THE WORKPLACE TRAINING NEEDS OF DIFFERENT GENERATIONS OF ADULT LEARNERS WITHIN A CORPORATE COMPANY IN SOUTH AFRICA

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Masters in Adult Education at the University of South Africa, Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other tertiary educational institution.

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Signature

_____ day of _____ 2015

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the training needs of different generations of adult learners within a corporate company within SA.

Training needs were identified through interviews. Qualitative interviews were conducted with learners from each of the generations. This was a case study and the population was taken from a company within SA.

Data was collected through interviews with different generations of adult learners, as well as the field notes of the researcher before, during, and after the interviews. The interviews were transcribed. The data was coded and categories were identified. This was done through inductive and abductive reasoning. From the categories, data were placed into themes.

From these themes, findings were made regarding the training needs of different generations. Recommendations were made that can significantly impact the approach companies take towards training different generations of adult learners.

Research limitations were described, and recommendations for future study.

Key Terms:

Training needs, Workplace learning, Baby boomer, Generation X, Generation Y, Adult learner, Experiential learning, Work-life balance, Corporate learning, Learning and development.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this study firstly, to all my mentors who have believed in me and invested in me. These were men and women who found my potential worthy of their time.

Secondly, I would also like to dedicate this study to all leaders in Africa who understand that leadership means serving your people. Leadership does not mean that people need to serve you in your position of leadership. Our African continent deserves better leaders, but I dedicate this study to those African leaders who lead through servanthood.

Thirdly, I dedicate this study to my Creator who sustains us all.

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Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introduction

Different generations of people find themselves as adult learners within corporate companies in South Africa. Adult learners within the learning context of a corporate company vary between the ages of 18 and 65. This represents various different generations of learners within the learning context of the corporate environment.

Corporate companies budget large amounts of money for training on an annual basis to address workplace learning needs. Workplace learning is a priority if companies want to stay competitive. Determining the various learning needs of employees adds to a greater effectiveness of the training programmes. Aligning workplace training with the workplace learning needs of different generations is the role of those responsible for learning taking place in the workplace. Determining learners' needs is nothing new and is standard practice since the research of Neale (1985: 7) discovered the impact of understanding the needs of adult learners. What the researcher of this study is pointing out here is that different generations have different learning needs and these different needs have to be researched, studied and analysed (Gravett and Thockmorton 2007: 152).

This study focused on determining whether there is a difference in the training needs of different generations of adult learners within the workplace learning environment.

1.2 Background and Rationale

1.2.1 Workplace learning

Workplace learning is a process of improving the skills and knowledge base of people working for corporate companies. The reason corporate companies invest in developing the skill of their people is because they want their people to improve their skills, become more productive and deliver better results. It must be remembered that companies exist to make a profit. Therefore, the effectiveness of the process of improving skill and knowledge through workplace learning must improve and deliver better results to justify the investment of companies into workplace learning. South African companies spend 3.13% of their payroll on training and workplace learning

(ASTD report 2009: 10). This is a big investment for profit-driven businesses and therefore continuous improvement of delivery is essential.

It is important to note that the Department of Education mentions in their Human Resources Development Strategy for 2010-2030 that credible and effective stewardship of resources is necessary, as well as credible capability to identify priority skills. This implies managing the investment into people through learning and training more effectively (DOE HRDS–SA 2009: 13). The research of Meyer and Bushney (2008:50) suggests that only 13% of learners and participants rate the coaching, mentoring and training that they receive as effective. This percentage is extremely low and raises concerns regarding the investment of corporate companies into workplace learning.

Types of workplace learning that the researcher of this study is involved with, include the following:

- Classroom training programmes where topical content is taught by a specific trainer and the focus mainly falls on theory.
- On-the-job training programmes: these are more practical and focus on teaching employees practical skills.
- On-the-job learning through coaching: this is one-on-one training by a coach who facilitates the learning and then monitors the learner while they attempt to apply the skills.
- Workplace discussion groups/forums: this is a space where peers and colleagues share problems and innovations so as to learn from each other's experiences. The researcher of this study spends vast amounts of time with corporate companies in these kinds of discussions and strategic sessions.

Corporate companies fall into the trap of using a single mode of training delivery and implementation.

1.2.2 Learning needs in the workplace

In the corporate environment, employees have different learning needs that require to be met, in order for them to carry out their duties more efficiently and effectively. It is the responsibility of the company or employer to determine the learning needs of employees in the workplace. White (2009: 11-16) says, learning needs can be identified, by observation, needs analysis and discussions.

Needs in the workplace will differ from company to company depending on the learner, organisation and the nation. Van Dyk, Nel & Van Zyl Loedolf (1992:168) call these needs the micro (learner), meso (organisation) and macro (national) needs. A company, therefore, has to pay attention to the needs of individuals, of the organisation in their industry and the needs of the country in which they operate. It is also important to realise that these needs will differ because of the diversity of the adult learners in the workplace environment. White (2009: 11-16) explains further that understanding the diversity will ensure that the correct learning needs of the adult learner are addressed in the workplace learning environment. Caffarella (2002: 123) adds, that to find the needs to be addressed by workplace learning is to find solutions for specific problems, and to clarify and define those problems clearly. Once workplace learning needs are clearly defined through a needs' analysis, effective learning programmes are implemented that leads to the desired change envisioned when the investment was made by the company (Cafferella 2002: 123).

1.2.3 Generations of adult learners

In the field of education, various scholars have addressed the concept of adult learners from different perspectives. Among these are:

Malcolm Knowles (1990), through his classic *The Adult Learner: a neglected species,* defines the term adult learner and his description of the adult learner has become a starting point for many in adult education.

Learning styles: Howard Gardner published his theory on multiple intelligences in 1993 and this has had a profound impact on how we understand learning styles. Peter Honey & Allan Mumford developed their typology of learner styles from Kolb's Learning Cycle which he published in 1984.

Emotional intelligence: This phrase was coined by Salovey & Mayer in 1990, after their study of social intelligence, and they published a framework for emotional intelligence which is an essential ingredient for adult learners for success.

The stages of learning: These stages were developed by Fitts & Posner and they explain how learning moves through three stages, namely: cognitive stage, associative stage and the autonomous stage.

Learning outcomes: Biggs (2003) dwelt on the constructive alignment between the learning activities and the outcomes that the teacher or trainer has in mind for the learning.

In addition to the above categories on adult learners, Salopek (2000:26) emphasises the importance of adopting approaches to learning facilitation that are consummate with the age of the learners. In terms of age, the following generations of adult learners are present in the workplace environment:

- Silent or Radio Babies (1925-1945) are close to retirement and are strongly focused on finishing their careers well. They grew up after the First World War and experienced the Second World War.
- Early Boomers (1946-1954) have vast experience in their careers and have built up good knowledge to be passed on to new generations. They grew up just after the Second World War and had constant exposure to radio. The early boomers also had big families.
- Late Boomers (1955-1963) have also built up good knowledge in their careers and have a high work ethic. They were the first generation to grow up with television and also had big families.
- Generation X (1964-1976) was the first generation to experience the acceleration of technology and the majority of this generation had computers at school.
- Generation Y (1977-1988) experienced even more of an acceleration with technology and received a cellular phone in their teenage years. This generation is also more aware of the environment and our environmental impact on the future of the planet.

Mosaics/ Millennials (1989 – 2000) are the ones with technology as a part of life since birth. They have been brought up by Baby Boomer parents who expose this generation to materialism and consumerism. (Shaw 1998: 1)

From the classification above, the four dominant generations are:

- Early Boomers (1946-1954)
- Late Boomers (1955-1963)
- Generation X (1964-1976)
- Generation Y (1977-1988)

These generations are viewed as dominant, simply because the majority of the current adult learners in the workplace learning environment consist of these four generations. Gravett and Thockmorton (2007: 15) state repeatedly that these classifications of generations according to age are broad and the characteristics of each generation could have exceptions and this should be expected in some instances. Never has there been such a diversity of adult learners in the workplace. This diversity brings with it a diversity of needs as each of these generations brings a specific phase of life into the didactic situation (Fraser, Loubser & van Rooy 1996: 11).

For example, older learners will have lived life longer and, because of this, have accumulated more experiences and practical skills which could lead to different learning needs than younger generations who have little experience. Learning needs are also affected by the exposure of different generations to different events in history, such as technological developments like the computer. According to Salopek (2000:26), younger learners are usually more fast-paced learners and the older learners tend to learn at a slower pace.

The needs of different generations of adult learners do not appear frequently in literature and it appears that this problem has rarely been studied. Specifically within the South African context, there seems to be very limited research on the training needs of the different generations of adult learners.

1.2.4 Implications of having different generations of learners for adult learning facilitators

Education, Training and Development (ETD) practitioners have neglected paying attention to the diversity of generations, more specifically their training needs. Workplace learning facilitators have disregarded the needs of their learners by placing all of them in the same learning environment and training all generations using the same learning content.

The aim of the study, therefore, is to determine the training needs of different generations of learners in the corporate environment. Once the needs of each generation have been determined, these will be compared with those of other generations so as to identify if there are differences in the training needs of the different generations.

1.3 Problem Statement

The training needs of adult learners that are found within a corporate company in South Africa differ between the generations. As such, it is necessary to investigate these differences to determine how the generation gap influences the needs of adult learners in the work place.

1.4 Problem Analysis

The training needs of learners are an important variable that needs to be taken into account when learning programmes are designed and developed; and when learning facilitation is implemented to provide relevant learning experiences. In other words, those responsible for the facilitation of education, training and development have to pay sufficient attention to the role of generational diversity of the adult learners in curriculum development and instructional design for adults in the workplace. This view is based on the view that different generations of learners have different training needs. Such an approach towards adult learning in the corporate environment has wider implications on the learning process, training, the goals and outcomes of training, change in the company and the effectiveness of the workplace learning as discussed below.

Learning is widely practised in companies with a mass production approach. Learners are all exposed to the same content and facilitation within the same environment, facilitated by the same trainer/teacher. Frasier, Loubser & Van Rooy (1996: 11) explain that a didactic situation is present when a lecturer teaches specific content to a learner. In this study, the question is being raised whether the content is relevant to all the learners within the learning context of a corporate company. The stated problem also impacts the adult learner as Knowles (1990: 47) states that the adult learner is oriented towards life-centred learning and goal-centred learning. Adults of different generations are in different phases and stages of life and this leads to different learning needs. As such, there is a need to cater for their different needs because adults generally disengage from learning if they do not see the relevance of the learning to their lives and goals.

This study has an impact on training programmes and the approach that is taken within the corporate company. If different generations of learners have different learning needs, the design of the training needs analysis for collecting information for the needs of the training will need to be adjusted. Furthermore, the target audience will need to specify the needs of the different generations (Rothwell & Kanzas 1992: 46).

The stated problem also has an impact on the goals and outcomes of training if different generations of learners have different learning needs. Goals and outcomes of training will be more effective if planned according to the needs of the different generations. This will also lead to the desired change in the life of the adult learners and in the company, which provides the environment where the learning takes place. If the difference in needs of the different generations is noted, the outcomes and goals of learning could be defined more clearly. This will serve as a clearer guideline to the learning facilitator (Van Dyk et al 1992: 97).

Lastly, the study has an impact on the overall effectiveness of workplace learning if different generations of learners have different learning needs. If needs are clarified, the appropriate programmes will be implemented for workplace learning which will lead to a higher return on investment regarding the money spent on the learning experiences or programmes. A major concern for corporate companies is whether the monetary investment into workplace learning is paying off in terms of the desired change. Edwards et al (1993:176) points to the fact that in a new world, post–mass production, more effective learning will have to be less structured for all and more flexible to the individual. This means taking into account the needs of the individual.

If the training needs of different generations of adult learners within the corporate environment are not studied and identified, training will prove to be ineffective for the adult learners, ETD practitioner, learning facilitators and the corporate company. This will also lead to poor management of training budgets.

1.5 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The aims of the study are as follows:

1. To determine if there are differences in the training needs of the four dominant generations of learners within a specific learning environment.
2. To determine the specific nature of needs of the four dominant generations of learners.
3. To determine the implications of the differences in the training needs of the four dominant generations of learners within a specific learning environment for the learning facilitation strategies of those responsible for facilitating learning.

If differences and their nature are established, this study can provide valuable information to those responsible for facilitating learning regarding the specific needs of each generation studied. The data gathered will assist those responsible for facilitating learning in adapting their training to the needs of specific generations of learners.

1.6 Research Design

To address the above-mentioned aims of the study, a thorough literature review study was conducted and focuses on the following:

1. The adult learner in terms of the theory of andragogy, the characteristics and the centrality of experiential learning.
2. The workplace learning environment as an adult learning environment, the learning organisation and the andragogical implications of workplace learning.
3. Different generations of adult learners by defining generations, explaining their differences, explaining the impact of this diversity in the workplace and discussing the implications on adult learning.

The research of this study is empirical in approach, as such a qualitative and interpretative methodology was utilised. Fouché in De Vos (2011: 313) states that the choices and actions of the researcher determine the strategy in qualitative study. Qualitative researchers, therefore, create the research strategy best suited for the specific research. The type of design that is chosen for the research in this study is

a case study. Creswell (2013:97) states that a case study can be regarded as an exploration or in-depth analysis of a bounded system of a single or multiple cases over a period of time. This means that within a specific environment, one or multiple cases over time can be studied to gain information or, in multiple cases, to compare information.

In this study, the bounded system was a specific corporate company that provided the learning environment. In this study, only one company with different generations of learners was used to gather information. The case study was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the training needs of the different generations within a specific corporate company.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted within a specific corporate environment. Thus, this case study has a population of 3 groups of different generations, as the focus of this study is on the three dominant generations currently in the working environment. This could limit the findings as the study is only undertaken in one singular working environment.

Learners from each of the three dominant generations were interviewed to gather data. This excludes three generations of the six that were mentioned earlier because it will be very difficult to try and determine the needs of the Silent/Radio Babies' Generation as very few of them are still around in the work environment as they have retired. The Early and Late Boomers are treated as one generation in this study. The Millennial Generation have only two to three years of their generation in the work environment with many of them studying at universities after leaving school. El –Shamy (2004: 5) identifies the Boomers and Generation X, because she finds the new and emerging generations difficult to identify. Therefore, the focus of the research problem are the dominant three generations currently in the work environment. These are:

- Early Boomers (1946-1954) and Late Boomers (1955-1963)
- Generation X (1964-1976)
- Generation Y (1977-1988)

The fact that the post levels of individuals may vary, and the sample was taken from a specific department of the corporate company, may be a limitation. This means that even though learners may be from different generations, some will be on the same level in terms of management, and some learners from the same generation could be on different management levels. Their level of management may be a variable that contributes to similar needs in different generations.

Definition of terms according to position in the company:

Worker – a person who just performs an assigned duty or task, normal worker responsible for a specific task.

Supervisor – a person who supervises the tasks of workers and has more responsibility than a general worker.

Junior management – manages a team of supervisors, that is, he/she now has the responsibility of managing various supervisors.

Senior management – manages a team of managers, that is, he/she manages an entire division with junior managers who manage various supervisors, and oversees various functions in the company.

1.8 Defining Key Terms in the Study

The concepts below are defined according to how they are used in the study.

1.8.1 Training

Training is viewed as a method of learning facilitation. Training as a method of learning facilitation typically takes place in a classroom or workshop setup. The trainer (the person facilitating the learning) and the trainee have less personal contact when there is more than one trainee. This method of learning is very common within corporate companies. In this study, didactical situation training takes place when the trainer facilitates the learning content to the adult learners in the corporate learning environment.

1.8.2 Generation

A generation is a specific age group that grew up in a specific timeframe, in specific circumstances that had a profound impact on how they developed their perceptions and worldview, shaped by events or circumstances.

1.8.3 ETD Practitioner

The ETD Practitioner is a professionally-trained individual who is employed or contracted by an organisation to facilitate learning in the organisation.

1.8.4 Adult learners

An adult usually has a defined role in society outside of school. As such, an adult as learner is regarded as different from a child learner. Adult learners are more self-directed and want to see the value of learning before doing so. In this study, adult learners are individuals working in a specific work environment. Their main task in life is not necessarily related to education.

1.8.5 Corporate company

A corporate company is a business that is either publically- or privately-owned. The corporate work environment is very structured and functions with standardised processes and procedures. Hierarchical structure is the norm, with specific authority and responsibility assigned to each level of the corporate company. For the purpose of this study, the corporate company is the learning environment.

1.8.6 Training needs

Training needs are the learning desires of the learner that need to be met. A training need points to a gap in skill, knowledge and competencies of a learner. The training need determines the nature and content of learning.

1.9 Outline of Study

The study was conducted within the following structures:

1.9.1 Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter introduced the study and provided a background to the study, problem statement, aims, and the methodology used to collect and analyse data.

1.9.2 Chapter Two: Review of Relevant Literature

This chapter provides the theoretical foundation upon which this study is based and articulates theoretical perspectives related to the research problem. The theoretical framework addresses the theme of different generations of adult learners within the workplace learning environment.

1.9.3 Chapter Three: Research, Design and Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the overall research design of the study, including the methods used to obtain empirical evidence. Included is information on the population and the sample used. The strategy for the selection of the sample is also explained. The selection of specific techniques and measurements is explained, as well as the validity and reliability of these techniques and measurements.

1.9.4 Chapter Four: Presentation and Interpretation of Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and describe the process that was followed step by step during the analysis of the data collected from the interviews. The aim in this chapter is to present the analysis of the answers and responses of fifteen adult learners from the three dominant generations, during semi-structured interviews regarding their workplace training needs. In the resultant presentation, the actual words, comments and statements of the adult learners are quoted to illustrate the specific themes and categories.

1.9.5 Chapter Five: Summary, Recommendations and Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter is to present the core findings and what the implications are for the field of adult education. Recommendations are presented that are aligned with the findings of the study. The various limitations are also discussed and how they had an impact on this specific study.

Chapter Two: Review of Relevant Literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents theoretical frameworks and perspectives used to determine whether the training needs of different generations of employees as learners within a corporate company in South Africa differ, and whether needs are disregarded or provided for. The review of literature in this chapter provides a clearer understanding of the adult learner, the workplace learning environment and the different generations of adult learners in the workplace within the context of this study.

A discussion of the adult learner clarifies the type of learner that this study focuses on. The adult learner has been studied at length since the work of Malcolm Knowles made in-roads into the education sphere. Many theories have developed from the theory of Knowles regarding andragogy as indicated by Lee (1998: 47). Most researchers point to Knowles as a foundation or beginning. This review also focuses on the setting of the learning environment in the workplace. Workplace learning has become a necessity for many corporations and institutions because of the speed of change in a global world. The impact of "the world on speed" (Plumb 1999: 141) on the workplace challenges adult educators in terms of continuous learning for adult learners to stay abreast with the pace. Finally, this review provides insight into different generations of adult learners in the workplace environment. Howe and Strauss (2007: 41) state that as people grow older they realise that the sum total of their life events has, in many ways, made them who they are. Exactly how these events affected them is related to how old they were when the events occurred. This is what constitutes a generation (Howe & Strauss 2007: 41):

"It is shaped by events or circumstances according to which phase of life its members occupy at the time."

As each generation ages into the next phase of life (Piaget 1950), from youth to young adulthood, to midlife, and to elder hood, its attitudes and behaviours mature, producing new perspectives in the public and society. Any society is the sum of its parts – the generations that co-exist at that moment in time. The workplace, thus, also provides a society with different generations.

2.2 The Adult as a Learner

Generally, adults are not associated with education (Gravett 2003: 7). Learning takes place in school and children attend school. Adults go to work to try and make a living and therefore add their roles as learners to the other full-time multiple roles of their lives (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgardener 2007: 83).

2.2.1 Andragogy

Adult learning is studied within the context of andragogy which refers to the education of adults. The term “Andragogy” was created with an analogy of pedagogy (from the Greek) for child education and andros (from the Greek) for adult man (Zmeyov 1998: 104). The father of andragogy or adult education is Malcolm Knowles (Lee 1998:47). Knowles defined andragogy as the art and science of helping adults learn. The term “andragogy” is diffuse (Gravett 2003: 70). It is sometimes formulated as a theory, a set of hypothesis or guidelines for adult education practice. The term “andragogy” is, however, widely accepted as the study of how adults learn and also the education of adults. In the majority of research, this is the case starting with Malcolm Knowles (1990:57). “Andragogy” is the overarching concept for the study of adults, the way they learn and the implication for education.

2.2.2 Characteristics of adult learners

The adult as a learner is regarded as different from the child as a learner. Thus, adult learners have different characteristics to those of children. The assumptions that underlie Malcolm Knowles’ andragogical model (Knowles 1990:57) are:

1. The need to know – adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it.

2. The learners’ self-concept – adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions, for their own lives.

3. The role of the learners’ experience – adults come into an educational activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experience from the youth.

4. Readiness to learn – adults become ready to learn those things they need to know and are able to do, in order to cope effectively with their real-life situations.

