involve a facilitator in the conciliation process. Similarly, any other organisation (e.g. sports club, youth group or community organisation) could try conciliation as a first step.

Three methods of resolving situations that have reached the stage of open conflict are often used by many different organisations. It is important to understand these methods, so that people can decide which methods will work best for them in their specific conflict situation:

- **Negotiation:** This is the process where mandated representatives of groups in a conflict situation meet together in order to resolve their differences and to reach agreement. It is a deliberate process, conducted by representatives of groups, designed to reconcile differences and to reach agreements by consensus. The outcome is often dependent on the power relationship between the groups. Negotiations often involve compromise – one group may win one of their demands and give in on another. In workplaces unions and management representatives usually sue negotiations to solve conflicts. Political and community groups also often use this method.
- **Mediation:** When negotiations fail or get stuck, parties often call in an independent mediator. This person or group will try to facilitate settlement of the conflict. The mediator plays an active part in the process, advises both or all groups, acts as intermediary and suggests possible solutions. In contrast to arbitration (see below), mediators act only in an advisory capacity – they have no decision-making powers and cannot impose a settlement on the conflicting parties. Skilled mediators are able to gain trust and confidence from the conflicting groups or individuals.
- **Arbitration:** Means the appointment of an independent person to act as an adjudicator (or judge) in a dispute, to decide on the terms of a settlement. Both parties in a conflict have to agree on who the arbitrator should be, and that the decision of the arbitrator will be binding on them all. Arbitration differs from mediation and negotiation in that it does not promote the continuation of collective bargaining: The arbitrator listens to and investigates the demands and counter-demands and takes over the role of decision-maker. People or organisations can agree on having either a single arbitrator or a panel of arbitrators whom they respect and whose decision they will accept as final, in order to resolve the conflict.

17. How to be an effective mediator

An effective mediator needs certain skills in order to achieve credibility and results:

- Preferably a proven record of success in mediation or negotiation.
- The ability to gain the trust, acceptance and cooperation of conflicting parties.
- Clear thinking in identifying the real problems and offering practical solutions.
- Knowledgeable about the organisational structures, strategies and attitudes of the conflicting parties; as well as any relevant laws or agreements.
- Tactful and diplomatic with the necessary powers of persuasion and strong character to nudge the participants progressively towards an agreement.

18. How to run a mediation process

The mediation process can be broadly divided into the following three stages:

a. Stage 1: Introduction and establishment of credibility

During the first stage, the mediator plays a passive role. The main task is to gain the trust and acceptance of the conflicting parties, so that they begin to believe that he/she will be capable of assisting them fairly as a person on whom they can rely at all times. An experienced mediator will leave most of the talking to the disputing parties, but will listen attentively and ask probing questions to pinpoint the causes of the dispute, obstacles to a possible settlement and to identify the issues in order of priority. Once credibility is achieved and sufficient background knowledge gained, the mediator may begin to persuade the parties to resume negotiations, possibly with a fresh perspective.

b. Stage 2: Steering the negotiation process

In the second stage, the mediator intervenes more actively in steering the negotiations. He/she may offer advice to the parties, attempt to establish the actual resistance point of each party and to discover areas in which compromises could be reached. The mediator will encourage parties to put forward proposals and counter-proposals and (when a solution appears feasible) will begin to urge or even pressurise the participants towards acceptance of a settlement.

c. Stage 3: Movement towards a final settlement

An experienced mediator will know when to use diplomacy and when to exert pressure towards final settlement of the dispute. Timing and sensitivity to personalities and strategic positions is important to maintain credibility and avoid rejection by one or more parties in the process. He/she might use bilateral discussions with individuals or groups and during the final stages may actually suggest or draft proposals for consideration. In the event of

a final settlement being reached, the mediator usually assists the parties in the drafting of their agreement, ensuring that both sides are satisfied with the wording, terms and conditions of the agreement.