5. Orientation to learning – in contrast to children's and youth's subject-centred orientation to learning, adults are life-centred (or task-centred or problem-centred) in their orientation to learning.

6. Motivation – while adults are responsive to some external motivators (better jobs, promotions, and higher salaries) the most potent motivators are internal pressures like increased job-satisfaction, self-esteem and quality of life.

Adult learners also have different attributes. Raggat, Edwards & Small (1996: 177) state that there are two ways that knowledge can be obtained, namely the school approach and the adult approach. This again points to the unique characteristics of adult learners, and is illustrated in Table 2.1:

Table 2.1: Difference between school and adult approach

The school approach	**The adult approach**
Transmitting a given body of knowledge	Developing an own perspective on a subject
The teacher decides	The learner decides
A semantically poor context	A semantically rich context
Learning without facilities	Learning with facilities
Learning as drilling	Learning as a conscious activity
Experience as condition	Experience as foundation
Directed to subject matter	Directed to problems
Evaluation as a check	Evaluation as a means of improving
Compulsion and duty	Voluntary basis, pleasure in learning
Directed at achievement	Directed towards completion
Closed tasks	Open tasks

Zmeyov (1998: 106) adds 3 additional assumptions of adragogy after his research which follows on the work of Knowles. They are:

1. The learning of an adult is largely determined by his/her life context (time, place, daily life and occupational, social and family factors).

2. The adult learning process is characterised by the leading role of the learner himself or herself.

3. The adult learner and the teacher co-operate in all stages of learning – in the planning, realisation, evaluation and correction of the learning process. There should be constant interaction and communication for feedback and monitoring.

It has become clear through the research in this study that the approach to educating adults should be tailored to their characteristics as adult learners. As the researcher of this study, I daily engage with adults in learning interventions. An approach where the learners are just passively receiving information from a teacher has proven highly unsuccessful in the workplace environment. As an entrepreneur providing learning solutions to clients to assist in learning in the workplace, it is essential to our business success that we take these characteristics into consideration.

Gravett (2003: 8) explores characteristics of adult learners which are generalisations, and mentions that there is no generic adult learner. Her characterisation is based on her study of literature and her own interactions with adult learners. Gravett (2003) explains:

1. The learners are adult by definition – even though not all adults have the attributes of an adult, it has to be accepted that the concept of adulthood includes a collection of values and norms ascribed to adults. The learning then has to be independent, self-directed and responsible.

2. Adults learn by bringing accumulated life experience with them – adults enter education events with a vast quantity of experience that varies from individual to individual. This holds various implications for the educator in terms of the identity of the learner and the resources for learning.

3. Adult readiness to learn is linked to their life roles and life tasks – adults engage in learning if it can be applied to their everyday lives where they experience problems and challenges, and whatever they learn helps them to deal better with their lives.

Through all the above-mentioned characteristics, the researcher has made significant changes in engaging with existing clients surrounding the way learning interventions are introduced. Here are some examples:

Firstly, all learners get an opportunity, even before the intervention starts, to share their knowledge on the specific topic that they are learning about. All this accumulated knowledge and experience gets noted and incorporated in the existing learning manual. Secondly, the interaction between the ETD Practitioner and learners has significantly increased through consistent interaction with exercises and case studies relevant to the adults' context. Thirdly, the ETD Practitioner spends at least a day with a specific group observing their environment to fully understand the context of the specific adult learners. This helps the ETD Practitioner to focus on the learning that will immediately benefit the adult learners.

2.2.3 The centrality of experiential learning

Experiential learning abounds with definitions as the situation, culture and priorities change (White 2005: 32). There is a definition for every current situation. For some it refers to non-formal education that transcribes into formal academic credit. For others it is the day-to-day survival and problem-solving on the job and in the market place. According to White (2005: 32), there exists over 58 definitions on experiential education and learning. One of the definitions and theories White refers to is that of David Kolb (1984).

Kolb (1984: 141) defines experience as the source of learning and development. He offers the following model of learning and learning styles schematically depicted by Prasad (2009) in Figure 2.1.

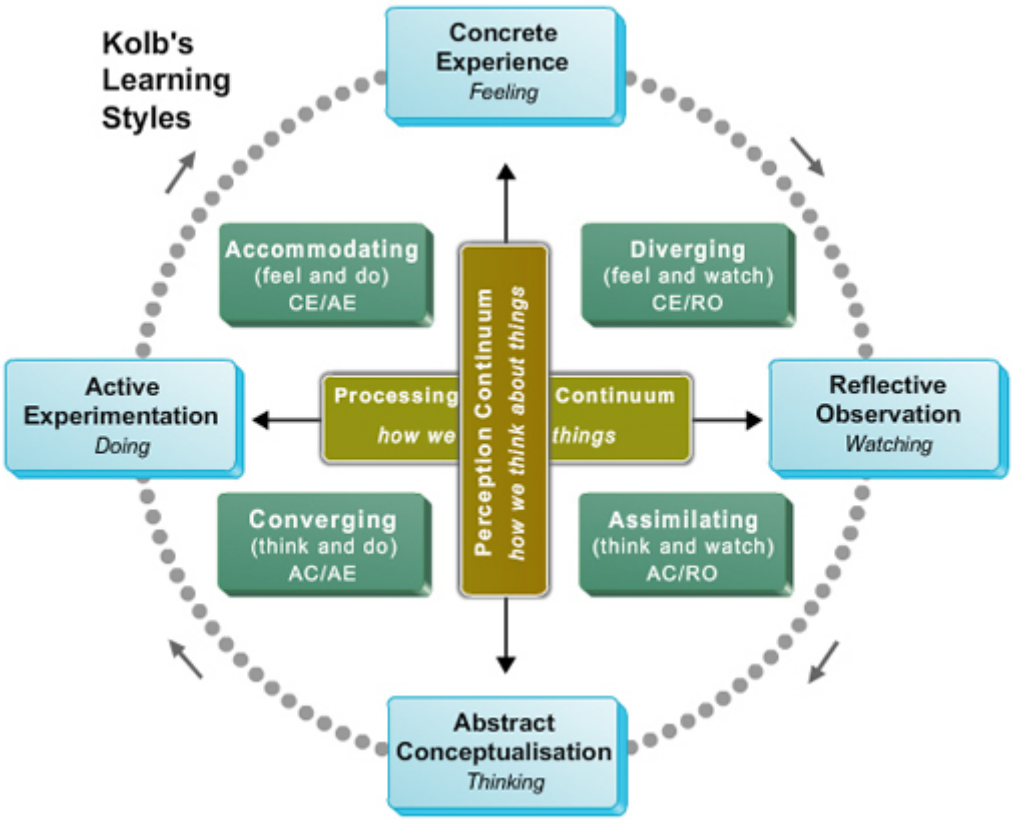

Figure 2.1: Kolb's Learning Styles

Kolb's theory of learning states that we process learning along two continuums. The first is the Perception continuum which is between Concrete Experience (feeling) and Abstract Conceptualisation (thinking). The second continuum is the Processing continuum which is between Active Experimentation (doing) and Reflective Observation (watching). Out of this theory, Kolb developed four learning styles, each representing a combination of two preferred styles:

1. Diverging (Concrete Experience /Reflective Observation).
2. Assimilating (Abstract Conceptualization /Reflective Observation).
3. Converging (Abstract Conceptualization /Active Experimentation).
4. Accommodating (Concrete Experience /Active Experimentation).

Therefore, learning happens through a four-stage cycle which is known as the cycle of learning.

1. Concrete Experience - (CE)
2. Reflective Observation - (RO)
3. Abstract Conceptualization - (AC)
4. Active Experimentation - (AE)

Kolb's experiential learning theory sets out four distinct learning styles (or preferences), which are based on a four-stage learning cycle (which might also be interpreted as a 'training cycle'). In this respect, Kolb's model is particularly practical, since it offers both a way to understand individual people's different learning styles, and also an explanation of a cycle of experiential learning that applies to us all.

The defining condition of being human is understanding the meaning of our experience (Mezirow 1997: 5). Mezirow (1997) explains that learning is making meaning of individual experiences as people go through life and so are constantly learning. Critical reflection plays a crucial role in making meaning of peoples' experiences. Mezirow emphasises the influence of the person's environment on the process of learning. White (2005: 35) however, is of the opinion that Kolb's model has emerged as the central unifying perspective in experiential learning by identifying a continuous flowing cycle of learning that incorporates concrete experience, observation and reflection, formation of new concepts and principles and application to a new situation. For Kolb though, there is a reliance on concrete experience with abstract feedback that leads to learning through experience.

The importance of adults' life experiences for adult learning and teaching is viewed as a given in the literature of adult learning. Adults enter into any learning environment with large amounts of experience and this experience is diverse. Prior experiences of learning and education are also brought into the learning environment (Gravett 2003:9). The experiences of adult learners cannot be ignored or undermined, but must be included in the learning. In this way, adults contribute through their experience to the curriculum. Additionally, they become fellow teachers and trainers in the learning setting. Dialogue becomes a critical part of the education process as adult learners share their experiences, are then guided to reflect upon it, and then it is incorporated as new knowledge gained (Gravett 2003:9).

Experiential learning, therefore, is central to adult education. Adults are unique in that they have lived life. They have experienced life, as such, and they bring a wealth of practical intelligence into the learning environment. For adult educators, there needs to be a process to facilitate the incorporation of this intelligence into the learning content through reflection and application with new knowledge gained. One such learning environment is the workplace. ETD Practitioners need to keep in mind that sufficient time should be allocated with learning interventions for adults to make sense of new knowledge and reflect on the impact of this new knowledge on their current work responsibilities.

Within the context of this study, adults of different generations, older and younger generations, have had more or fewer opportunities to gain experience. How they have learned from those experiences has an impact on what their age was, and depends on when those experiences took place in their lives. This is discussed in more detail later in this literature review when the specific generations of adult learners are analysed.

2.3 Workplace Learning

Learning takes place within a specific context or environment. This study focuses on a specific corporate company as the environment and workplace as the specific context.

2.3.1 The workplace as an adult learning environment

Learning in the workplace has become very prominent and this is evident in the training and development of employees that has become essential for many companies to stay competitive in an ever-changing world. There is an inextricable link between all the rapid changes in technology and the emergence of a global economy that has changed the way many individuals and companies function (Bassi, Cheney & Lewis 1998: 51). Bassi (et.al 1998) lists four trends that emphasise this change and the need for learning in the context of the workplace. These trends are the growing effort being given to knowledge management, the integration of learning and communication, a resurgence in leadership development and executive coaching, and the intensifying requirement among employees that career

development become an integral part of their employment relationship (Bassi et. al 1998).

Employees who are adults in the learning environment of the workplace are now under pressure to continuously learn and develop. Consequently, there is a demand for workplace learning to continuously improve the performance of the adult learner in the workplace. According to Poell, van der Krogt & Wildemeersch 1999: 43, learning projects have also been introduced into the learning environment of the workplace. These projects are employed to help adult learners improve performance and learn how to solve problems which arise due to the changes taking place. Work –related learning projects focus on bringing meaning to work activities.

In a country like South Africa, where trade unions form part of the government, the push for unions should be more on workplace learning programmes (Stroud & Fairbrother 2008: 6). Unions in Europe have, for decades, been providing workplace learning as a service to members, to assist with the changing environment of the workplace. The workplace environment has undoubtedly become a primary environment for learning and educating adults. European trade unions, specifically in the steel industry, have been engaged in workplace learning through bargaining processes, partnership and social dialogue (Stroud & Faibrother 2008: 8).

A case study conducted at Northumbria University's School of Health, Community and Education Studies, studied work-based learning as a way to increase the skills' repertoire of individuals while also gaining academic credit (Rhodes & Shiel 2007: 173). One of the findings was the need to recognise and assess the diverse learning required throughout the work-based learning journey, so that it can be formally recognised in the Higher Education setting.

Leadership and learning have also been linked to the workplace environment. Leadership development is seen as a learning process from naturally occurring experiences in the workplace:

"Applying adult learning principles and creating conditions that fosters transformational learning are essential in the design and delivery of leadership development efforts." (Brown & Posner 2001: 9).

Making sure that younger generations learn from more experienced, older generations has become a priority for many companies. Virtual models (Hilsen & Ennals 2007: 33) have also been designed to make experience-based competencies available to younger generations. Mentoring has become a priority for younger, less experienced employees to learn from older, more experienced employees. The role of the organisation to meet the learning needs of the current workforce has become an essential ingredient to success. White (2009: 12) expands:

> "*It is the organisation's responsibility to anticipate the learning needs of customers and employees and provide them with the knowledge and skills to perform their jobs effectively."*

The workplace as a learning environment has become central to the development of employees to give them competitive advantage. Employees are adult learners going to work every day, not only to work, but also to learn. In an ever-changing world, learning in the workplace environment has become the norm. As a result, the concept of the learning organisation emerged over the last two decades.

2.3.2 The learning organisation

The broad argument for the Learning Organisation (Parsloe & Leedham 2009: 61) is as follows:

- People are now in a world of global information and technology-driven organisations.
- Success depends on the speed with which new information and intelligence is communicated and applied to current operations, problems and opportunities.
- Storage, transfer and retrieval of this new information is essentially technology- driven, but application of that information is people-driven and is heavily dependent on the strength of conversations, relationships and personal, social and professional networks.
- Applying new information effectively means that people and organisations need to learn to do things differently and rapidly.
- Since new information is becoming continuously available, learning needs to be continuous, both for individuals and for organisations.

The new reality of the workplace is an environment of constant change where learning is essential to staying competitive. Senge (2006) is widely regarded as the writer who brought the term: “The Learning Organisation” to the fore. Senge published his best-selling book, The Fifth Discipline (Senge 2006), which addresses the importance of learning as an organisation. Senge (2006: 17) specifically identifies seven learning disabilities of organisations. These disabilities prevent adults from learning in the work environment and the alarming reality is that these disabilities go largely undetected in the organisation. The learning disabilities of organisations are:

1. I am my position: Many adults become overly loyal to their jobs, which leads to the adult confusing their job with their identity. This leads to a limited view of the impact the individual has on the business, as well as limited responsibility for performance in the business.

2. The enemy is out there: The adult has the propensity to always find someone or something to blame for poor performance and bad results in the workplace.

3. The illusion of taking charge: Adults tend to stay reactive even though they would proclaim that pro-activeness is the ideal way to function and operate.

4. The fixation on events: Adults are conditioned to see life as a series of events, but there is a bigger picture. Each event has more than one cause.

5. The parable of the boiled frog: Because there are no sudden threats, adults do not adapt and many organisations decay slowly, over time. As Senge (2006: 23) puts it: “*Our minds are locked in one frequency.”*

6. The delusion of learning from experience: You cannot learn from experience if you do not see or feel the consequences of your actions. This happens in bigger organisations where decisions are made, but not felt or experienced by the decision- maker.

7. The myth of the management team: Cross-functional management are appointed to sit down and solve complex problems, but end up fighting turf wars favouring their own departments.

Senge (2006: 129; 219) gives solutions to these disabilities in the form of disciplines, one of these disciplines being Team Learning – “the process of aligning and developing the capacity of a team to create the results its members truly desire.”

The workplace as a place where adults need to learn, and learn at a fast pace, has become the focus of many adult educators. It has become a primary place of learning and development. The reality seems to be that learning is constant in most organisations and learning opportunities are rife.

2.3.3 Andragogical implications of workplace learning

Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgardner (2007: 27) have found in their research that most adults today mention that their learning takes place through education and training programmes sponsored by the workplace. This mostly refers to formal training programmes, but there is also a lot of informal learning that takes place on a daily basis through experiences and observations.

2.3.3.1 Adult learning settings

Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgardener (2007: 27) mentions three types of settings that learning takes place in:

1. Formal institutional settings like academic institutions or learning centres
2. Non-formal settings like workshops and workplace discussions
3. Informal contexts where learning takes place every day at work, during on-the-job learning and conversations about work problems and possible solutions.

Adult learning takes place in various settings and more options than only formal learning settings are available for companies to explore regarding the learning of their workers.

2.3.3.2 Dimensions of learning

Among the three dimensions of the learning model developed by Illeris (2004) as quoted in Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgardener (2007: 98), is the dimension of environment. In this dimension of environment, sociality plays an important role in learning. In the workplace, sociality will be encountered with fellow workers or adult learners. The other two dimensions of the learning model are cognition and emotion. Any learning activity therefore, reflects cognitive, emotional and social dimensions.

Should any of these dimensions be neglected, the learning of the adult learners might be affected. Within the context of the current study where different generations of learners in the workplace are studied, the three dimensions of learning might be affected when learners are on different cognitive, social and emotional levels.

2.3.3.3 Structural aspects of learning

The workplace learning environment is influenced by various diversities, which will have an impact on learning and also on the needs of the diversity of learners. In other words, the learning context or environment where learning takes place in a group setting, the learners are in constant interaction with their fellow learners and with the following structural aspects of the learning context: race, class, gender, cultural diversity and power and oppression (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgardener 2007: 427). These structures of the context or environment, also affect learning as learners with different backgrounds have different life experiences. All these structures are found within the context or environment of the organization.

Cultural Intelligence (Livermore: 2011) is, at present, a key to effective learning with fellow adult learners in the workplace environment.

2.3.3.4 Accommodating adult learners in the working environment

Businesses and companies need to be more open to their employees (adult learners) regarding shaping the working environment into a learning environment (Raggatt, Edwards & Small 1996: 211). Adult learners in corporate environments need to be able to figure out what skills they need to develop for their future career and this process of discovering their learning needs should be facilitated by companies. Managers are obliged to sit down with their employees and determine their learning needs. Companies should always make it easy for employees (adult learners) to learn in the workplace (Raggatt, Edwards & Small 1996: 212). The start of this process will be to assist adult learners in discovering their learning needs.

The lack of Education Training and Development (ETD) opportunities in the workplace for career development and advancement leads to massive frustration (Jerling 1996: 37). Consequently, corporate companies have incorporated the ETD function into the Human Resources Department to make sure that ETD opportunities are provided. ETD forms part of organisational development and career

development. The primary focus is to improve the effectiveness and skill of the individual through workplace learning.

2.3.3.5. Factors to consider for optimal workplace learning

For learning to take place within the workplace and specifically within the context of an organisation, the following imbedded factors need to be taken into account (Caffarella 2002: 63):

Structural factors: These factors form the structure of how an organisation operates on a daily basis and should be used to align the learning with workplace operations. Adult learners in the workplace need to understand the necessity for learning. Structural factors include mission, goals, objectives of the organisation, administrative hierarchy, standard operating policies and procedures, the system of formal organisational authority, information systems, organisational decision-making patterns, financial and other resources, and physical facilities.

Political factors: These factors refer to the decision-making power as well as the influencers in the organisation. For learning to succeed in the workplace, we need to have the influencers buy into the learning activities/programmes that are planned. Political factors include coalition building, bargaining and jockeying for position, power relations among individuals and groups, and the politics of funding and providing other resources.

Cultural factors: These factors are the unique characteristics of an organisation. Learning interventions should be tailored to the culture or the organisation for maximum success. Cultural factors include the history and the traditions of the organisation, organisational beliefs and values, and organisational rituals, stories, symbols, and heroes.

For the researcher, these factors of Caffarella once again point to the importance of understanding the uniqueness of each context where learning takes place. Providers of learning and development in companies need to understand that these factors for each company will be different. The experience of the researcher has been that even in the same company, different branches vary from the above-mentioned factors.

2.3.3.6 Conducive learning environments

One of the most important roles of the ETD Practitioner when working with adult learners in any context, is creating a learning environment that is conducive to learning and this should also be practiced in the workplace learning environment. Apps (1991: 78) suggests some tools to assist in creating a welcoming environment.

Atmosphere creators in the first hour, such as introductions so that learners can get to know one another, developing a group agenda that will clearly express the needs of the learners, brainstorming to gather ideas for problems, and potluck meal/snacks add to the social dimension of learning. Also, an alternative classroom keeps the environment new and fresh, a learning celebration at the end of the learning experience cements the learning and finally, help learners to form study groups and continue learning.

The workplace has become a vibrant learning environment and the importance of learning in the workplace is because of a world that changes very quickly (Parsloe & Leedham 2009: 61). And therefore, as mentioned in Chapter One, many corporate companies invest heavily in learning and development of their employees to keep up with the pace of their competitors. Competitive advantage sometimes lies in how fast organisations learn and adapt.

2.3.3.7. A primary place for learning

Many adults today point to their work environment as their primary place or context for learning and development (Merriam, Carrafella & Baumgardener 2007: 27). Many of the adults in the workplace have specific learning needs regarding their future, and obviously many of these learners have diverse backgrounds. Many organisations though still have the mentality that their employees have to learn outside of the workplace environment, and just come to work at their workplace. We are also reminded through the learning model of Illeris that learning is a social task as well (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgardener 2007: 98). Adults learn with others in the workplace environment. A popular concept used in the workplace to learn together and solve complex problems facing teams and companies is called: “collaboration”. At school, collaboration was called cheating, but adult learners should be encouraged to collaborate.

The role that organisations play in fostering workplace learning is critical (Raggat, Edwards & Small 1996: 212; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgardener 2007: 27). Organisations need to plan, discuss and develop learning programmes with employees (adult learners) to help them to acquire the necessary skills to become better at their work, but also to plan the future of their careers. Obstacles that hamper workplace learning should be removed. Obstacles lead to a lack of learning taking place. The lack of education, training and development leads to frustration. Organisations which really want to attract the best employees should make education, training and development a priority in their organisations (Jerling 1996: 37).

An obstacle to adult learning in the work environment, within the context of this study, is the different generations of learners in the work environment. This obstacle needs to be addressed in order to understand the frustrations of different generations of adult learners within the same work and learning environment.

2.4 Different Generations of Adult Learners

Learning is a social activity which, amongst others, takes place within a specific context, which in this case is the working environment. One of the most striking diversities is the generational diversity of learners in the workplace learning environment.

2.4.1 Defining generations

The sum total of peoples' life events has in many ways made them who they are. Exactly how they affected people is related to how old they were when these events occurred. This is what constitutes a generation: "It is shaped by events or circumstances according to which phase of life its members occupy at the time. As each generation ages into the next phase – from youth to young adulthood to midlife to elder hood – its attitudes and behaviours mature, producing new cultures and realities in society. Any society is the sum of its parts – the generations that coexist at that moment in time (Howe and Strauss 2007: 41)."

2.4.2 Different types of generations

Sociologists have always studied the generations of humanity and documented them. Most sociologists start their lists in the 1400s with the Pilgrim Generation and end with Generation Y. A combination of various generational lists is summarised into cycles by Ervin Shaw (1998) as follows:

The Pilgrim Generation (1492-1583) was known for their exploration across the world from Europe. The Colonial Cycle Generation (1584-1673) was a result of the Protestant persecution in Europe that led to their dispersing across the world. The Revolutionary Cycle Generation (1674-1791) predominantly points to the American generation that brought about the revolution in the United States. In this time in Europe, the focus was on Enlightenment. The Civil War Cycle Generation (1792-1859) predominantly points to the American generations involved in the civil war after the revolution. This was also the time of the French Revolution. The Great Power Cycle Generations are also known as the World War Cycle Generation (1860-1945). This generation is known for the birth of many religious movements as well as the two World Wars. The Millennial Cycle Generation (1946-1994) is the current generation and what is clear is the globalisation of the world. These generations are more alike than any generation before them. This is the case across the world in different nations because of the globalisation of the world (Murray 2013). The world has become smaller and more integrated. We now live in a global village.

2.4.3 Characteristics of current generations

Generations that are of relevance today are those that start in the early 1900s (Gravett and Thockmorton, 2007: 15). The generations which form the majority of humanity today are:

Radio Babies/Silent Generation: Born between 1930 and 1945

This generation grew up without television and was shaped profoundly by the first Man on the Moon. This generation experienced the Cold War and the great enemy: Communism. Personal characteristics of this generation are that they are “financially prudent, conservative and loyal (Gravett and Thockmorton, 2007: 35).

Baby Boomers: Born between 1946 and 1964

This generation was the first to be exposed to television from a young age. They were shaped by the music of Elvis and the Beatles. They are seen as ambitious and materialistic. They were also shaped by their values of hard work and paying their dues (Gravett and Thockmorton, 2007: 39).

Generation X: Born between 1965 and 1976

This generation grew up with television and also technology, like computers. Renting videos has also been a part of this generations' entertainment. This generation has been used to adapting to fast changes in the world, especially in the world of technology. This generation is seen as independent and represents the biggest segment of double income families (Gravett and Thockmorton, 2007: 41).

Generation Y: Born between 1977 and 1989

This generation has been made aware of the environment and the impact humanity has on it. They are seen as very open-minded in terms of race, sexuality, gender and so on. AIDS has always been part of their world. Technology has shaped them into a global generation with the Internet (Hira 2007: 26). Entertainment has primarily been computers and video games. They are seen as socially conscious and aware of everything because of 24-hour news cycles (Gravett and Thockmorton, 2007: 45).

Millennials: Born between 1990 – 2004

This generation comprises mostly teens and twenty-somethings known for constantly "holding up cameras". They live their lives online and see their technology as an extension of who they are. They are seen as narcissistic, overconfident and lazy. Terrorism is part of life. Friendships across the world through the Internet are a reality (Stein 2013: 30).

2.4.4 Generational diversity in the workplace

Five generations form part of the workforce of the majority of corporate companies today. Most of the Radio Babies have left the work environment, but there are still some left on boards of companies. Some of the Baby Boomers have also started retiring, but the majority is still working. The Millennials have just joined the workforce and their presence will increase as the years go by. The core of the

workforce is Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. Radio Babies and Millennials make up smaller parts of the workforce.

The above-mentioned generations also need to be understood in the context of adult development (Piaget 1950). Levinson (1996: 18) identifies stages of transition and in each stage there are new challenges in life:

Pre-adulthood (0 – 22 years)

Individuals grow from helpless infants in this phase into independent adults. Rapid bio-psychosocial growth takes place during this stage. Here, a link is also established between pre-adulthood and early adulthood.

Early adulthood (17 – 45 years)

Individuals start accepting responsibilities for their lives. They develop structure of how to connect and work within their society. Later in this phase, individuals become more serious about life and commit to the responsibility in their lives. Stability and security become the focus. They grow in expertise.

Middle adulthood (40 – 65 years)

This is a new phase of stability with set routines and life styles. These are the prime years for career growth, senior positions and success. This is the fullest season of the individual's life. In later adulthood years, the individual starts preparing for the later years of retirement and late adulthood.

Late adulthood (60 + years)

This is life in the last period, where a new transition happens as these people prepare to move into retirement. This stage is seen as a single period and the foundation for later-life gets laid. This is also referred to as a single stage, mainly because of a lack of research (Levinson, Darrow, Klein & McKee 1978).

An awareness of different age groups of learners has always been noticed by educators, but this has become more diverse and accentuated in the workplace. The generations in the workplace have never been as diverse as they currently are and that brings its own challenges to the workplace. It also needs to be mentioned that adult development clearly shows different stages of development for adults. This

brings the reality of a diverse group of adults at different stages of their lives working together in the working environment.

2.4.5 Diverse adult learner generations and workplace learning

One of the challenges of the younger workforce is that they bring freshness and energy into the workplace with an eagerness to learn, grow and develop (Capelli 2002:70). They are interested in growing with the company that they work for and usually want to know how fast they can develop in their careers and this implies moving up in traditional management structures.

The older workforce is very reliable, patient, and live with a belief that they have to work hard and, with enough time, work their way from the bottom to the top of the organisation (Capelli 2002:71). These varying perspectives bring about a dynamic that ETD Practitioners should pay attention to. Frustration, irritation and even conflict could dominate daily work procedures but also, more importantly, impact workplace learning. Older generations get irritated by what they perceive as an over-ambitious younger generation. This could lead to older generations not engaging the younger generations with workplace learning (Stein 2013: 33; Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013: 13, 151).

Diverse generations of adult learners in the workplace lead to diverse sets of values, ambitions, views, mind-sets and demographics (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013: 9). This has the potential to lead to conflict and hostility in every setting in the workplace, even where learning happens. Zemke, Raines, Filipczak (2013: 9) further argues that this problem did not occur previously as we now live in a post-industrial, info-centred world where senior positions are filled frequently by older people for much longer and this leads to bigger age gaps between employees. This means that the workplace is less horizontal and more spatially compact and has stirred different generations into one melting pot called work.

There are individual differences between learners in the workplace (Parsloe & Leedham 2009: 93). More than age, development phases and generations, there are many differences that cause a diversity of learners such as personality, values, beliefs, interests, intelligence, ability, motivation, learning styles, self-concept, race, religion and gender. What astounds is the fact that Parsloe & Leedham (2009: 93) omits generations from his list. One of the core differences between generations are their values and beliefs (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013: 28, 67, 94,122).

ETD Practitioners must take these individual differences into consideration when planning workplace learning programmes. They are always a factor in learning. People have different backgrounds, abilities, skills knowledge and personalities (Jerling 1996: 126). For ETD to succeed, there has to be recognition and response to each learner's needs, perceptions, habits and manners. Jerling (1996) fails to mention generational diversity specifically, but could include that under the backgrounds of individuals. However, she mentions the awareness of the differences in needs because of diversity.

One issue with generational diversity in workplace learning is intelligence and ageing. Research in the last 20 years has clearly shown that, for most adults, intellectual functioning is alive and well throughout most of their lifetimes (Merriam, Caffarella, Baumgardener 2007: 359). Another socio-cultural factor that has come to the fore is sexual-orientation. With the United States legalising homosexual marriage and various African countries condemning the homosexual lifestyle with prison sentences and death, this diversity has attracted a lot of debate and media coverage. The age of postmodernity is more prone to celebrate diversity among people, ideas and institutions. By accepting this diversity, the postmodern society sees no one more privileged or more powerful than the other. This is interesting as generations might be more open to learn from each other in an education setting within the workplace (Merriam et al 2007: 261)

Generational conflict and generational gaps are still very prevalent in companies across Asia, Europe and America. Research (Centre for Creative Leadership 2007) shows though that all generations value feedback and would like to get that feedback from a coach. Everybody wants to know how they are doing and how they need to cope with the different people at the office. Another interesting fact that their research showed was that all generations are very eager to learn. Therefore, gaining an understanding of the different training needs of each generation will assist the trainer in tailoring his training for each generation, so it can be more effective (The Leading Effectively e-Newsletter 2007:1).

Demographic variables have an impact in terms of participation in adult education. These variables include age and sex (Merriam and Brockett 1997: 192). It seems that younger learners participate in greater percentages than older learners in workplace learning, and it seems that men participate in greater percentages than women, except in industrialised nations. The reasons that older learners give for

why they do not want to participate in learning are because they are sometimes in poor health, they are tired of learning, there is a lack of information on what the learning is about, whether parking is available, and how familiar the setting would be. (Merriam; Caffarella & Baumgardner 2007: 159-180). Within the context of this study, the above-mentioned reasons indicate that older Baby Boomers and Generation X adult learners look for comfortable easy access learning opportunities.

Creating awareness of this diversity through consulting is currently a standard practice for corporate companies. Getting teams in the workplace to attend meetings where this diversity between generations is discussed is a step in the right direction. The idea behind these discussions is to get the challenges between generations out of the way, so that the focus could again be placed on work (Martin and Tulgan 2002: 44). These discussions also aim to encourage better co-operation between the diversity of generations during workplace learning (Nayar 2013: 40).

There is a definite impact of generational diversity on the training and development of adult learners across the corporate environment (Gravett and Thockmorton 2007: 151). As a result, vast amounts of money are invested by companies into training and development of their employees. Many companies make huge investments into their workforce, yet they do not see the desired results in terms of learning and development. Multiple clients of the researcher in this study have expressed their disappointment in vast amounts of money being spent on the development of their employees, and yet the desired impact of the investment did not come to fruition. Within the context of this study of various generations, the challenge is that one size does not fit all when recruiting, training and retaining different age groups.

2.4.6 Andragogical implications of generations for workplace learning and facilitation

A new approach in training and development needs to be implemented to accommodate the different needs of generations when designing and implementing workplace learning. Generations have a common trend, that is they each have a different focus of what they want to learn and grow. Training should be tailored for a generation by focusing on the following preferences for each generation (Gravett and Thockmorton 2007: 152; Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013: 179; Hira 2007: 33):

2.4.6.1 Radio Babies preferences

Radio Babies prefer a lecture style when taught. The ETD Practitioner needs to respect their experience and opinions in case studies. It is important to align the training to the goals of the organisation for them to see the impact on financial performance. Radio Babies will be respectful in evaluating the learning that they receive. Their motivation will be to learn for fun and perseverance (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013: 47). They will be on time and they want the ETD Practitioner to acknowledge their input during learning interventions (Gravett and Thockmorton 2007: 162).

2.4.6.2 Baby Boomer preferences

Baby Boomers prefer team activities in their learning activities. A core value of this generation is teamwork (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013: 67). They want to experience different roles to learn for example: team leader. They prefer the training they receive to be aligned with the company's strategic plan. Baby Boomers want to evaluate the training at the end of the session and at follow-up sessions. When engaging in workplace learning, Baby Boomers want deliverables that will help them survive in their work. Baby Boomers also enjoy social time during training and workshops and they want other participants to acknowledge their input (Gravett and Thockmorton 2007: 162).

2.4.6.3 Generation X preferences

Generation X-ers want many activities, but individual feedback during training. They do not accept only one solution to case studies and they want everything they learn to be aligned with the company's vision. Their feedback of training will happen during the workshop. Generation X-ers want skills that are transferable to other companies. They think more globally and are more self-reliant (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013: 94). Respect the time of Generation X-ers by starting and ending on time as agreed. This generation will not need any acknowledgement during training. (Gravett and Thockmorton 2007: 162). Group and team work can also be found as beneficial for Generation X.

2.4.6.4 Generation Y preferences

Generation Ys enjoy technology and multi-media. They are extremely connected to the world through social media and technology (Nayar 2013: 40; Hira 2007: 27). They want casual discussions with each learner's point seen as relevant and valuable. They enjoy the sociability of learning (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013: 122). There are various answers to case studies. Generation Ys want their training to be aligned to the company's values and image. They like giving feedback and expect to be praised for it. They want to learn skills in a fun way that they can take forward to other companies in their career. Generation Ys expect trainers to start on time, but will allow trainers to extend the training. They also have a need to be frequently acknowledged for their input during training (Gravett and Thockmorton 2007: 162). They are extremely confident (Stein 2013: 28).

It is clear that there is a need to pay attention to the preferences of different learners from different generations. Relevant training methods, techniques and exercises should be used to incorporate all generations into workplace learning. All generations want to learn and grow through workplace learning and see it as the primary space where learning will happen for them.

Training managers and trainers in the workplace learning environment must be equipped in co-ordinating skills, occupational health and safety, programme design and review, needs' identification and skills for programme management (Edwards et al 1993: 147). In the context of the current study, the researcher is in agreement with Edwards. One aspect that is clear is the needs' identification of different generations of learners. Identifying and understanding the needs of learners in the workplace is essential for meeting the needs of different generations of adult learners.

Does the diversity of different generations of learners bring different needs into the workplace learning environment? This question is at the core of this research study.

2.4.7 The unique situation of Generation Y and Millennials

Since 2007, Generation Y and Millennials have been studied by various academics and journalists (Gravett and Throckmorton 2007; Howe and Strauss 2007; Hira 2007: 26) and most recently by Stein (2013) and Zemke, Raines & Filipczak (2013). Stein (2013) wrote an article in Time Magazine titled: *"The Me Me Me Generation".*

Generation Y and the Millenials are studied together by researchers and classified as one generation. Martin and Tulgan (2001: 4) writes about this Generation:

- *"A generation of new confidence, upbeat and full of self – esteem"*
- *"The most education – mindset generation ever"*
- *"A generation paving the way to a more open, tolerant society"*
- *"A generation leading a new wave of volunteerism"*

This is a generation that realises that their future success lies in education. They believe education is cool. They are excited to join organisations that are focused on lifelong learning (Martin and Tulgan 2001: 4).

An article published in Fortune Magazine (Hira 2007: 26) and titled: *"Generation Y, you raised them now manage them."* describes this generation as children who were, and still are, being raised by a very materialistic Baby Boomer Generation. The cause of this is that Generation Y is the most consumer-driven generation in history. They get described as different, arrogant and self-centred. They are called the most high-maintenance workforce in the history of the world, simply because their values do not align with the Baby Boomer Generation who now needs to manage them in the workplace. But Generation Y will also be the most high-performing (Hira 2007: 28). If businesses pay attention to their needs, especially their learning needs, this generation will be a workforce that performs better than previous generations.

The following questions, according to Gravett and Thockmorton (2007:56), may help companies evaluate whether they are ready for the Generation Y workforce:

- Do you provide positive and constructive feedback more often than annually?
- Do you help all employees understand how they contribute to the organisation's success?
- Do you have a friendly, fun work environment where work is play?
- Does your organisation make every effort to invest in the development of its employees and make it well known to everyone?
- Does the organisation have a strong level of integrity and commitment to quality service and products?

Generation Y will reshape how we work and how we learn, simply because they are the first generation exposed to the globalised world that includes the internet, social media and multi-channel television entertainment 24 hours a day (Stein 2013: 30).

Their values and worldview is different and they are the most populous generation, that is, most similar in the history of humanity (Hira 2013:40). Their impact will be real and what is most important will be our reaction towards them (Stein 2013: 35).

2.5 Conclusion of Literature Study

> *"Every generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it." George Orwell*

The review of literature in this chapter provided a clearer understanding of the adult learner, the workplace learning environment and the different generations of adult learners in the workplace within the context of this study. From the research, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y show clear differences in various dimensions of humanity. Generational diversity is one of multiple diversities in the workplace environment.

Research cited in literature indicates that the training needs of different generations of adult learners in the workplace learning environment are disregarded. As a result, this study seeks to fill this gap by exploring how the generational gap informs the training needs of employees from different generations in the corporate environment.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the research design and methodology used to investigate the research question on which the study was based. A description of data collection methods and instruments, the population used and the sampling is shared. The data analysis techniques used are also discussed, as well as ethical considerations.

The research design and methodology allowed the researcher to gather data in order to address the following research question:

- Are there significant differences in the training needs of the three dominant generations of learners in the corporate environment?

3.2 Research Design

De Vos (2011: 41) states the following:

"The important point is that all scientific research is conducted within a specific paradigm, or way of viewing one's research material. The researcher must, therefore, decide within what paradigm he is working, know the nature of his selected paradigm very well, and spell this out in his research report in order to keep communication with his reading public clear and unambiguous."

A research design/paradigm shows which methods, processes and steps the researcher used to gather the relevant data for his study. There are basically two well-known approaches to research and they are known as qualitative and quantitative research. The research design serves as glue and holds the research project together by integrating all the major parts to address the specific research question.

For this research study, the qualitative research design was employed. The qualitative research design rests on the assumption that valid understanding can be gained through accumulated knowledge acquired at first hand by a single researcher (Fortune & Read 1999: 94). Fouche & Delport in De Vos (2011: 66) mentions the following aspects about qualitative research in social sciences:

1. Epistemological roots in phenomenology
2. The purpose is constructing detailed descriptions of social reality
3. Methods utilise inductive logic
4. Suitable for a study in a relatively unknown terrain
5. Participants natural language is used for authentic understanding
6. This design is flexible and evolves through the research process
7. Data sources are determined by information richness of settings, and types of observation are modified to enrich understanding
8. The unit of analysis is holistic, concentrating on the relationships between elements, contexts and so on. The whole is always more than the sum.

3.3 Research Method

Creswell (2013: 69-110) identifies five research methods that can be used in qualitative research design. They are biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study.

This study utilised the case study method of qualitative research. Creswell (2013: 97) regards a case study as an in-depth analysis of a bounded system, or a single or a multiple case over a period of time. The philosophical underpinning of this method is within the constructivist paradigm. This paradigm puts forward that truth is relative and dependant on an individual's perspective (Baxter & Jack 2008: 545).

This study utilised the single case study (Creswell 2013: 99) method, as research was conducted in a single corporate company in South Africa. This is also an instrumental case study (Mark 1996: 219; Baxter & Jack 2008: 549), because the study tries to better understand a social issue to elaborate on it and to gain additional and better knowledge regarding this social issue. The social issue in this study is the workplace learning needs of different generations in the workplace.

3.4 Population

Basically, a population refers to the subjects that will be studied and researched. McBurney (2001: 248) points to the population as the sampling frame. The population is either the people or elements that interest the researcher and points to what the researcher wants to study. The population is where the interest of the researcher is found.

This study, within the frame of qualitative research, utilised the case study method. The population will then point to where the case study takes place. Creswell (2013: 148) mentions that the most important aspect in qualitative research, when using a case study approach is to find a "case". For this study, the population was within the context of a specific corporate company in South Africa. The company chosen for this study focuses on providing multi-disciplinary engineering services and has a very strict corporate culture.

All three of the dominant generations are found within this company. Engineers in this company are between the ages of 23 and 65. Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y are represented in this age bracket. This company delivers regular learning interventions and programmes to their employees and the researcher has also been used as a service provider for training and coaching at this specific company.

The basis for selecting this company and the employees is that it has a strict corporate culture and has a representation of all the generations. Furthermore, this is a company that does engage in regular workplace learning and therefore provides the preferred population for study and research.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample is a subset of the population that was chosen for the study by a researcher. The sample is based on the characteristics and diversities of the population of the study (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey 2005: 5). Now the role of the researcher is to collect data for research and therefore is responsible for selecting a specific sampling method to collect relevant data for the study.

In qualitative research, there are different methods and strategies for sampling. The size of the sample is determined by what you want to know, what is useful and also what is credible (Paton 2002: 244). In doing research, the two main categories for sampling are probability and non-probability sampling.