The process of mediation is dynamic and finely-tuned. A good mediator has to be flexible and inventive, must ensure that his/her personal values are not imposed on the conflicting parties. At most a mediator can advise, persuade or coax them towards agreement.

In conclusion, conflict in the workplace can be incredibly destructive to good teamwork. Managed in the wrong way, real and legitimate differences between people can quickly spiral out of control, resulting in situations where cooperation breaks down and the team's mission is threatened. This is particularly the case where the wrong approaches to conflict resolution are used. It calms these situations down, it helps to take a positive approach to conflict resolution, where discussion is courteous and non-confrontational, and the focus is on issues rather than on individuals. If this is done, then, as long as people listen carefully and explore facts, issues and possible solutions properly, conflict can often be resolved effectively.

Conclusion

South Africa's youth unemployment rate is staggeringly high which does not compare favourably with other developing countries such as Brazil and India. Many fear the situation is a ticking bomb, with the threat of violence looming. Typical are the ongoing service delivery protests in most municipalities throughout the nine provinces of our country.

The starting point in dealing with issues of youth unemployment is to understand the causes of our structural unemployment in order to figure out how to fix it. Why do we have high and persistent structural unemployment? What are the challenges facing South African students today in order for them to understand and champion the world of work? Some reasons offered are:

- Self-knowledge and career knowledge: Most students do not know themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, their aptitude, interest, personality, etc. In as far as career knowledge is concerned, most learners/students have very little or no knowledge at all of the careers they want to follow. Half way or towards the end of their high school life, they only find that their choice of careers do not fit their personalities, strengths, etc. resulting in them dropping out or following alternative careers just to obtain certificates.
- South Africa's education system: South Africa's education system does not match the bulk of learners'/students' abilities, interests, etc. Although the South African school curriculum is said to be learner-centred and goal-driven, it does not seem to cater much for the so-called 'geniuses' or the 'highly intelligent' – the result is a high drop-out rate and unfulfilled dreams.
- Saturated careers: Some careers are so saturated that studying towards a qualification in them will not easily provide you with a job unless you specialise in, for example teaching, law, clerical jobs, etc.
- Institutions that do not supply a high quality of skills by identifying scarce skills and promoting their development, for example Mathematics, Science, Accounting and Engineering fields.
- Supporting employment growth through industrial policies, innovation research and development.
- Current and past discriminations in access to educational training opportunities along racial, disability and gender lines, for example Africans (including blacks, Indians and coloureds).

- The Skills Development Act and the Skills Development Levies Act: The primary aims of these Acts are to introduce new institutions, programmes and funding mechanisms to increase investment in skills development that is linked to economic and employment growth, for example the creation of learnerships and learning programmes that lead to occupational qualifications.
- Influx of foreigners: There are a lot of foreigners entering South Africa's borders in search of work and better living conditions. They have fled their war-torn countries in search of better prospects. They are therefore preferred to South Africans by most employers in the farming and mining industries as they are being exploited by being paid meagre wages. Sometimes this causes a lot of tension amongst South African youth as they feel these foreigners are taking up their jobs and are prepared to work under poor conditions.
- Increasing employment prospects for unemployed youth: For instance the establishment of vocational schools/colleges, apprenticeships and labour market programmes as well as the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) initiatives.
- The introduction of the Employment Equity Act (EEA): This can be seen as an active labour market intervention to remove the discriminatory barriers to recruitment and employment that existed in the past. The EEA aims to promote equal opportunity and fair treatment in recruiting and employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination. It activates this through implementing affirmative action (AA) measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups.

In conclusion, there can be no doubt that most South African students face a bleak future after leaving school in search for work. They are caught in a dilemma that affects all spheres of their lives. Most of them have no prospect of a decent work-life that could enable them to earn an income, choose working activities that they would like to do and be integrated into a socio-economic (SES) whose status is to benefit the majority of the nation.

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