In qualitative research design, the sampling category that is used almost without exception is non-probability sampling (Strydom and Delport in De Vos 2011: 391). The reason for this is that the researcher is seeking out a specific group and setting where specific behaviour will occur. Examples of non-probability sampling are purposive sampling, theoretical sampling, deviant case sampling, sequential sampling, snowball sampling and volunteer sampling (Strydom en Delport in De Vos 2011: 391 - 394).

For this study, purposive sampling was employed (Creswell 2013: 154). Purposive sampling is one of the most common sampling methods in qualitative research and is used to group the participants of a study into the pre-selected criteria. This pre-selected criteria is determined by the researcher and is in line with the purpose of the study (Mack et al 2005: 5). The size of the sample is determined by the resources and time available to the researcher. Sometimes the sample size is determined when the researcher reaches data saturation in terms of the specific research question.

Sampling for this study included five participants from each generation (Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y). There are a total of 15 participants. All these participants work in the same corporate company. All the participants are also qualified engineers.

The Human Resources Department of the company in this study invited specific participants who fit the criteria. They were also given the assurance that their participation is treated confidentially.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

There are a variety of data collection techniques available to the researcher in a qualitative study (Maxwell 2013: 87). These techniques in qualitative research include interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and document analysis (Greef in De Vos 2011: 341 and Creswell 2013: 149). The data collection method used in this study was interviews.

3.6.1 Interviews

Interviewing is seen as the predominant and primary mode of data collection in qualitative research. One of the reasons for interviewing being common as a qualitative research method is that it is very effective in understanding the humanity of the research problem (Saldana 2011: 32; Seidman 1998:1, Mack et al 2005: 29).

For the researcher, conducting interviews and engaging with participants can be a very rewarding exercise as they probe the questions that answer their research question. The quality of the interview depends strongly on the interview skills of the researcher and thus the researcher has a responsibility to equip himself with the right interview skills (Greef in De Vos 2011: 343). Thorough preparation is also key to quality interviewing (Saldana 2011: 34).

Participants can also find the interviewing process rewarding as it provides them an opportunity to express how they feel about the research question in their specific field of expertise or in their setting (Mack et al 2005: 29). This is not always afforded to the participants. The interview is a technique to *"elicit a vivid picture"* (Mack et al 2005:29) of the participants' perspective in terms of the topic of the researcher being studied.

Interviews can be conducted in various ways. Greef in De Vos (2011: 347 – 360), discusses unstructured interviews, which is described as a conversation with a purpose, semi-structured interviews, which is described as a way to gain a detailed view of a participant about a topic, and the ethnographic interview, which is described as an interview used to gather cultural data (Creswell 2013: 163).

For this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 15 participants from the three different generations. The interviews were conducted one-on-one and the interaction was purposive of nature. The data collected focused on the learning needs of each participant for this specific time of their lives.

An interview guide or schedule (Creswell 2013: 165) was developed with open-ended questions for the researcher to use as a guide during the interviews (See Appendix 2: Interview Protocol). The reason for the open-ended questions was to guide the researcher during interviews, but also to enable the researcher freedom to digress if it necessitated. The role of the researcher in a semi-structured interview is to facilitate and guide (Greef in De Vos 2011: 351).

The interviews took place during working hours at the offices of the specific corporate company that is used for this case study. A boardroom was booked that provided privacy, and a notice was put up to avoid unnecessary distractions (Creswell 2013: 165 – 166).

The researcher who also conducted the interviews studied interviewing techniques from various literature sources and also from other researchers. The following techniques and tips from Greef in De Vos (2011: 343 – 346) and Saldana (2011: 32-46). Mack et al (2005: 32 – 34) were particularly helpful to the researcher:

- Make sure the logistics are suitable
- Know your research document
- Practice interviewing
- Practice with the equipment
- The participant must do 90% of the talking
- Ask one question at a time
- Encourage free rein, but maintain control
- Return to incomplete points
- Explore laughter
- Document the interview and make back-up notes
- Expand notes as soon as possible after the interview
- End the interview in reasonable time

3.7 Reliability

Reliability refers to whether the findings in the study or research are consistent and whether they can be replicated (Merriam 1998: 205). If this study is conducted again by another researcher, will it produce results that are consistent with the current study?

With regards to this study, reliability was concerned with the consistency of the conducting of the interviews as well as the way the data was analysed (Creswell 2013: 253). In this study, all respondents were asked questions from the same interview guide/schedule. All interviews were recorded and transcribed to be read again and analysed. But human behaviour is not static and it cannot be guaranteed that this study yields the same results in another corporate company.

In qualitative research Creswell states:

> *"Reliability often refers to the stability of responses to multiple codes of data."*

3.8 Validity

Validity points to the truthfulness of the study. De Vos (2011: 419) mentions that there are criteria (canons) which the trustworthiness of a research project should stand up to. This is the most important test for any research project. It points to whether the research has any credibility (Creswell 2013: 250 & Maxwell 2013: 125).

Eisenhart and Howe (1992: 657 – 663) give five standards that can be used and applied in all forms of educational research:

1. The appropriateness of research questions, data collection procedures and analysis techniques.
2. Effective application of specific data collection and analysis methods
3. Alertness to and coherence of prior knowledge
4. Value constraints
5. Comprehensiveness.

In this study, the research question focused on the learning needs of different generations and the questions of the interviews were structured accordingly after a thorough literature review. The appropriate data collection procedures and analysis techniques were used, and are described in 3.9 of this chapter.

As the researcher, my prior knowledge of this issue might contain some subjectivity as this company is one of my clients. The researcher is a service provider to the current business being studied.

Eisenhart and Howe (1992: 660-662) mentions that educational research is subject to value constraints, both internal and external. External refers to the value of research to inform educational practice, where internal refers to the way the research was conducted. This study aims to provide some valuable knowledge regarding the learning needs of different generations of learners in the workplace. The interviews were also conducted with prior consent of the company and individuals which is discussed in 3.10 in this chapter.

In terms of comprehensiveness, this study aims to cover the research question thoroughly. The study was submitted for technical editing by an editor and the knowledge gained can be applied in the workplace environment where adult learners function every day.

The researcher used the five standards of Eisenhart and Howe (1992) to show validity.

3.9 Data Analysis

"Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the collection of data. It is a messy ambiguous, time – consuming, creative and fascinating process" (De Vos 2011: 397). The process of analysing data involves researchers moving deeper and deeper into the understanding of what the data is reflecting.

As the researcher in this study, it creates excitement to discover what the hidden knowledge could be in the data that was collected. The creativity, reflection and interpretation of this analytical process is enthralling as the discovery of knowledge that could assist the field of education brings deep fulfilment to me as the researcher. Creswell (2013: 179) rightly stated that this a challenging process as well.

Where data collection and analysis is clearly distinguished in traditional studies, a qualitative study involves a relationship between these two phases (De Vos 2011: 405; Baxter & Jack 2008: 545). Thus, in a qualitative study, data collection and analysis work together to build a more comprehensive understanding of the data. This leads to making field notes while conducting data collection, and documenting certain insights that are noticed.

In this study, while conducting the interviews the researcher used field notes as a form of data collection while the interviews were recorded. The researcher documented certain trends and insights that were noticed while the interviews were conducted. In qualitative research, this is a way of observation (Saldana 2011: 46 – 54).

3.9.1 Organising the data

Interviews are always to be recorded (Mack et al. 2005: 83). Thereafter, they are transcribed, typed and saved in computer folders with proper back-ups which are properly stored in a different secure location. This first step, Creswell (2013: 182) calls data management.

Field notes are made on the interview guide by the researcher and form part of the data that was collected (Mack et al 2005: 84). These notes are typed and added to the transcript of each interview (Saldana 2011: 50).

In this study, the researcher recorded all the interviews. They were transcribed, typed and saved in computer files with a proper back-up. Field notes were also typed and included in the separate files of the interviews. All this data was backed-up on an external hard drive and kept at a separate office to that of the researcher.

3.9.2 Reading the data

A theoretical sensitivity must be developed and, therefore, interviews and notes must be read and re-read (Clarke 1999: 532). This step allows the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the frame of reference of those who were interviewed.

In this study, the data was read and re-read several times to start an in-depth process of analysis (Creswell 2013: 183 and Packer 2011:58).

3.9.3 Generating themes

De Vos (2011: 410) states that the step or phase of generating themes is at the heart of qualitative research and it can be quite a challenge. There remains limited literature on exactly how to go about this process (Packer 2011: 57).

Baxter & Jack (2008: 544) refers to this phase as pattern matching, especially in a case study. The researcher of this study tried to take the interviews and data apart in order to categorise. Sub-themes emerged from original themes. The idea is to

create small, manageable sets of themes to write the final findings (De Vos 2011: 412, Packer 2011: 58).

3.9.4 Coding

A coding scheme is used to mark certain themes and categories as they appear in the paragraphs of the data collected (Creswell 2013: 184 – 188). So the job of the researcher is to read through the data diligently and mark certain of them according to themes identified. Codes could be abbreviations, numbers, colour markings, or basically anything that makes sense to the researcher (De Vos 2011: 411).

In this study, the researcher used certain abbreviations of key words for the coding system that was used.

3.9.5 Evaluate plausibility

This phase involves the evaluation of the data for its usefulness and centrality (De Vos 2011: 415). The question is whether the data is illuminating the question being explored. The researcher should critically challenge and question patterns and themes that seem apparent. Getting feedback in this step of the research is key for the researcher to have other researchers challenge the assumptions (Baxter & Jack 2008: 555). The data should also be compared and contrasted with literature (Creswell 2013: 200).

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The fact that human beings are the objects of study in education makes it very important to conduct research in an ethical manner. Strydom (2011: 114) states that there are two ethical considerations: to the humans involved in the study and to the field of study. To ensure that this study was conducted in an ethical manner, the issues of avoidance of harm, informed consent, violation of privacy and confidentiality, and the co-operation with and feedback to contributors, were addressed (Denzin & Lincoln 1994: 89; Strydom in De Vos 2011: 115-126).

3.10.1 Avoidance of harm

How could the researcher harm humans in this study? In a highly-competitive business world, anything that is seen as an intrusion of productivity is dealt with ruthlessly. This researcher had a concern for those taking part and sacrificing work time to take part in the interviews in this specific company. Employees bill by the hour and that is why clear buy-in from the Human Resources Department was important as well as communication with the superiors of those taking part in the research. The researcher did not want those taking part to be victimised after the study.

3.10.2 Informed Consent

Right through the process of this study and the engagements with participants in the interviews, the purpose of the study was clearly communicated and participants had the choice to withdraw at any time that they felt uncomfortable with the process.

There was also a clear explanation of exactly how their contribution to the study would be utilised. Informed consent was gained by the signature of participants on a letter of consent. (See Appendix 1: Informed Consent) Consent was also requested from the specific company of this case study and after a long process of approval, consent was given for the study to proceed.

3.10.3 Violation of privacy and confidentiality

In this study, particularly during the interviews, participants were given the assurance that their personal details and their responses to the questions would not be made known in the final study. The researcher understands, with sensitivity, the importance of gaining truthful data and also protecting the identity of those who provide it (Strydom in De Vos 2011: 119).

3.10.4 Co-operation with and feedback to contributors

In this study, the contributors were the company and the employees who were interviewed. They played a valuable part in this study. Therefore, the findings of this study were shared with the company as well as the individuals who took part in the study. This is a small way to acknowledge and thank them for making this study possible in the interests of learning more about adult learning in their workplace environment.

3.11 Summary

This chapter provides a description of the research design and methodology that was used to investigate the research question on which the study was based. A description of data collection methods and instruments, the population used, and the sampling were described. The data analysis techniques used were also discussed as well as ethical considerations taken by the researcher.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and describe the process that was followed, step-by-step, during the analysis of the data collected from the interviews. Analysing various forms of data and deciding how to finally represent the hard work of the researcher is a challenge. (Creswell 2013: 179) The steps of analysis are interconnected and form a whole at the end of the process. The role of data analysis is to reveal fresh insights of what the researcher has observed during the research process (Saldana 2011: 89).

One of the most common problems in qualitative research is the volume of data that piles up over months of research and that then must be worked through at the end. Therefore, analysis should be taking place throughout the entire process of data collection as well (Maxwell 2013: 104).

The aim in this chapter is to present the analysis of the answers and responses of fifteen adult learners from the three dominant generations, during semi-structured interviews regarding their workplace training needs. In the resultant presentation, the actual words, comments and statements of the adult learners are quoted to illustrate the specific themes and categories.

4.2 Presentation and Analysis of the Qualitative Study

4.2.1 Interviews

Data collected during the interviews with the fifteen adult learners represents the first phase of the data analysis process. Notes were made with each interview to start analysing similarities and differences between the different generations of adult learners regarding their workplace learning needs. Creswell (2013: 180) describes the broad process of data analysis in qualitative research as:

- Preparing and organising the data for analysis
- Reducing data into themes through a process of coding and
- Representing the data in tables and discussions.

This general approach was also followed by the researcher in this study.

4.2.2 Biographical data of the adult learners interviewed for this specific study

Table 4.1: Biological Data

Questions	GEN Y	GEN X	BOOMERS
Date of birth?	1. 1986/08/05 2. 1983/08/04 3. 1987/05/03 4. 1984/01/29 5. 1987/05/22	1. 1974/07/06 2. 1976/11/24 3. 1973/11/07 4. 1973/05/30 5. 1976/06/29	1. 1961/09/07 2. 1958/09/21 3. 1958/05/20 4. 1961/03/24 5. 1967/03/13
Please describe your current work responsibilities ?	1. Civil Engineer – Airport designs 2. Civil Engineer- Projects 3. Civil Engineer- Bridges 4. Legal Advisor- Internal 5. Junior Programmer	1. Technical Director- Water 2. Senior Software Developer 3. Engineer- Railways 4. Human Capital Consultant 5. Human Capital Consultant	1. Project Leader- Infrastructure 2. Regional Manager- Environment & Sustainability 3. Human Capital Consultant 4. Administrative Assistant 5. Human Capital Consultant
On what level of management are you functioning?	1. Junior 2. Junior 3. Junior 4. Junior 5. Junior	1. Middle 2. Junior 3. Middle 4. Junior 5. Middle	1. Middle 2. Middle 3. Senior 4. Non-Management 5. Junior

Table 4.1 shows the different generations of adult learners who were interviewed for this study: Generation Y were generally born in the 1980s, Generation X were generally born in the 1970s and the Baby Boomer Generation were generally born in the late 1950s to late 1960s. The Table also indicates the work responsibilities of each of the adult learners who were interviewed. There is a blend of work responsibilities between the different generations as well as within each of the generations. Finally, the Table also indicates the level of management at which each of these adult learners function within this specific company.

4.3 Analysis Process of the Interviews

4.3.1 Data orientation

Data intimacy is essential in qualitative research. Reading and re-reading the interviews, listening to them again on audio while making notes and also studying the field notes made during the interviews, leads to an intimate familiarity with the data (Saldana 2011: 95; Maxwell 2013:105).

For the researcher in this study to develop intimate knowledge of the data, interviews were listened to again, the transcriptions of the interviews were read twice and the field notes during interviews were studied multiple times. This lead to a deep intimacy with the data collected for the study. During this process, tentative categories were formed and noted (Maxwell 2013: 105).

4.3.2 Working with the data

Data needed to be organised so that it could be thoroughly analysed. This happened for the researcher even before the coding began. A structure was developed according to the questions of the interviews, and the answers of each respondent were summarised into the specific generation that the adult learners fell into. This meant that all the answers for Generation Y for a specific question were grouped together, as they were for Generation X and the Baby Boomer Generation. This can be seen as a grouping of significant statements that were made by the adult learners of each generation during the interviews (Creswell 2013: 193).

This was the first step and basically a coding process that forms the main strategy for categorizing qualitative research (Maxwell 2013: 107).

After this process was concluded, the researcher read through the coded data and started identifying categories. This was done through inductive reasoning. Saldana (2011: 93) defines induction as:

"Induction is what we explore and infer to be transferable from the particular to the general, based on an examination of the evidence and an accumulation of knowledge."

Abduction was used to conclude from the data, the clues that leads to certain plausible conclusions. Saldana (2011: 93) calls this *"surmising from the evidence."*

These categories were broad aspects that the researcher wanted to investigate to present the data in a meaningful way. (Maxwell 2013: 107) Saldana (2011: 91) notes that humans naturally categorise all things in numerable ways.

"Category construction is our best attempt to cluster the most seemingly alike things into the most seemingly appropriate groups." Saldana (2011: 91)

The above-mentioned process by Saldana was the next step for the researcher, taking the data after coding and working them into categories that made most sense. These categories could also have been anticipated as the researcher had an intimate knowledge of the data. (Maxwell 2013: 107) The researcher worked through the coding and identified and grouped the data into ten categories.

After the process of categorising was complete, the researcher noted that themes emerged that were basically aligned with the questions that were asked during the interview. This prompted the researcher to discuss this phenomenon with more experienced researchers in qualitative inquiry. These researchers confirmed the fact that the categories reflected themes that were aligned with the questions used during the interviews.

The researcher then placed these themes and sub-themes (categories) into tables for each of the three generations of adult learners which are illustrated in Tables 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4:

Table 4.2: Generation Baby Boomers

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1. Learning challenges facing the Baby Boomer Generation (Question 4 and Question 5)	1.1 Professional challenges 1.1.1 Change fatigue 1.1.2 Software packages
	1.2 Personal challenges 1.2.1 Work-life balance 1.2.2 Personal financial planning 1.2.3 Finding a new career
2. Learning preferences of the Baby Boomer Generation (Question 7 and Question 10)	2.1 Blended approach, according to personal preference
	2.2 Tailoring of content to context
3. Learning interventions requested by the Baby Boomer Generation (Question 8, Question 9 and Question 12)	3.1 Relevance of learning interventions
	3.2 Apprehension to attend learning interventions and to learn
4. Learning needs of the Baby Boomer Generation (Question 6 and Question 11)	4.1 Technical skills needs 4.1.1 Industrial relations
	4.2 Soft skills needs 4.2.1 Conflict and confrontation 4.2.2 Company Culture
	4.3 Technology needs 4.3.1 Software Design Packages 4.3.2 Beyond the basics – uncomfortable with technology

Table 4.3: Generation X

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1. Learning challenges facing Generation X (Question 4 and Question 5)	1.1 Professional challenges 1.1.1 Time management and prioritizing challenges 1.1.2 Change in profession and getting buy-in from colleagues
	1.2 Personal challenges 1.2.1 Work-life balance
2. Learning preferences of Generation X (Question 7 and Question 10)	2.1 Blended approach, according to personal preference
	2.2 Tailoring of content to context
3. Learning interventions requested by Generation X (Question 8, Question 9 and Question 12)	3.1 Career based learning
	3.2 Relevance of the learning intervention
4. Learning needs of Generation X (Question 6 and Question 11)	4.1 Technical skill needs 4.1.1 Continuous professional development 4.1.2 Project management 4.1.3 Financial management 4.1.4 Labour law
	4.2 Soft skill needs 4.2.1 Interpersonal communication 4.2.2 Life goals 4.2.3 Company culture
	4.3 Technological needs 4.3.1 No needs for Gen X

Table 4.4: Generation Y

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1. Learning challenges facing Generation Y (Question 4 and Question 5)	1.1 Professional challenges 1.1.1 Demanding work environment 1.1.2 Lack of practical experience
	1.2 Personal Challenges 1.2.1 Work-life balance 1.2.2 Boundaries between work and personal life
2. Learning preferences Generation Y (Question 7 and Question 10)	2.1 Blended, but majority prefer to learn on their own
	2.2 Tailoring of content to the context
3. Learning interventions requested by Generation Y (Question 8, Question 9 and Question 12	3.1 Relevance of learning interventions
	3.2 Leadership and Management – future growth
4. Learning needs of Generation Y (Question 6 and Question 11)	4.1 Technical skill needs 4.1.1 Project management 4.1.2 Engineering specialised
	4.2 Soft skill needs 4.2.1 Proper induction 4.2.2 People management
	4.3 Technological needs 4.3.1 No needs , but feels company must learn to utilise technology more effectively

4.4 Data Interpretation Discussion

As mentioned, the four main themes that emerged from the data were aligned to the questions that were used during the interviews. The four main themes that emerged were:

- Learning challenges facing each of the different generations emerged from question 4 and question 5
- Learning preferences of each of the different generations emerged from question 7 and question 10
- Learning interventions asked for by the different generations emerged from question 8, question 9 and question 12
- Learning needs voiced by each of the different generations emerged from question 6 and question 11

This study is a case study and Creswell (2013: 199) makes it clear that a case study draws direct interpretation and meaning from a single instance, not multiple instances. This process includes pulling data apart and putting it back together in a more meaningful way. The above-mentioned themes, as shown in the Tables, emerged from this process of analysis and interpretation.

4.4.1 Theme: Learning challenges facing the Baby Boomer Generation, Generation X and Generation Y

Professional Challenges

Baby Boomer Generation

The Baby Boomer Generation identified professional challenges that the researcher titled: change fatigue (Plumb 1999: 141). It became clear in the interviews that the Baby Boomer adult learners had quite enough of change and that they were getting to a point where they felt fatigued by the change. Baby Boomers need deliverables from training that will help them survive at work and therefore training interventions need to focus on helping this generation cope with the change (Gravett and Thockmorton 2007:162). Boomer 3 mentions in the interview:

"*Consistent change in the structures…….. I normally say as soon as I got things to work then somebody changes the structure and we start all over again…….. It's frustrating ….. Just spread the change a bit."*

Other Baby Boomers mentioned the changes in software packages as a problem and they need to know how to work with all of them. The fact that the company has been in a “comfort zone” and “change is tough to cultivate” were also mentioned by two of the Baby Boomers. Whether it is technological change or organisational change, this could bring out a cynical side in the Baby Boomer Generation (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013: 72), which the researcher noticed during the interviews. Zemke, Raines, Filipczak (2013: 80) also suggests giving them a “change agent challenge” to get them changing and joining in.

Generation X

Generation X identified professional challenges that the researcher titled: time management and prioritizing challenges. They also identified a challenge that the researcher titled: change in profession and getting buy-in from colleagues. The answers for Generation X were diverse, but these categories seemed to encapsulate the different codes. Their responses seemed to correspond with the observations of Gravett (2003: 7) and (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgardener 2007) regarding the fact that adults at work need to juggle various responsibilities.

Generation X 3 mentions in the interview: “*Time ….. Ja, lack of time. Time is money.”* Others from Generation X mention the fact that there is much to do and how to prioritise becomes a challenge. Making career growth a priority was also mentioned in the interviews.

Generation X 5 mentions in the interview: “*I would say the one challenge is that the engineering profession has changed quite a lot in the last twenty to thirty years.”* There is a different change in the profession for this generation. They were trained in one area of skill, but in the new world they are challenged with management and labour legislation. This was mentioned by one of the Generation X adult learners who is in the HR department and responsible for getting buy-in into the new labour laws and legislations regarding BEE and so on. Generation X is now filling the majority of management positions and therefore, they will find it a challenge to develop in all spheres of management (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013: 91).

Generation Y

Generation Y identified professional challenges that the researcher titled: demanding work environment and lack of practical experience. This younger generation were

feeling challenged to adapt to the high demands of the work environment and could sometimes even be perceived as lazy by their elder generations of adult learners (Hira 2007: 28; Stein 2013: 30).

Generation Y 1 mentioned in the interview: “the learning curve is a bit bigger…. At the end of the day it is just sitting down and working…. It is assumed that you come from an academic background and therefore you are expected to run.”

Another challenge that was mentioned was working in an open plan office and coping with noise and interruptions. The challenge of bringing in work was also mentioned as a challenge. What became quite clear to the researcher was that Generation Y is challenged to adapt to a demanding work environment as the younger generation in the workforce. Zemke, Raines, Filipczak (2013: 127) is not surprised by the fact that this generation will struggle as their parents and communities handled them with care, meaning their Baby Boomer parents went out of their way to make life comfortable for them (Hira 2007: 28).

The challenge of lack of practical experience also emerged from three of the five Generation Y adult learners. They have the theoretical knowledge after finishing their studies, but a challenge was how to use that practically in the work environment.

Personal Challenges

Baby Boomers

The Baby Boomer Generation mentioned personal challenges that the researcher titled: work-life balance. This was not unique to the Baby Boomer Generation, but very prominent. Baby Boomer 1 stated: “*Right now it is balancing my work and my travel and my family.”* Baby Boomer 4 bluntly stated: “*I only have a professional life.”*

Besides work-life balance, other challenges mentioned were earning more money and maybe finding a second career. Baby Boomers are close to retirement and it seems that earning more to save more for retirement and also finding something else after retirement could be very relevant issues for them. The two fundamental challenges seem to be work-life balance and retirement. With retirement comes the challenge of what they would do after retirement (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak (2013: 83, 86).

Generation X

With Generation X, the dominant personal challenge was work-life balance as with the Baby Boomers. Gen X 1 stated: “I do not want to go back to where I was in my previous job, because I left that job so that I could have better work-life balance.” This particular adult learner left her previous position and took a demotion, but it still persisted in being a challenge for her. Gen X 2 expressed herself like this: “just finding time for everything.” This Generation X adult learner refers to finishing studies, getting time for her children and spouse, and finding time, all seem to be a major challenge in her personal life (Gravett and Thockmorton 2007: 88).

Children of Generation X are younger, with most of them at school, so Generation X needs to invest a lot of time in homework with the kids and school activities. As Gen X 5 remarked: “*It is just to balance it all out!”* When asked whether their employer can do something to assist, most of Generation X replied that they do not believe so but that they, as employees, need to find a way to balance their lives (Gravett and Thockmorton 2007: 93).

Generation Y

From the interviews, it was quite clear that Generation Y adult learners also struggled with work-life balance. Gen Y 4, who is already married with a child and doing a PHD, really struggles to find time for it all: “*you’re tired after work, get home and then you need to speak to them (child and wife). And secondly there is my PHD, I have to make time for my PHD.”*

Life balance was mentioned by the majority of Generation Y with specific reference to establishing themselves in their careers, without sacrificing their personal lives. This lead to the researcher identifying a second challenge which is titled: boundaries between work and personal life (Hira 2007: 30).

Here are the words of Gen Y 3: *“I’ve spoken to people that always say, you shouldn’t fall into the thing of working overtime, cause once you fall into that then you just gonna do it for the rest of your life, but then I also feel that if my boss asks me to do something then I’m gonna try and finish it even if it means that I have to work late.”* Zemke, Raines, Filipczak (2013:147) advises employers to offer Generation Y flexible options to accommodate family and personal life.

This is the challenge for Generation Y, to find a way to put up boundaries between work and life. There is a challenge for this generation in the workplace to establish themselves, without falling into the trap of sacrificing their personal lives for their professional lives (Stein 2013: 30).

The first theme identified in this study deals with the learning challenges facing different generations of adult learners. From the discussion above it is clear that there are similar challenges facing the different generations, but also different challenges. These challenges should be noted by companies and learning interventions should be designed to assist adult learners with these challenges.

4.4.2 Theme: Learning preferences of the Baby Boomer Generation, Generation X and Generation Y

Baby Boomers

The first preference of the Baby Boomers that emerged from the interviews was titled by the researcher as: a blended approach to learning according to personal preference (Zmeyov 1998: 106). Baby Boomer 3 referred to blended learning as follows: "*I think the fancy word is integrated learning."* Baby Boomer 4 stated: "*It varies. It depends on what you learn."* Gravett (2003: 15) reminds us that adult learners bring an accumulated life experience into the learning environment and that this should be integrated into the learning. Baby Boomers, being the older generation, has more experience to offer.

The Baby Boomer adult learners mentioned a variety of learning preferences, depending on the individual, but the core preferences mentioned were:

- Reading up on things on my own
- Reading online
- Small group discussion
- Classroom setting.

The biggest concern raised by the Baby Boomer Generation regarding learning in groups was that it slowed them down and caused frustration. One Baby Boomer mentioned that the younger generations do not work as hard as they do and that causes frustrations during learning. (Stein 2013: 30) Concerns about classroom settings were the fact that introverts could get lost in the crowd.

The second preference of the Baby Boomers that emerged from the data was titled by the researcher as: tailoring the content to the context. Baby Boomer 2 mentions: "*It depends on what is learned."* Baby Boomer 3 actually gave a good example: "*Three years ago I did a course in advanced dispute resolution and the course was presented in theory, but then the test at the end of the day was practical, so you should know what you've learned and make that practical at work."* Malcolm Knowles (1990: 57) refers to this aspect in his andragogical model in principle four and five, that adults must learn to deal with real life, immediately.

The preference for Baby Boomers seems to be that if it should be practiced at work, the learning preference is practical and learning should, in some cases, be an experience. If it is something they just need to know, then it can be theory. The content should be tailored to the context. As adult learners, these responses pointed to the work of David Kolb (1984) on Experiential Learning referring to the four learning styles of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation.

Generation X

Generation X responded in a very similar way in the interviews that the Baby Boomers responded, regarding learning preferences. The first preference of Generation X was also titled: blended learning approach according to personal preference (Malcolm Knowles 1990: 57). Here, once again, there was a strong emergence of different preferences according to different scenarios. Gen X 5 stated: "*In some cases I would go for a course where I just pick up what is going on and how to get started, but the rest I'll do with handbooks and read."* Once again, as with in the case of the Baby Boomers, their responses here pointed to the work of David Kolb (1984).

Gen X 4 responded: "*it depends on the subject. If it's something I can do by myself on e-learning, I'll do it. I don't want someone telling me something I can read."* Many varied preferences were given, but it is all dependent on personal preference. The words: "it depends" were used frequently Zmeyov (1998: 106).

The Generation X adult learners mentioned a variety of learning preferences, depending on the individual but the core preferences mentioned were:

- Reading up on things on my own
- Reading online
- Small group discussion
- Classroom setting
- One-on-one mentoring discussion.

The concern for Generation X, as with the Baby Boomers on learning in groups, is that the pace of learning could hold faster learners back. It is clear from the interviews that time is a scarce commodity in the life of adult learners and that wasting of time because of slow learners, causes frustration. The biggest advantage identified by Generation X of the group sessions is the interactive approach, which assists in learning from others and asking questions for clarification. Zemke, Raines, Filipczak (2013: 110) found in their research that this generation has a very strong friend ethic and that team and group would be a preference.

When distinguishing between harder technical skills and softer relationship skills, one of the Generation X 1 adult learners responded by saying: *"soft skills are more an interactive mentoring relationship that I prefer. Sometimes you need that push in that area."* As with Baby Boomers, we again see the emergence of a second preference with Generation X that is titled by the researcher: tailoring content to the context.

Learning should be tailored to the context at work. Gen X 1 mentioned: *"if it is something where I actually need to apply then I'd like to have someone in the room where I actually get to apply whatever, then I need to be in a room with other people so I can test and apply whatever I need. I want to do the reading on it prior and then I'd like to sit with other colleagues to check my understanding of the same thing."* This preference was clear with Generation X: content should be tailored to the context (Kolb 1984).

Generation Y

Generation Y adult learners exhibited the same learning preferences when compared with the Baby Boomers and Generation X. There was a slight deviation with the first preference where the majority of Generation Y prefer to learn on their

own, rather than groups. Thus, the researcher titled the preference for Generation Y as: blended learning approach with a preference to learn on their own. The obvious and most notable difference was that there was no appetite for a classroom setting.

Gen Y 3 stated clearly: *"On my own, by myself."* Gen Y 1 remarked: *"I prefer to do it on my own."* Gen Y 2 explained it this way: *"On my own. I think with me being on my own it's easier for me to pace myself."* The two other Generation Y adult learners in this study preferred self-learning and learning in groups. With Generation Y, there was a clear preference to learn on their own with them setting the pace. This again, as with the Baby Boomers and Generation X adult learners, was a major reason for learning on their own, reading up, which was the advantage of learning at your own pace without being held back. Gen Y 5 even went as far as describing his learning preference as: *"Learning on the go"* (Nayar 2013: 40). That is why Generation Y have been called digital natives by many researchers (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013: 131).

The Generation Y adult learners mentioned a variety of learning preferences, but the core preference was learning on their own Zmeyov (1998: 106). This is in contradiction to literature that points to their sociability during learning (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013: 122). The following preferences were all mentioned:

- Reading up on things on my own
- Reading online
- Group discussion
- Audio talks and books
- Mentoring sessions.

The second preference titled by the researcher for Generation Y was the same as the preferences of the Baby Boomer Generation, as well as Generation X: tailoring the learning content with the context (Malcolm Knowles (1990: 57). Gen Y 3 explains it this way: *"I like learning by myself, but I do like discussing my work. Once I've studied, I actually do like speaking to people about it and asking questions. Sometimes I actually enjoy explaining stuff to other people, because as soon as I explain it, then I can see if it actually understand it and then of course the questions that they ask you if you can answer them, then you are fine."*

Gen Y 5 stated: *"learning by myself, would be to take time and working through very complex problem or condition, I would like the time to go through it. In groups I appreciate the fact that people will think differently ….. and incorporate as much as possible how others view or see the problem."* The preference to learn is dependent here on what is learned again. Gravett and Thockmorton (2007: 99) state that there is no "one size fits all" approach with this generation of adult learners. Generation Y seems to need time to work on it as an individual and then take it to the group to check the group thinking (Stein 2013: 32).

An interesting occurrence with learning preferences with Generation Y was the mention of learning tools that they use. For example:

- I like colour
- Summaries
- Learning at a table
- Underlining
- Not reading, it is too demanding – audios.

In terms of the theme of learning preferences, there are many similarities with slight differences when we look at the data for Generation Y.

The data discussed regarding the learning preferences of the different generations of adult learners does indicate that all three generations show clear attributes of adult learners as prescribed by Raggat, Edwards & Small (1996: 177); Malcolm Knowles (1990:57) and Zmeyov (1998: 106).

4.4.3 Theme: Learning interventions requested by the Baby Boomer Generation, Generation X and Generation Y

Baby Boomers

The Baby Boomer Generation is known as the generation of adult learners with the least appetite to learn at work. In this study, there emerged some learning interventions requested by the Baby Boomer Generation, and the first category that emerged from the interviews was the importance of the relevance of these interventions. This was consistent with the work of Knowles (1990: 57):

"Readiness to learn – adults become ready to learn those things they need to know and be able to do in order to cope effectively with their real-life situations.

Orientation to learning – in contrast to children's and youth's subject-centred orientation to learning, adults are life-centred (or task-centred or problem-centred) in their orientation to learning."

Relevance for the Baby Boomer Generation is based on whether it can be applied and used. Baby Boomer 3 explained it this way: *"which was very practical and which I really enjoyed and I think it adds value to me as a person ….the principles made sense to me and I could implement the principles which I've learned. I tend to skip things which I read in the curriculum if it does not fit into me or I cannot see the practical need."*

Baby Boomer 4 referred to a learning intervention within the company which originated from a foreign company which had no relevance to their context here in South Africa: *"it was just thrown together and thinking they'd take the best of everybody, but it was just this abortion, there is no better way to explain it….we stopped the boat. You don't sit and talk for seven hours about change and one hour about what is changing."*

From the interviews with the Baby Boomers, the researcher also titled a second category for learning interventions and that was: apprehension to learn and attend learning intervention. Baby Boomer 2 stated quite clearly: *"yesterday I said that at this stage of my career I don't really need it."* Baby Boomer 3 when asked about any learning intervention he needs to attend said: *"I can't think of anything, I don't have a burning feeling I got to learn something."* Baby Boomer 1 responded: *"It will be maybe how to use software, but in a safe environment, not an environment where I get intimidated by it."* Baby Boomer 5 answered: *"It puts more pressure on you, cause normally you work under stress for deadlines and if you go for two, three, four day course you just not gonna make your deadlines."*

From the Baby Boomer Generation, it emerged from the data that there is a clear apprehension to learn. Various reasons were given, but the appetite to learn seems to diminish with the older Baby Boomer Generation. Zemke, Raines, Filipczak (2013: 81) calls this an "I know it all" chip on the shoulder. A good suggestion by Zemke, Raines, Filipczak (2013: 82) is to get Baby Boomers involved in mentoring initiatives within the organisation, which could aid their learning.

Generation X

The first category that emerged from the data of the researcher for Generation X regarding learning interventions requested was titled: Career-based learning. Generation X is now in the prime of their careers and it seems that the learning interventions requested here were focused on their careers and development in their careers. This seems consistent with the work of Zemke, Raines, Filipczak (2013: 115) when they state:

"Encourage and allow Generation X to direct their own learning."

The requests made, which aligned with their careers, were:

- Slurry course – engineering term
- Human Resources
- Financial Management
- Project Management
- Mathematics
- Hydraulics and structures.

The second category that emerged for Generation X in the learning interventions requested was the same as the first category in learning preferences for Baby Boomers and that is: Relevance of the learning interventions. Gen X 5 stated: *"the course was very good…it was things that had interest on me."* Gen X 4 remarked: *"I'm fairly selective about stuff like that (workplace learning interventions), but I think I'm too cautious about will this absolutely fit me therefore I will do it, this won't fit me perfectly so I'm not gonna do it."*

Gen X 3 commented on a financial course that she found beneficial: *"I think it was beneficial because I'm at a point where I'm practically needing to know those."* Gen X 2 remarked that training in the workplace is too short and cannot achieve much if it is rushed. Gravett and Thockmorton (2007:157) found that Generation X wants to do case studies, after which feedback should be given individually and one answer only is not acceptable. This process takes time and this generation will therefore find short information sessions unbearable.

The data analysed by the researcher sees a clear focus for Generation X on career based learning. As with the Baby Boomer Generation, there is a need for relevance and immediacy of application. Generation X will not attend learning interventions if it is not relevant to them (Knowles 1990:57). Zemke, Raines, Filipczak (2013: 115) explains that training for this Generation needs to be explained for them to understand the rationale and buy into the training.

Generation Y

The first category that emerged for Generation Y from the data of the researcher regarding learning interventions requested, was similar to the first category in this theme with the Baby Boomer Generation, and similar to the second category with Generation X: relevance of the learning interventions. This, once again, is a significant characteristic of an adult learner as observed in the other two generations in this study. Gravett (2003: 16) talks about addressing the need for immediacy (Knowles 1990:57).

Gen Y 3 mentions a course she attended: *"And you knew exactly…when I walked out of there for the first time it felt like I actually know what to do now."* Gen Y 1 referred to design discussions that were immediate, relevant and as a group they helped each other with their struggles. Gen Y 1 also referred to interventions that do not benefit in this way: *"We try to miss that. We can see it and then we are sure this is not gonna be beneficial."* Gen Y 2 was very clear on a learning intervention that he found to be a waste of his time: *"I was expecting something that I can use with where I am…I can apply it on a day to day basis."* Generation Y has a lot of confidence and it is clear that they question and challenge more than the other two generations in this study (Stein 2013: 28).

From Generation Y, it became very clear from the data that learning interventions that are beneficial are those which they can apply immediately (Knowles 1990:57). The learning intervention must be relevant to Generation Y in the now. Gen Y 4 even mentioned his university subjects that he found a waste of time, because he did not find it relevant. Now that he is an engineer he still cannot see the sense of those particular university subjects in his engineering curriculum.

Gen Y 5 mentioned that some of the learning interventions entailed them getting a lecture with a lot of reading to do. He remarked: *"I think that it's perhaps the hassle to go through it, to actually find information and use it."*

The second category that emerged from the data for Generation Y regarding learning interventions was unique. The researcher in this study titled this category as: leadership and management for future growth. Gen Y 4 asked: *"I think the leadership development programme. I think that is what I need."* This programme in this company specifically focuses on developing leadership and management skills. There is also a strong focus on personal development which strikes a chord with Generation Y. Zemke, Raines, Filipczak (2013: 149) identifies that the interpersonal skills of leadership and management need to be developed in Generation Y. They put it this way:

"Help them learn interpersonal skills for the workplace. Many of this generation are more comfortable communicating through technology than in person and need to learn how to verbalise their ideas and work with colleagues."

Gen Y 2 also referred to the Leadership development programme: *"I think that's the one place where I'd get that strategic thinking from – management focus, how to think like that in that area and space, ja."* Gen Y 3 also requested to be part of the management intervention: *"I would like to go on a management course just because eventually I would like to go into management."*

Because corporate companies are now structured in management levels, the younger Generation Y has made the correct assumption that to grow my career and future, I need to grow myself and my leadership and management capabilities.

4.4.4 Theme: Learning needs of the Baby Boomer Generation, Generation X and Generation Y.

The fourth and final theme that emerged from the data refers to the learning needs of the different generations of adult learners. Out of the data and the questions of the interviews, basically three categories emerged which the researcher titled:

- Technical skills needs
- Soft skills needs
- Technology needs.

Baby Boomers

Out of the first category for the Baby Boomer Generation, the only technical skills that emerged as a need was: Industrial Relations. Baby Boomer 3 stated: *"Sometimes I think I am too old to learn….I think there is new changes I've picked up in labour legislation and I'm quite interested in IR….it would be interesting just to get on top of new legislation."*

Out of the second category for the Baby Boomer Generation, various soft skill needs emerged. Conflict and confrontation was mentioned by Baby Boomer 5: *"I think if you've got deadlines and people don't meet it you must confront them and personally I don't like confrontation, that's a bit hard and ja, maybe just to do it actually for me personally is a challenge."* Company culture and the understanding thereof also emerged as a soft skills need. Baby Boomer 1 referred to it in this way: *"understanding the culture and trying to come up with things that are really going to influence the company…the political way of how to be savvy not to make the wrong statement."*

The third category of technological needs did set the Baby Boomers apart from the other generations of adult learners. The first need expressed regarding technology was a need to be trained in the software packages used within the company. Baby Boomer 5 explained his need in these words: *"Yes, like I said, in this unit we use design packages which I am not familiar with, the actual using of it and that is the problem at my level where you are in management and you earn probably more than your junior technical people, it's not beneficial for you to actually do that work, but it would be beneficial if you can use that design package to know how fast you can do the work."*

Also, when software updates are done, even for simple Microsoft programs, training needs are prevalent for the Baby Boomers. Baby Boomer 1 responded: *"It could be difficult because I battle a little bit also with Excel. I will do what I need to do but I'm not able to do like your Macros etc…..but deep down I do know that I need them but I'm just scared to actually explore. So I might have difficulties moving onto different software."* This honest answer from this Baby Boomer adult learner also introduces the next technological need for this generation: a need to move beyond the basics. The Baby Boomers tend to only learn enough to get along, but again the data of this

researcher shows that there is an apprehension to move beyond the basics of technology.

Baby Boomer 1 responded: *"I guess because I am one of those late Baby Boomers, I am still not technologically savvy."* Baby Boomer 2 admitted that she is left behind: *"in our day and age the technology is so vast and changing quickly that you get lost…you get left behind."* Baby Boomer 5 had a really simple cellular phone present and this caught the researcher's attention as it is rare not to see a smart phone in the hands of a corporate employee. During the interview, he admitted that it is all he needs.

Baby Boomer 3 almost seemed defeated and admitted: *"I've made peace with the fact that I will never be keeping up with technology….my children says I'm a waste to have an iPhone, because I say it must phone…I will never be able to do the recording thing you are doing now with your phone."* He also admitted to delegating technological tasks in his work profile to younger generations at the company.

Regarding technology, the Baby Boomers have a pressing need to learn in a safe environment. Gravett and Thockmorton (2007: 78) calls this struggle with learning about technology one of the great myths of the Baby Boomer Generation. However, from the data from this case study it is clear that this generation struggles to cope with the fast change in technology and how fast they need to adapt and learn. When training the Baby Boomer Generation, Zemke, Raines, Filipczak (2013: 81) suggests developmental experiences – which are assignments where you help them through it and help them develop their skill. Gravett and Thockmorton (2007: 156) found in their research that Baby Boomers do not want to learn about technology for the sake of new cutting edge technology, but because they would like to stay competitive with the younger generations.

Generation X

Out of the first category of technical skills regarding learning needs for Generation X, the emergence of career-based learning emerged again. Gen X 5 referred to his professional registration as an engineer: *"The one type of learning that I have to do is we have continuous development to register as a professional engineer, so I have to…in order to keep my registration up I have to do a certain amount of training every year."* This seems to be a priority in professional careers like engineering which is the example here.

Gen X 3 noticed the change in needs as he grows in management and therefore, his needs are more focused on project and financial management: *"I'm at a point in my career where…and most engineers go through this at middle management, where you move away from the engineering and you move to project and financial management."*

Gen X 2 in her role also pointed to her career in terms of learning needs: *"I have to be two steps ahead with the law, the labour law. I think it is important, because if you know that then you know how to conduct management with the people and if you are not on par with the law, you are in trouble."*

From the data, the second category of soft skills needs also emerged for Generation X. Gen X 4 explained his soft skill needs very accurately: "*I call it the soft sciences or the fuzzy sciences and that it….your life goals, your career path, interpersonal communication and things like that. That I would rather prefer."* Gen X 1 was at first reluctant, but then mentioned that she struggles to deal with the egos of engineers: *"it's all driven from an ego perspective but now I've qualified so treat me differently."*

Gen X 1 also expressed the need to understand the company culture and how to function within the specific environment: *"but it's more understanding the organisational culture and then also understanding my consulting role and then the business with regards to engineers."*

The third category of technological needs did not emerge from Generation X. Zemke, Raines, Filipczak (2013: 104) clearly explains that one of the greatest assets of Generation X is their techno-literacy. This generation of adult learners seemed more at ease with the technology of today's world and seemed to adapt easier than the Baby Boomer Generation. Gen X 2 answered with a resounding: *"No. Surf, delete, save, so I'm okay. I know how to operate. It depends how long you have been at the company and it has become easy."* Gen X 1 felt the technology was outdated at work: *"Okay, in terms of technology here at work from the system I worked with, it's like I have gone back. So it's frustrating having to work with systems that are not necessarily user friendly."*

Gen X 3 answered in a way that explained the attitude of Generation X: "*No, no. I think because technology is so much a part of our work environment you gotta jump in and just get involved and learn as you go along."* Gen X 4 said: *"No I don't think so. I am quite happy with tech as is."* Gen X 5 indicated that this company was far

ahead of competition with technology: "*so I actually think in terms of the technology side we're far ahead in terms of what other civil engineers are doing."*

Generation X seemed very comfortable with technology and was prepared to engage and learn what is needed. All adult learners in Generation X accepted that technology is a part of life (Gravett and Thockmorton 2007 & Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013). They were the first generation to have engaged with technology from school level.

Generation Y

Out of the first category of technical skills regarding learning needs for Generation Y, the needs seems to be typical of adult learners starting out in their careers. The first needs that emerged from the data for Generation Y was the need for skills pertaining to project management. Gen Y 4 mentioned: *"financial planning for projects…so ja I think more financial and people management."* Gen Y 2 felt intimidated working with elder executives and said: *"cause were dealing in a very sophisticated (project) management space, we advise people from all aspects of the company and it is a challenge sometimes as a young professional coming in and having high level discussions with executives of other companies."*

The second need in the technical skills category for Generation Y was specialised engineering skills. Most of Generation Y have just started their careers and they have studied a lot of theory to achieve their university degrees, but now need the practical skills of working with their specialised skills under the supervision of more experienced engineers. Gen Y 5, who is an airports engineer, was worried that our airports in South Africa are not specialised enough. He was comparing himself with global colleagues and how their experience at this current stage is far more advanced that his experience is.

From the category of soft skills needs, the first need that emerged for Generation Y is the need for proper induction. The researcher knew about this need as he was contracted by this company to develop a proper induction programme for newly graduated electrical engineers. Gen Y 4 referred to a really helpful session where new associates just connected in a session with senior management and the discussion was regarding the company business model and how the company operates: *"It just gives you that sense of being part of the bigger picture and I think*

you get a bit of a wider scope, but you also become more focused on growing something and being a part of the family."

The second need regarding soft skill needs that emerged was people management. As mentioned previously within the theme of learning preferences, Generation Y realise that their career growth is dependent on working with and managing people. Gen Y 1 mentions: *"(we) end up in management eventually, so we would all have to manage a team or manage…be a lead programmer on a new project."* Gen Y 3 states: *"I think conflict management that is quite a thing."* She then further explains how an engineering site is a place with a lot of stakeholders and that managing those people is a part of engineering (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013: 149).

Regarding the category of technological needs, we find Generation Y as the Generation most comfortable with technology. None of the adult learners of Generation Y expressed that they have a need for technology training. They were all comfortable to learn by themselves regarding technology. Gen Y 4 stated: *"I use technology a lot and I like using it so I figure it out by myself."* Gravett and Thockmorton (2007: 102) states that companies who do not embrace technology to its full capacity, will not retain Generation Y.

Generation Y actually expressed their frustration with technology not being used enough. Gen Y 3 expressed herself like this: *"I actually think computers are so powerful, but we don't know how to use it. I just think there is a lot of technology out there that can help us to be better…and we're not really using it but I think it's also older people who are scared of it. They don't like implementing new things."* Gen Y 4 also mentioned that it was difficult to convince the boss to buy new technology. Generation Y grew up with technology, and therefore they will be pushing the boundaries regarding learning about technology (Nayar 2013: 40; Hira 2007: 27).

4.5 Observations During, Before and After the Interviews

4.5.1 Observations regarding the Baby Boomer Generation

A notable observation during the interviews was the irritability of the Baby Boomer Generation. The majority of the candidates, even though they agreed to the interviews, were rushed and unfriendly before the interviews. After explaining the

interview procedure to them, four of the five adult learners expressed their reluctance to learn at their age.

Three of the candidates referred to their retirement and that they are looking forward to it. When the researcher asked the three Baby Boomers how they were, when greeting them before the interview started, they responded by saying they are overwhelmed with work.

The Baby Boomers expressed their frustration with the disloyalty of the younger generations at work and specifically referring to Generation Y.

4.5.2 Observations regarding Generation X

Before and after the interviews, Generation X brought up various concerns that are typical of this generation:

- Struggles with family responsibilities
- Personal finances
- Concern for the future of their small children.

What was interesting to the researcher was that all of the Generation X participants mentioned that they feel stagnated in their careers and that they search for more meaning in life.

Three of the Generation X participants mentioned their frustration with the ambition of Generation Y.

4.5.3 Observations regarding Generation Y

This generation is all about progress. Concerns expressed before and after interviews were the following:

- I am frustrated at not being developed
- How do I deal with a boss who stifles my growth?
- I want to gain experience faster
- My job specific development is not enough.

Generation Y are frustrated with older generations wanting them to bide their time. They are not patient enough and are prepared to move to companies that will develop them.

4.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to explain and describe the process that was followed step-by-step during the analysing of the data collected from the interviews. The various forms of data were discussed as well as how it was interpreted. The researcher presented the data in table form and discussed the four major themes that emerged from the data. The purpose was to find fresh new insights into the workplace training needs of different generations of adult learners within the corporate working environment.

These insights will be discussed in Chapter Five of this dissertation.

Chapter Five: Research Findings and Implications

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the various findings of the research of this study. The findings were arrived at in Chapter Four where data was presented, analysed and interpreted. Main categories of findings from Chapter Four are discussed in this chapter as well as the implications and recommendations that emerged from this study. The limitations of this study are also discussed so that a holistic picture of the study is presented.

This qualitative study was an intrinsic case study where certain concerns or issues were studied within a bounded system (Creswell 2013: 99). In this case, it was the training needs of different generations of adult learners within a corporate company in South Africa.

Creswell (2013: 99) mentions that case studies often end with conclusions formed by the researcher about the overall meaning derived from the case. These conclusions could also be called assertions, patterns or explanations.

In this chapter, the researcher presents the conclusions of the research so that the overall meaning of the study is presented in a just way. These are the general lessons from the case study.

5.2 Research Findings

5.2.1 All three generations of adult learners in the workplace learning environment exhibited characteristics of adult learners

The Baby Boomer Generation, Generation X and Generation Y presented themselves during the interviews as adult learners. The requests that were made, and the needs that were mentioned by these adult learners, all confirmed that they approach learning as adults. Immediacy and relevance was mentioned by all three generations of adult learners.

Knowles (1990: 57), as the father of andragogy, identified the characteristics of adult learners in his research and this study confirmed these characteristics. A phrase

that was used by one of the adult learners in this study was: *"tailoring the content with the context."*

Baby Boomer 3 actually gave a good example: "*Three years ago I did a course in advanced dispute resolution and the course was presented in theory, but then the test at the end of the day was practical, so you should know what you've learned and make that practical at work."* Gen X 1 mentioned: *"if it is something where I actually need to apply then I'd like to have someone in the room where I actually get to apply whatever, then I need to be in a room with other people so I can test and apply whatever I need. I want to do the reading on it prior and then I'd like to sit with other colleagues to check my understanding of the same thing."* Gen Y 3 explains it this way: *"I like learning by myself, but I do like discussing my work. Once I've studied, I actually do like speaking to people about it and asking questions. Sometimes I actually enjoy explaining stuff to other people, because as soon as I explain it, then I can see if it actually understand it and then of course the questions that they ask you if you can answer them, then you are fine."*

In this study, the research strongly suggests that these adult learners did express and present themselves as adult learners in accordance with the work of Knowles (1990: 57).

When the three generations were asked what learning interventions they preferred, the clear suggestion from the adult learners was that any learning intervention would be good as long as it is relevant. There was a concern from all three generations that too many learning interventions are a waste of time, because they are not relevant.

Baby Boomer 3 explained it this way: *"which was very practical and which I really enjoyed and I think it adds value to me as a person ….the principles made sense to me and I could implement the principles which I've learned. I tend to skip things which I read in the curriculum if it does not fit into me or I cannot see the practical need."* Gen X 4 remarked: *"I'm fairly selective about stuff like that (workplace learning interventions), but I think I'm too cautious about will this absolutely fit me therefore I will do it, this won't fit me perfectly so I'm not gonna do it."* Gen Y 1 also referred to interventions that do not benefit in this way: *"We try to miss that. We can see it and then we are sure this is not gonna be beneficial."*

What was clear from this study is that this specific company had to focus more on the characteristics of adult learners when designing learning interventions.

5.2.2. Work and life balance emerged as the biggest challenge for all three generations of adult learners

When the generations were asked about the biggest challenge in their personal and professional capacity, work and life balance emerged as the biggest challenge. This should be a real concern for corporate companies as this is also the experience of the researcher when working with other clients outside this case study.

Gravett (2003: 7) and (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgardener 2007) refer to the fact that adults at work need to juggle various responsibilities. Adult learners are not only employees, but have many other responsibilities. To balance all these responsibilities is a real challenge and that became quite clear in this study.

Baby Boomer 1 stated: "*Right now it is balancing my work and my travel and my family."* Gen X 2 expressed herself like this: "*just finding time for everything."* Here are the words of Gen Y 3: "*I've spoken to people that always say, you shouldn't fall into the thing of working overtime, cause once you fall into that then you just gonna do it for the rest of your life, but then you I also feel that if my boss asks me to do something then I'm gonna try and finish it even if it means that I have to work late."*

From the research in this study, it became clear that work and life balance is a real challenge for adult learners in the workplace. There is a real need for adults to find a way to learn and manage their lives in a very demanding corporate work environment.

5.2.3. The Baby Boomer Generation of adult learners is struggling to adapt to the fast rate of change at work.

This is a clear learning need for the Baby Boomer Generation that emerged from the study. Whether it is technological change or organizational change, this could bring out a cynical side in the Baby Boomer Generation (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013: 72), which the researcher noticed during the interviews.

Baby Boomer 3 mentions in the interview:

"*Consistent change in the structures…….. I normally say as soon as I got things to work then somebody changes the structure and we start all over again…….. It's frustrating ….. Just spread the change a bit."*

Companies must become aware of the fact that the Baby Boomer Generation is struggling with the rate and pace of change. This should be addressed as a learning need and interventions on how to deal with change and more comprehensive change management programmes could make a difference in assisting the Baby Boomer adult learners.

5.2.4 The Baby Boomer Generation of adult learners are apprehensive towards learning in the workplace environment.

The appetite to learn clearly decreases with the older Baby Boomer Generation of adult learners. All of the candidates interviewed from the Baby Boomer Generation made known their apprehension to learn at their age.

Baby Boomer 2 stated quite clearly: *"yesterday I said that at this stage of my career I don't really need it."* Baby Boomer 3 when asked about any learning intervention he needs to attend said: *"I can't think of anything, I don't have a burning feeling I got to learn something."* Baby Boomer 1 responded: *"It will be maybe how to use software, but in a safe environment, not an environment where I get intimidated by it."* Baby Boomer 5 answered: *"It puts more pressure on you, cause normally you work under stress for deadlines and if you go for two, three, four day course you just not gonna make your deadlines."*

For a generation that struggles with change and has a strong apprehension towards learning, companies should be aware of the attitude of this generation towards learning. They could negatively impact learning with cynicism and derailment of learning, especially in group settings.

5.2.5 Technological training needs are urgent for Baby Boomers and Generation Y, but in a different way.

The Baby Boomer Generation was reluctant to admit they had a need to learn about technology, but admitted their incompetence when it came to technology. This seemed like a paradox, but the research revealed that the Baby Boomer Generation

who occupy most of the senior positions in corporate companies are reluctant to learn about new technology. It also takes them longer to learn about technology.

Baby Boomer 3 almost seemed defeated and admitted: *"I've made peace with the fact that I will never be keeping up with technology….my children says I'm a waste to have an iPhone, because I say it must phone…I will never be able to do the recording thing you are doing now with your phone."* He also admitted to delegating technological tasks in his work profile to younger generations in the company.

Baby Boomer 2 admitted that she is left behind: *"in our day and age the technology is so vast and changing quickly that you get lost…you get left behind."*

When training the Baby Boomer Generation, Zemke, Raines, Filipczak (2013: 81) suggests developmental experiences – which are assignments where you help them through it and help them develop their skill.

This lead to the research revealing a frustration of Generation Y, because technology is not embraced as it should be by seniors in the organisation. These seniors are the Baby Boomers.

Gen Y 3 expressed herself like this: *"I actually think computers are so powerful, but we don't know how to use it. I just think there is a lot of technology out there that can help us to be better…and we're not really using it but I think it's also older people who are scared of it. They don't like implementing new things."* Gen Y 4 also mentioned that it was difficult to convince her boss to buy new technology.

The irony here seemed to be that the Baby Boomers who mentioned no interest in learning about technology were the ones who needed it the most. Generation Y who mentioned the need to learn about technology within the organisation, is the generation who needs it the least. Generation Y grew up with technology and therefore, they will be pushing the boundaries regarding learning about technology (Nayar 2013: 40; Hira 2007: 27).

5.2.6 There are unique learning needs for each of the three generations of adult learners that reflects the different training needs of each generation

Table 5.1: Unique learning needs of each generation

Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y
1. Personal Financial Planning 2. Finding a new career after retirement 3. Software packages at work 4. Conflict and confrontation	1. Continuous professional development 2. Project management 3. Financial management 4.Interpersonal Communication 5. Life goals	1. Practical experience of their speciality field 2. Leadership and Management skills 3. Proper induction 4. Boundaries between work and personal life

Baby Boomers

The unique needs of the Baby Boomers that emerged from this study as summarised in Table 5.1 are:

- Personal financial planning – this generation is nearing retirement and feel like they need to learn more about managing personal finances
- Finding a new career after retirement – most Baby Boomers want to keep working after retirement. How can this happen and where do they seek opportunities?
- Software packages at work – this once again points to the struggles of this generation and ever-changing technology.
- Conflict and confrontation – this is a soft skill that was mentioned by this generation. There is a need to learn about engaging effectively with conflict.

Generation X

The unique needs of Generation X that emerged from this study as summarised in Table 5.1 are:

- Continuous professional development – legislation in South Africa mandates professions to continually develop. For engineers, this is crucial to keep their accreditation and qualifications. Generation X is in the prime of their careers and needs to keep developing
- Project management – a big part of the work of an engineer is project management. In fact most companies now structure work around projects. Generation X expressed a need to learn more about project management
- Financial management – most corporate companies have decentralised budgets as with this company where the research was completed. Generation X adult learners expressed a need to learn more about financial management and how to manage their budgets more effectively.
- Interpersonal communication – Generation X expressed a need to learn about communicating more effectively, especially between departments within a corporate company that it structures into silos.
- Life goals – how do I, as an individual, set goals for myself and my life? This was a need raised by Generation X. This generation is in the prime of their careers and they need to figure out how to further develop themselves and find direction and purpose.

Generation Y

The unique needs of Generation Y that emerged from this study as summarised in Table 5.1 are:

- Practical experience of their speciality field – this generation has realised that a degree does not prepare you for work and especially not how to do your work. As this generation begins their careers, they have identified a need to gain more practical experience in their field.
- Leadership and management skills – as this generation enters the workplace, they realise the importance of leading and managing and that this will become a big part of their future career. Because of this realisation, Generation Y has expressed a need for leadership and management training.

- Proper induction – as this generation of adult learners enters a corporate environment they are left to learn on their own. There is a quick introduction to the company, but not a proper induction programme to settle this generation in the workplace.
- Boundaries between work and life – as Generation Y settles into their careers, it is difficult for them to find a specific rhythm and routine between life and work. This generation expressed a need to learn how to find this balance and draw boundaries between work and life.

From the research findings presented here, it is clear that there are different training needs for different generations of adult learners within the workplace learning environment or corporate company.

5.2.7 A training need for all three generations of adult learners is to learn more about the other two generations of adult learners in the work environment.

Observing the three generations of adult learners before and after the interviews and documenting their comments as part of the researchers notes, it became clear that each generation has strong opinions about the other generations.

For the Baby Boomer Generation, there is a real concern that Generation Y lacks loyalty and also the work ethic needed to succeed. Generation X voiced their frustration regarding the ambition of Generation Y. And Generation Y in turn feel that they are not appreciated, not developed and not given the opportunities that they want. This challenge is in line with literature discussed in Chapter Two of this study.

One of the challenges of the younger workforce is that they bring freshness and energy into the workplace with an eagerness to learn, grow and develop (Capelli 2002:70). Older generations get irritated by what they perceive as an over-ambitious younger generation. This could lead to older generations not engaging the younger generations with workplace learning (Stein 2013: 33; Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013: 13, 151).

The irony here is that Generation Y was parented and raised by the Baby Boomers. An article published in Fortune Magazine (Hira 2007: 26) and titled: *"Generation Y, you raised them now manage them."* describes this generation as children who were

and still are being raised by a very materialistic Baby Boomer Generation. The cause of this is that Generation Y is the most consumer-driven generation in history.

So the reality for the three generations of adult learners is that they need to learn more about the other two generations of adult learners in the workplace. This could lead to a better understanding of other generations as well as a better appreciation of the other generations. The researcher of this study has also found this challenge of inter-generational misunderstanding at other corporate companies and it is something that should be addressed to improve better relationships and performance.

5.3 Recommendations of the Study

In summary, the major recommendations for the research findings in this study are as follows:

Recommendation 1: Base training on careful assessment of the learning needs of the three different generations of adult learners in the corporate learning environment

Motivation

Any training programme should undertake a needs' assessment. Assessment of needs is not an easy task and it is likely to fail if it is based on a one size fits all approach by the training organisers. Prior to the training, designing and implementation of training programme, a training plan should be formulated taking into consideration the different generations of adult learners who attend the programme.

The basis of who must be trained, what must be trained, when training will occur, and where the training will take place are accomplished in this plan. Therefore, gaining an understanding of the different training needs of each generation will assist the trainer in tailoring his training for each generation, so it can be more effective. (The Leading Effectively e-Newsletter 2007:1).

A successful training programme should have clear objectives, based on careful identification of employees' (three generations of adult learners) needs.

Recommendation 2: When training in a corporate company, the learners identify themselves as adults and the learning interventions should be designed as such

Motivation

From this study, it was quite clear that learners in the corporate environment approach learning as adult learners (Knowles 1990; Gravett 2003, Raggat, Edwards & Small 1996). The IAT Model, as shown in Figure 5.1, is recommended by the researcher to assist in designing learning that engages the adult and leads to transformation.

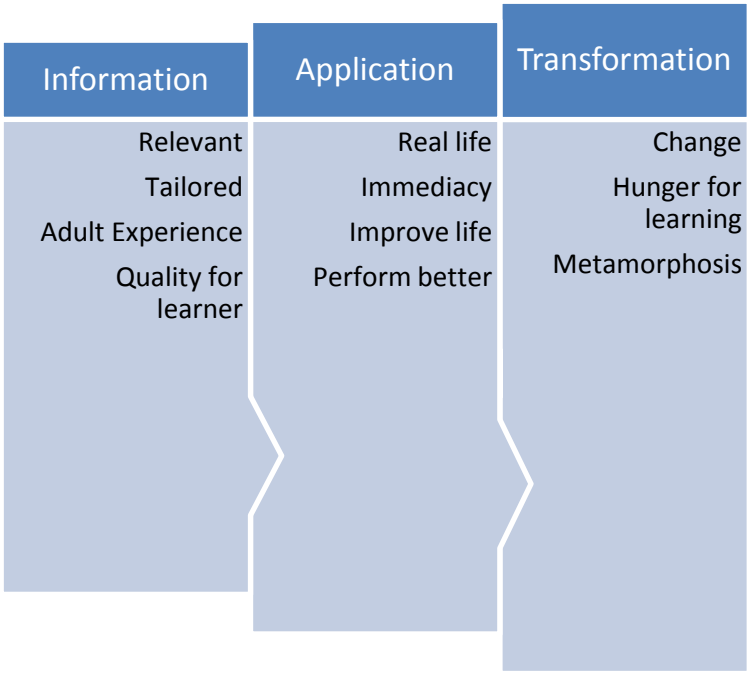

Figure 5.1: IAT Model

The IAT model has three phases to design learning for adult learners:

Information

Information for training should be relevant to the needs of the specific adult learners attending the training. It should be tailored to their context. The experience of the adult learners must form part of the curriculum. The information should be perceived by the adult learner as quality and that it is worth sacrificing time to attend the training.

Application

The training must be practical. By this, the researcher means that it must address the real life issues of the adult learner attending the training. It must have immediacy, which means that is can be used right now in the life of the adult. The use of the learning and training must improve the life of the adult and also improve the adult as an employee. It must assist the adult in their life and in their work. Learning must then be experienced. Experience is the source of learning and development (Kolb 1984: 141).

Transformation

Once good information can be applied by the adult learner, this will lead to the change and metamorphosis that trainers and companies want to see. This is also the change that adult learners want to experience through learning (Knowles 1990; Gravett 2003, Raggat, Edwards & Small 1996). Once the change is experienced there will be a greater hunger for more learning, because the benefit is experienced and appreciated.

Adult learners' particular learning needs are important considerations when designing training. When training employees, trainers should bear in mind that they are not training children and that understanding adult learning needs is the most crucial part in training.

Recommendation 3: Design learning interventions to assist Baby Boomer Generation adult learners with technology and change

Motivation

Even though the older Baby Boomer Generation in this study show a reluctance to learn, they need to be assisted in the work environment to cope with technology and change. The important fact that emerged from the research was that this generation occupy the most senior positions and have the decision-making authority in the company.

The Baby Boomers in leadership positions should be managing the change and embracing technology, but causes frustration because they struggle to cope with technology and change. The majority of Baby Boomers in this study admitted their struggles with technology and change.

Companies need to be aware of this and design safe spaces and interventions where Baby Boomers can be trained regarding technology and how to manage the fast pace of change. In this case study, the friction between the generations centred on the fact that this generation struggles with changing and embracing technology.

It is imperative though to provide these opportunities to learn about technology and change in an environment where the Baby Boomers do not feel threatened.

Recommendation 4: Design training interventions to assist all three generations of adult learners with managing work and life balance.

Motivation

All three generations admitted to struggling with balancing the ever increasing demands of work and life. The impact of a "world on speed" (Plumb 1999: 141) on the workplace will challenge adult educators in terms of continuous learning for adult learners to stay abreast with the pace.

Adults go to work to try and make a living and therefore, add their roles as learners to the other full-time multiple roles of their lives (Merriam, Carrafella & Baumgardener 2007). So in a world where all three generations of adult learners feel overwhelmed by work and life, learning should not add to them feeling even more overwhelmed, but should assist them to cope better in this "world on speed".

Therefore, companies should evaluate the value they get from interventions like wellness programmes. Additional to wellness programmes, learning interventions should be developed to assist employees in balancing their work responsibilities with the rest of their lives.

Recommendation 5: Design learning interventions where different generations of adult learners can learn about other generations and from other generations

Motivation

As mentioned in Chapter Two in the literature study, and in the research findings of this study, generations have strong opinions about other generations. To repeat the words of George Orwell quoted in Chapter Two of the study:

> *"Every generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it." George Orwell*

An awareness of different age groups of learners has always been noticed by educators, but this has become more diverse and accentuated in the workplace. These varying perspectives bring about a dynamic that ETD Practitioners should pay attention to. Diverse generations of adult learners in the workplace lead to diverse sets of values, ambitions, views, mind-sets and demographics (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013: 9). This has the potential to lead to conflict and hostility in every setting in the workplace, even where learning happens (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak 2013: 9).

Companies should become more aware of the seriousness of this dynamic in their labour force. Opportunities should be created where generations could learn about each other and from each other. Creating awareness of this diversity through consulting is currently a standard practice for corporate companies.

But companies should be more proactive and create learning interventions for Baby Boomers to learn about Generation X and Generation Y. In these sessions, the following can be discussed:

- When was this generation born?
- What world events shaped their thinking?
- What are the advantages of this generation?
- What are the vulnerabilities of this generation?
- How do we work effectively and efficiently with this generation?

The same applies for Generation X and Generation Y to learn about the other generations. But besides learning about the other generations, there must also be interventions where they can learn from each other. The researcher in this study has developed discussion groups for various clients to get different generations to engage and have fruitful conversations. The idea behind these discussions is to get the challenges between generations out of the way, so that the focus could again be placed on work (Martin and Tulgan 2002: 44). These discussions also aim to encourage better co-operation between the diversity of generations during workplace learning (Nayar 2013: 40).

Recommendation 6: Design learning interventions to address the ambition and energy of Generation Y

Motivation

Generation Y is unique and can cause problems, according to literature in Chapter Two and the findings of this study. They can be viewed as arrogant and entitled (Hira 2013:40; Stein 2013: 30). They are very ambitious and can be seen as impatient.

Companies need to realise that if they want to fully utilise the genius of Generation Y, they need to accommodate them. One of the ways to do that would be to design learning interventions that stimulate them and communicate to them that they are valued by the company and their colleagues. Generation Y will be the most high-performing generation that humanity has ever seen (Hira 2007: 28). To keep them around long enough in your company to utilise them, the following learning interventions could nourish their ambition and impatience:

- A session to discuss their career plan and path in the company
- A session to show them how they contribute to the organisation
- A session to show how the company is impacting the world and giving them the opportunity to provide input in that. Then getting Generation Y involved in some corporate and social responsibility sessions for them to experience the impact the business is making.
- Pair them with experienced Baby Boomers or Generation X employees in a mentoring relationship where they can ask questions, gain direct experience and give input.
- Offsite exposure to other departments of the company - for example, a visit to a production plant of the company.

Generation Y will change our world with technology and hard work, but companies need to embrace this generation and truly accommodate them.

5.4 Limitations of this Study

Upon reflection, three main limitations of this study were identified:

5.4.1 Novice researcher

The researcher in this study is a novice researcher. Although the researcher had full support from a study leader and validated research results with two seasoned researchers, the study could have yielded more and better results if it was conducted by a more seasoned researcher.

The researcher gained valuable experience through this study and will improve with future research studies and projects.

5.4.2 Limited study

This study is a limited study. More findings are possible regarding this research topic if full studies are done in the corporate work environments in South Africa.

5.4.3 Preparation of the adult learners for interviews

The adult learners who took part in this research study were not properly prepared by the corporate company involved. All documentation was submitted and the company gave the researcher the assurance that the documentation shall be read by those taking part in the study.

On the day of the study, it was clear to the researcher that the majority of adult learners did not read the documentation and were not prepared by the Human Resource Department. Some participants asked the researcher what the meeting was about when they entered the room.

Had they been properly prepared, the participants could have given more detail in their answers during the interviews.

5.5 Recommendations for Further and Future Study

On completion of this study, the following recommendations are made for future study:

- A broader study of the workplace training needs of different generations of adult learners in the corporate work environment
- A strategy to engage the Baby Boomer Generation with technological advancements in their field of specialisation
- A change management process to assist older generations (Baby Boomers) to cope better with change
- An employee assistance programme that could really add value to the lives of adult learners in the workplace as they struggle to cope with balancing work and life
- A model to effectively engage and utilise Generation Y in the workplace environment
- Impact of inter-generational discussion groups on teamwork and productivity.

5.6 Conclusion

This qualitative study focused on determining whether there is a difference in the training needs of different generations of adult learners within the workplace learning environment.

There is a definite difference in training needs for each of these generations and this has an impact on how learning interventions and programmes are designed in the corporate learning environment. ETD Practitioners should take this diversity of different generations and the unique needs of each generations into account when designing training programmes.

Corporate companies budget large amounts of money for training on an annual basis to address workplace learning needs. Workplace learning is a priority if companies want to stay competitive. Determining the various learning needs of employees adds to a greater effectiveness of the training programmes.

The hope of the researcher is that through this study, companies and those responsible for learning and training in companies learn to be sensitive towards the

different generations of adult learners, consider their unique needs and, in the process, implement training interventions that yield a remarkable return on investment and impact on business.

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Appendix 1: Informed Consent

Dear Participant

Thank you for your time. I am conducting MEd research project entitled: *The workplace training needs of different generations of adult learners within a corporate company in South Africa*, with the University of South Africa (UNISA). The project is aimed at determining if there are differences in the training needs of the four dominant generations of learners within a specific learning environment. If differences and their nature are established, this study can provide valuable information to those responsible for facilitating learning regarding the specific needs of each generation studied. The data gathered will assist those responsible for facilitating learning in adapting their training to the needs of specific generations of learners.

I am writing to request your informed consent and participation in order to do the study. Your input is requested through recorded interviews. Please be assured that the interview will take no more than two hours and that any information that you provide will be totally confidential and no name will be reported. Your participation in the study will be voluntary and you can withdraw at any time during the study without any penalty.

I appreciate your cooperation and the time you have put aside to help me in this important project. If you should have any questions or suggestions, please contact me (Hermann du Plessis) at 0828537463 or my study supervisor, Professor MM Dichaba (012) 4296153.

Your kind cooperation is highly appreciated; the interview will not take more than 2 hours of your time.

Participant‘s signature _____Date_____

Researcher‘s signature _____Date_____

- ***The signature of a participant in this document indicates agreement to participate in this study.***
- ***The signature of the researcher on this document indicates agreement to include the participant in the research and attestation that the participant has been fully informed of his/her rights.***

Appendix 2: Interview Protocol

The workplace training needs of different generations of adult learners within a corporate company in South Africa

The aims of the study are as follows:

- To determine if there are differences in the training needs of the four dominant generations of learners within a specific learning environment. To determine the specific nature of needs of the four dominant generations of learners.
- To determine the implications of the differences in the training needs of the four dominant generations of learners within a specific learning environment for the learning facilitation strategies of those responsible for facilitating learning.

If differences and their nature are established, this study can provide valuable information to those responsible for facilitating learning regarding the specific needs of each generation studied. The data gathered will assist those responsible for facilitating learning in adapting their training to the needs of specific generations of learners.

This brief interview guide is a set of guidelines rather than rigid questions which must be asked to every respondent. The interviewer will find it useful to envisage how the final report will look and feel, as well keep the interviewer consistent with the questions of the research topic.

A. General Information/ Indicate the following Biographical information?

1. Date of birth?

2. Please describe your current work responsibilities?

3. On what level of management are you functioning?

B. Learning needs

4. **What are the current challenges you are facing in the workplace environment?** (The interviewer should allow the respondent to give his/her own answer and then follow up with specific questions relating to: The impact of these challenges on work attitude and performance, steps that have been taken to resolve the challenges and the extent to which the company is aware of the challenges)

5. What are the current challenges in your personal life? (The interviewer should allow the respondent to give his/her own answer and then follow up with specific questions relating to: the impact of these challenges on work attitude and performance, steps that have been taken to resolve the challenges **and** the extent to which the company is aware of the challenges)

6. What are your current learning needs at work? (The interviewer should allow the respondent to give his/her own answer and then follow up with specific questions relating to: the extent of the needs, by clarifying whether it has to do with: a) Hard technical skills or b) Soft relational skills and whether these needs have been addressed by the company and in which way?)

7. How do you prefer to learn? (The interviewer should allow the respondent to give his/her own answer and then follow up with specific questions relating to: Clarity if the respondent is uncertain for example - Reading up on things, trial and error, classroom setting?)

8. Have there been any learning interventions lately that you have found beneficial? (The interviewer should allow the respondent to give his/her own answer and then follow up with specific questions relating to: Why they found it beneficial?

Clarify answers - for instance, if respondent's reply is: "It was very practical." Ask: "What exactly made it practical?")

9. Have there been any learning interventions lately that you have found a waste of your time? (The interviewer should allow the respondent to give his/her own answer and then follow up with specific questions relating to: Clarify answers for instance if respondent's reply is: "It was boring, or not very relevant." Ask: "What exactly did you find boring or irrelevant?")

10. Do you prefer to learn on your own or in groups? (The interviewer should allow the respondent to give his/her own answer and then follow up with specific questions relating to: Reasons they learn better on their own or in groups: “Why?”

Reasons they do not prefer learning on their own or in groups: “Why not?”)

11. Do you have any learning needs regarding technology and the use thereof at work? (The interviewer should allow the respondent to give his/her own answer and then follow up with specific questions relating to: Use of technology at work and comfort with using technology and the change that comes with technology).

Appendix 3: Request for Permission to Conduct a Research Project

PO BOX 6393

Weltevredenpark

1715

16 May 2014

Salome Rocther HRP

Manager I Human Capital Business Partner, Aurecon

Aurecon Centre Lynnwood Bridge Office Park

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0081

Tshwane

South Africa

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH PROJECT AT AURECON SOUTH AFRICA

I am a Masters student in Adult Education at the University of South Africa. I hereby request permission to conduct my research on the topic: **"The workplace training needs of different generations of adult learners within a corporate company in South Africa"** at Aurecon. The aim of my research is to find out whether different generations of adult learners have different training needs in the workplace environment.

The research project will be carried out over a week where semi-structured interviews would be conducted with 5 adult learners from each of the 3 dominant generations in the work environment. The generation are Baby Boomers,

Generation X and Generation Y. For the purpose of this study the following classifications will be used:

Baby Boomers: 46 to 60

Generation X: 34 to 45

Generation Y: 23 to 33

An information session can be conducted to explain the research to Aurecon employees who would like to participate. Thereafter they can finally decide whether to participate or not. An interview will last 30 to 45 minutes per employee.

The participation of Aurecon employees are on a voluntary basis and anonymity and confidentiality shall be maintained throughout the entire research project. None of the information gathered will be made public in anyway and a copy of finding will be made known to all participants in the study. The study will also be made available to Aurecon Human Capital for internal use regarding learning and development.

Benefits for participants will be that they get to learn more about their personal learning and training needs within the workplace.

If employees are willing to participate they will be asked to sign a declaration of your consent. Aurecon will also be asked to sign a letter of consent for the research to take place.

Yours sincerely,

Hermann Du Plessis

Managing Director: Themba Thandeka Leadership Institute

0828537463

Appendix 4: Example of a Transcribed Interview for Each Generation

Interview 1: Generation Y

I Right, interview one, the workplace training needs of different generations of adult learners within a corporate company in South Africa. Please state your date of birth.

P It's the fifth of August nineteen eighty-six.

I That's amazing. So your birthday was –

P Yesterday, actually.

I Congratulations.

P Thank you.

I Nineteen?

P Eighty-six.

I Thank you. Your current work responsibilities?

P I'm a civil engineer but I specialise in airport designs.

I Okay. And what level of management are you currently functioning on? Are you responsible for any people? Are you junior manager, middle manager, senior manager?

P It's a very, very small team. There are about four of us so we basically manage the project or manage all the disciplines that are involved in the project.

I Okay.

P So, for example, in the airport environment you have the air traffic control tower, you have the [INDISTINCT] engineers, the pavement engineers. So what we do is we bring all that together. So it's a mix of managing systems and people and not just –

I Okay. So if you're on a level of management it'll be junior management, am I right?

P Yes.

I Okay, great. Right, let's get into the learning questions. What are your current challenges you are facing in the work environment?

P In terms of?

I These could be any challenges. What would you say is your biggest challenge currently? I wanna leave it as an open-ended question 'cause I don't wanna guide you in any way. So if I pose this question to you, your current challenges that you face in the work environment, what would you say are they?

P I'd say the lack of a clear career path.

I Okay. Lack of career path. Ja?

P Everything. Everything actually ties in or rather stems from that.

I Okay, so it's where you're heading with your career?

P Yes.

I And does that include your life as well?

P Of course it does.

I Okay. Okay, great. What will you think is the impact of this challenge on your performance?

P I think it…well, the most significant impact would be motivation.

I Okay.

P You finish primary school, you have a sense of clarity, you go to primary school, you go to –

I High school.

P High school and then go to varsity, get your degree and then start working and you could almost tie those milestones to a timeline whereas –

I Yes.

P …when you at least start working there are people who will get into management in five years, there are those who get in there in ten, twenty years –

I Yes.

P …there isn't any specific reason why that is so you sort of not quite sure how hard should I work now to get there or should I even be working hard at all –

I Oh, okay.

P …or should I just wait for faith, if that makes sense.

I Has there been any steps taken to resolve this challenge for you by the company?

P Yes, there has been. I think in terms of personal development which is one of the areas that I am very driven about so I do take that personally.

I So would you say there's been sufficient intervention from the business? It's confidential, you can be honest.

P No, it's still…there isn't…I think the…yes, there has been.

I Okay. Okay, so there's been good intervention from the company's side?

P Yes.

I Okay, but still your career path is a bit uncertain?

P It is still uncertain.

I Okay, good.

P So that element of clarity isn't still there although we do have the support in terms of professional development and personal development, you still…you don't have it clear context so if I do A, B, C, and D, I will get here –

I Yeah.

P …as opposed to varsity, if I finish this module this semester –

I Yes.

P …I'm moving on. So it's not…so we still lack that sense of…that component of clarity.

I Okay. This brings me to the next question. What are the current challenges in your personal life?

P My personal life is…I'd say it's my personal goals and dreams.

I Yes.

P I had a lot of things worked out in terms of time and all and a lot of them actually pivoted around how quickly I grew in my career –

I Okay.

P …and I wouldn't say that I am growing as quick or rather, ja, as quickly as I had hoped I would –

I And anticipated?

P Ja, basically [INDISTINCT].

I Okay. Tell me, this personal challenge of you not reaching your goals as quickly as you anticipate, what does that create for you? What's the impact on you as an individual? So how do you feel because you haven't grown as you have anticipated?

P It's demotivating.

I So it demotivates you?

P Ja. It's almost as though I should…instead of working harder at my job, maybe I should start considering…or given that the parameters which I have timed my goals and dreams through, which is my career, is out of my control. Maybe I should actually start looking at starting something on my own that I can control and –

I Oh, okay.

P …can do that, if that makes sense. Again, a lot goes back to the clarity.

I I hear the clarity and the control component. That sounds like it's very important to you.

P It is important.

I Okay, so that's both the professional and a personal challenge for you. Okay. My next question, what are your current learning needs at work?

P Learning needs? Well, it would have to revolve around the airport environment. The field…my line of work is a very specialised field and it's not…we don't…we actually…as at last year [INDISTINCT] earlier this year when I checked we don't have airport courses in South Africa. Most of them are actually in Europe and –

I Okay, so it's a highly specialised field –

P It is, yes.

I …and that's a big need for you right now?

P Yes.

I Okay, so that's a hard technical skill. That's your job. Any other thing, like the softer things, any needs you have there in the learning environment?

P You mean in terms of…?

I If I say softer skills –

P Personality?

I Ja, that kind of thing. Maybe –

P Social and all of that?

I Ja, the communication, the conflict, the –

P Oh [CROSSTALK].

I …the softer side of things. Do you have any specific learning needs there currently?

P I wouldn't say I do 'cause I'm…okay, well I'm currently on the…a continuing education programme where, on a monthly basis, I get some books and all that I actually read to help improve myself in terms of the soft issues.

I Okay.

P I wouldn't say that I have it covered but I am working –

I Paying attention to it.

P [CROSSTALK].

I Okay, okay. Great. Here's my next question. How do you prefer to learn?

P On the go.

I On the go?

P Ja.

I What does that mean?

P Audio, audios, audios, definitely lots of audios.

I So you use your phone to listen to a lot of audio talks?

P I can multitask so typically I would like to, for example, if I were to read a book I would actually choose an audio book. That way I can actually play it over and over again whether or not I am at the office, I'm driving in the car, so that there is always an opportunity to learn regardless of whatever activities I'm –

I Okay. So you're an on-the-go guy. Always…you like to be stimulated all the time?

P Ja.

I And audio works for you?

P Yes, yes. Incredibly.

I Okay. Reading itself? Not a lot? More audio books like you said?

P [CROSSTALK] it's just with how busy and demanding our lifestyle is at the moment, it's hard to find the time that you can at least sit down and read and even when you do find the time it's very, very short intervals of time so –

I Okay.

P …a book that would have…through an audio that will take you thirty minutes to an hour to finish off you'd spend a month or something trying to get through it, so –

I Okay.

P …I think an audio is a lot more efficient.

I Okay, so it's about efficiency for you. Right, my next question is have there been any learning interventions lately here at your business or at work that you have found beneficial?

P That I have…yes, there are learning opportunities but whether or not I find them beneficial is a whole different story [CROSSTALK].

I Okay. Why do you not find them beneficial?

P I think it's perhaps that the hassle to go through it, to actually find information and use it. If…again like I told you, it would be a lot easier for me to go through an audio than to go through a two hundred page PDF document. I don't have that time while I'm working.

I And when I say learning intervention I also mean like workshops and stuff that you've been a part of.

P There are workshops. We do have some during lunchtime actually, which are nice. They're very, very informative but the bulk of the support is actually via PDF –

I Okay.

P …which most people don't get time to read.

I Okay. So your company provides you with a lot of reading material but that doesn't work for you 'cause you don't have the time to read. Okay. So the workshops itself you find beneficial?

P Yes, yes, definitely.

I Okay, but then the follow up afterwards, to go and read the material, that you find very tough?

P Ja.

I Okay. Okay, that brings me to my next question and it's sort of the opposite of what I just asked. Have there been any learning interventions lately that you really found to be a waste of your time?

P No. No, there isn't.

I So all learning interventions that you've been a part of you have found beneficial?

P I'd say the workshops, yes.

I The workshops have been beneficial?

P Yes. There are a lot of very, very important materials that actually provide us via PDF so via the Aurecon [SP] talent system. It, again, the time to go through those documents just isn't there.

I Okay.

P And I'm currently actually busy with my thesis as well for my master's degree so I don't have the time to read another document. However, if it was on audio I can actually go through it very quickly.

I Okay. So you prefer the audio way of learning. So you can't think of any learning intervention that you've lately experienced here at work that you've found I just shouldn't have attended?

P It's mostly meetings that often at times actually a huge waste of time but besides that, no.

I Why do you find meetings to be a waste of time?

P It's very complicated. I think it's…a lot more time is spent on people trying to express their view rather than actually solve the problem –

I Okay.

P …or resolve whatever issue it was that –

I Ja.

P …was the reason we are convened, so it's…from a one hour long meeting you only…the good part of it was about fifteen, twenty minutes and the rest of it was just opinions.

I So you found learning interventions a waste of time when the time that you are there is actually not used for learning. It's used to give opinions and people to

put their opinion forward. So for you I constantly hear time, time, time. It's about effective use of time. If it's an effective use of time, you find it more beneficial. Is that right?

P Ja, that's true.

I Okay, good. Do you prefer to learn on your own or do you prefer to learn in groups?

P I like both actually.

I Okay, why do you like on your own and why do you like in groups?

P I like groups because I appreciate the fact that people will think differently and the only way to perfect…or not perfect, to improve your style of thinking is to try and incorporate as much as possible how other people see or view the problem or the issue and then –

I Okay.

P …learning by myself is…would be I'm just taking my time, especially if it's a very, very complex problem or condition, I would like to take my time and go through it but I would mostly…I would say I am a lot more effective in a group than personally.

I When you learn?

P Ja, in the work environment.

I Because you enjoy the interaction –

P Yes.

I …and the input of others. Good. Right, do you have any learning needs regarding technology and the use of technology?

P Learning needs. Do you mean like how to use an iPhone? How to use –

I Any technology. Do you have any specific learning needs regarding technology and the use thereof?

P It depends what type of technology but generally I do…I consider myself to be fairly knowledgeable in terms of technology but –

I So actually your answer is no, I'm on top of technology, am I right?

P Yes.

I Ja. So you feel that on top of technology, it's easy. Okay, and then maybe just a final question in summary. What kind of learning intervention would you like your company to put in front of you for you to make use of?

P [INDISTINCT] intervention?

I Ja.

P I'd say workshops –

I Okay.

P …but audios first, actually, before workshop.

I Okay. Just because it's more time efficient.

P I'd say yes, yes. I would say eighty percent audios and twenty percent workshop. The reason being is that I like to get as much done as possible and as quickly as possible. So if I have an audio I can actually get work done while listening whereas with the workshop I'll have to put everything else on hold and be there for that and –

I You can't multitask in the workshop 'cause that's rude.

P Yes, it is rude.

I Great, thank you very much for your time, I appreciate it.

P Alright.

Interview 7: Generation X

I …start. This will be interview number seven. The workplace training needs of different generations of adult learners within a corporate company in South Africa. Please state your date of birth.

P Twenty-nine June nineteen seventy-six.

I Okay, that's the same year as my wife. And please describe your current work responsibilities.

P Currently I'm…what is it called? The human capital consultant. So basically I service three [INDISTINCT] or units which is water, buildings, and environmental planning. So my role is to look after the HR or consult with them on whatever HR needs. So I'm the interface for them with recruitment talent. So I'm the go-to person for them.

I Okay.

P Basically I look after the [INDISTINCT] human capital [INDISTINCT].

I Okay. On what level of management are you currently functioning?

P Currently I would say it's mid-level, mid-management.

I Mid-management. Okay. Right, let's dive into these learning questions.

P Okay.

I Right, what are your current challenges you are facing in the workplace environment?

P This one's really tough because this is a new environment for me.

I That's fine, but what is it? Explain it.

P So currently the challenges that are there, that have presented themselves in the close to two months, it's not a long time, it's just the role of the HC consultant with regards to the client. Understanding what HC does and what HC doesn't do. It's too unclear because within HC itself it's got recruitment and other functions within itself so it's still not clear for the clients what HC consultants do. They know it's someone that they go to but then they don't understand what the other people do

within HC, like recruitment and talent development and the administrators. So that was the challenge in the sense that sometimes they not sure who to send what to because we all want a bit of [INDISTINCT]. Secondly, I think the other challenge is the different environment for me with regards to consulting. So it's a different ballgame…I'm coming from mining. I've spent most of my years in mining –

I Okay.

P …and where HR sits and HR [INDISTINCT] human capital and it's owned by the unit so it's a different environment so I'm still learning that new environment.

I And to deal with that change.

P I have to deal with that change, and the new people –

I Okay.

P …and still understanding the roles of the different people.

I Okay, great.

P [CROSSTALK].

I Do you believe that this company is aware of these challenges you are facing?

P Ja. No, no, they aware.

I Okay, and has there been any steps taken to resolve this challenge?

P I would say yes.

I Okay, in what way?

P So with regard to my induction, they did make sure that I had enough time…I spent enough time with the different people from the unit and also within HC to try and understand the role and then I've got a supportive team I'm working with. That also helps me a lot because I had to come and run it.

I How do you think you gonna overcome this challenge of your clients…let's say your clients not knowing what your role is?

P Okay, so –

I ‘Cause that’s the big challenge here.

P Currently, that’s a big challenge. So currently it’s still an advantage because I’m new –

I Okay.

P …so they all for giving me that…affording me that opportunity itself other than just expecting. You here to do the job –

I Okay.

P Okay, so the challenge there is the more I have meetings or meet with them at different level, I also came in at the right time which is performance and development, so the more interfaces I have with them it lessens the stress and they get to understand what it is that I’m willing to offer or not.

I Okay. So the solution for you would be more interface with the clients –

P That’s the only thing [CROSSTALK].

I Okay.

P The more we interface the better we get to understand what we do [INDISTINCT] each other.

I Okay. Is it…do you find that they see the value in spending time with you?

P Yes, I have to say that –

I Okay.

P …in the month that I’ve been here I do see the value or the…or, okay, so this is a different…so I think I’m bringing in something else as compared to what they’re used to so some do get surprised at the level of service that they get –

I Okay.

P …which gives me an indication of they’re not used –

I Yes.

P …or and then others are actually inviting me to sections that other people didn't get an invitation. So it's a fine line. [INDISTINCT] clients so…and it's [INDISTINCT] I've got different relations with the managers there.

I Okay.

P The other ones [INDISTINCT] I'm still not sure of the [INDISTINCT] and the other one is saying just continue to do whatever and we'll catch up somewhere.

I Okay.

P [INDISTINCT] a bit of a variety.

I Okay. What are your current challenges in your personal life?

P So in my personal life, I would say I don't have…the biggest challenge is that I don't go back to what I used to do in my previous job because I left my previous role so that I could better the work balance. So I was at a senior level where I was and I left it to come to a mid-management role so that I can then be able to be there. I like the sensible hours here because I can take my son every day to school. So that won't change. The work won't change that but what will change is me adding more hours, getting back to what I [INDISTINCT]. That's the challenge that I have. So my challenge that I don't go back to…because I'm a very…I think I've worked [INDISTINCT]. So work provides…it's a safe haven for me and I don't know what else [INDISTINCT] because it's good…it's a good space. [INDISTINCT]. So it's try and balance now. So my challenge is to make sure that I moved to Aurecon for the right reason for my family so they get to see more of me and we have more fun and I'm not an irritable mother.

I Okay. Okay, and in the last two months have you seen that change happening?

P First month was great 'cause remember I [INDISTINCT]. Now we start to begin so the morning part, I'm still getting that sorted. The afternoon is a bit of a challenge but I understand that, at certain times…and my family understands. [INDISTINCT] that it should be fine but then the next month then I should go [INDISTINCT] back.

I Okay.

P So that's my challenge is to get back to that.

I Do you think this challenge will have an impact on your work performance or not?

P It shouldn't, no.

I Okay. And do you believe that the company might be aware of this personal challenge of yours?

P They're very aware. They very aware. With my interviews, I spelt out why I came to Aurecon, they understand that. So luckily –

I How can they assist you?

P No, luckily I've got a great manager that understands that. She's the one that says go home, she's the one that says [INDISTINCT] working because I made it clear in the interview this is the reason I'm coming. I've left that big job, I want…it's not about the money, I wanna still contribute and at this level I enjoy my work because I'm working with the people which is lovely.

I Okay. What are your current learning needs in your work environment here?

P My current learning needs is I will need to understand Aurecon as a business, so I'm slowly getting into that. In terms of HC or HR and its work, that's not an issue, that's why I can…but it's more understanding Aurecon, Aurecon people because –

I So the culture of this organisation?

P The culture of the organisation.

I Okay.

P The culture of this organisation and then also understanding the consulting role –

I Okay.

P …and then the business with regards to engineers and what it means to be this registered because it's all driven from an ego perspective but now I've qualified so treat me differently or I'm something. So I have to understand that and what it means because I've come in and I've looked at engineers or people called engineers

and I see salaries and I'm like why are you paying them so little because then…and then I have to understand the whole. So I'm still going to be schooled. I have to learn the career path of engineer in a consulting environment.

I Okay.

P …because they come in from a student –

I Yes.

P …and then they go through a career path –

I Yes.

P …so I plan to learn that. It's not something I know coming from mining.

I Okay. So if we have to make a distinction here between hard skills, you understand HR?

P Yes.

I That…those are your technical hard skills –

P Yes.

I …but from the softer side you need to get used to this environment, this culture, try and understand that. Any other softer skills that you feel you…that might be a learning need at this stage?

P I think for now for me, the culture.

I Okay.

P In terms of the other skills…

I Okay. So for you it's just a culture.

P Just the culture.

I Okay, great. Right, how do you prefer to learn?

P My preference in terms of learning, it depends on the subject. If it's something I can do by myself on e-learning, I'll do it. I don't want to have someone

telling me something I can read. So if it's one of those…something like a policy or a procedure or what, that I can e-learn –

I Okay.

P …but if it's something where I actually need to apply then I'd like to have someone in the room where I actually get to apply whatever, so whether through [INDISTINCT] or whatever, then I like to be in a room with other people so I can test and apply whatever I need. It depends on what it is that is. So if it's something totally new that I would need to go then I'd want a bit of both. I want to do the reading on it prior and then I'd like to sit with other colleagues to check my understanding of the same thing.

I Okay, okay, but if you can on your own you'd prefer?

P If I can it's something…I don't wanna go read something that I can read on my own and then just have someone else's voice.

I Okay. Okay, good. Have there been any learning interventions lately that you have found beneficial? Now I know you've been here for a short period so you may think of your previous employer as well –

P Yes.

I …but have there been any learning interventions lately that you have felt this has been really beneficial?

P I think for…I'll speak…for things like, I think, for…especially the HR stuff, the [INDISTINCT], that we tend to think will give a person a [INDISTINCT] and they understand, read and understand, and if it's something that's done not regularly, once a year, always better to just bring people in the room again, offer the two options. Here's a guide or come and sit with me or come –

I Okay.

P …or come together so that you all aligned in the thinking. So offer the three…I would say offer the three solutions and then let them pick. Don't always give one way of –

I Okay.

P So that I found for me to be beneficial because people learn it different so I always give three options.

I But tell me of an experience that you've had where this happened.

P So, for example, with the performance and development [INDISTINCT] –

I Ja.

P …that happens once a year on the system. So now the managers are not sure if they [INDISTINCT] from last year, they might have done it last year, [INDISTINCT] or they don't understand. Like someone will say this HC English or HR English where we think we communicating –

I Yes.

P …and you don't understand. So in that regard, every year it's that time again where you have to do that. Then you [INDISTINCT] what they need to do –

I Okay.

P …then you say here's a guide to help you navigate the system –

I Ja.

P …here's the sessions that we'll navigate the system with you so you can do it…bring your laptop and we'll do it with you –

I Ja.

P …or come on one-on-one, set up a time.

I Okay.

P So you give three options and you'll find people will pick different things.

I But tell me on the intervention where you were a part of the group. You didn't present it –

P Yes.

I …you were a part of the group that you found beneficial. A learning experience or intervention for you.

P That I as an [CROSSTALK]?

I Ja.

P Okay. One of the things I think, like I said, e-learning I appreciate on something that you wanna communicate something but you wanna confirm that people [INDISTINCT]. I appreciate that because I can read and then I can give myself [INDISTINCT]. So, for example, with the HR business [INDISTINCT] training [INDISTINCT]. So we sat. what was nice is that with the module, because there's so many, so you do your instruction, you do it for six months but now some of the modules you could do…so I appreciate the fact that –

I You could do some of the –

P …[CROSSTALK] sit with other people –

I Oh, okay.

P …but I could do it at my own time but I was given two weeks to finish.

I Okay, great.

P So that for me [CROSSTALK].

I Okay, that makes a lot of sense. Right, let me ask you the opposite.

P Yes.

I Have there been any learning interventions lately that you've found to be a waste of your time?

P Yes. As I said, if it's –

I Tell me about –

P …like Code of Conduct –

I Code of Conduct, okay.

P …where people want to present something and you reading and they're reading and there's nothing else that they bring in to [CROSSTALK] –

I Okay, so you could have read that on your own?

P I could have read it on my own. So I feel like that is really a waste of time and they [INDISTINCT] for three or four hours.

I Okay.

P Ja, so those are what waste…what I feel, then I'm frustrated.

I Okay, I think you've explained why that is a waste of your time 'cause it's basically a reading group –

P Yes.

I …and you can actually read it on your own.

P I can read…they reading what I can read –

I Yes.

P …and they adding nothing to it.

I Okay. Okay, great. Right, here's an interesting question. Do you prefer to learn on your own or in groups?

P I like to learn on my own.

I Why?

P And for some things I like a group but I'll –

I You mentioned that earlier.

P I will give an example. Last year I did executive HR programme with Stellenbosch. So it's three weeks…one week you sit as a group –

I Ja.

P …you get a group, so it could be people from Durban or wherever, then you have individual [INDISTINCT] in that group. Individual [INDISTINCT], group [INDISTINCT] you can discuss and agree, depending on the people you get in the group and especially if they working –

I Ja.

P …that's another ballgame. So with a group, there's no…I cannot predict the…and that would then give me the stress –

I Okay.

P …the outcome.

I Ja, 'cause you're not in control –

P But on my own I can control, so that's the thing. So I'll prefer that [INDISTINCT] where I work on my own but I also understand that you learn from others too.

I Okay.

P But I would like to feel…what tends to happen is that if I'm in a group, I will try and control. So I will take the role of having to do the schedule and hold people accountable because then I have more control, you can just understand when what will be done. So I'm not sure if then you'll say I [CROSSTALK] –

I [INDISTINCT].

P If I'm in a group I'll try and get on top. If there's someone else that wants to get on top then we gonna have fun.

I So for you it's about controlling the pace of the learning?

P Ja, I want to be able to –

I Because for you it's a…you need to be able to plan and –

P Yes.

I …if there's uncertainty of somebody else is not gonna play their part, especially with the group assignments it gets tough.

P Ja. So it's like from…when I go somewhere I've never been, especially in a group, I wanna see –

I Ja.

P …so I'll go and look at what's around 'cause if anything should happen that I don't know, then at least I know I'm there.

I Okay.

P So I like to go see and then come back and then go.

I Do you have any learning needs regarding technology and the use of technology here at work?

P Okay, in terms of technology here at work from the systems I worked with, it's like I've gone back. So it's…the frustration is on having to work with systems that are not necessarily user friendly.

I Okay.

P That is frustration in terms of how you designed –

I Ja.

P …and I can't change, that's what it is. So I come from a very efficient technology to…so I'm learning to take it one step below and do that but in terms of the system here, there's no challenges. It's just understanding the system. Like now, I've worked with the new system in a month, I'm already [INDISTINCT] helping others on it and they all like did you know the system? I didn't but it's the same system, it was the same outcome. It's just how it…it's just not user friendly because it requires a manager to click everywhere. And then also with the link, I don't know, if you send me a link my expectation is that I'll click a link and I'll get you where you want me to. I don't expect to get there and still do something else. So sometimes we get links where it will still have instructions on the front page to say when you get to the link then you need to do this and this and this and this and this.

I But am I understanding you correctly, you don't have a specific learning need –

P No learning need.

I …but you have a high frustration with technology that's not user friendly?

P Yes.

I Okay. How do you learn about technology?

P By using it.

I Okay, so you use technology –

P You gotta use it to…the more you use it, that's how you get –

I Okay.

P …because then you see.

I Okay. So you wouldn't like to go and sit and be taught about how to use technology in a group setting?

P I would like to go for new things like you go for advanced Excel where they'll say I'll show you a few things on how to better manage Outlook, I'd go for that. So I would go for things that will help me better the current.

I Okay.

P So I will still go for lessons or whatever to –

I Okay.

P …better what I know. So if there's short cuts or quick fix I'll go for that –

I Okay.

P …because it's something interesting, more than I'm doing to help my work.

I Yes, ja. So if it's technology that can improve your work then you'll go for it.

P Then I want it, yes.

I Ja, so it's gotta be relevant.

P Yes.

I Tell me, if Aurecon can expose you to any learning intervention right now, what would it be that you would feel this is gonna be beneficial?

P Right now? I think because of where we are I would just [INDISTINCT] then it would be with the system that we have, what we call the [INDISTINCT] system –

I [INDISTINCT] system.

P …and now [INDISTINCT] system in terms of just those systems –

I Okay.

P …it will be nice to learn more to understand them. So maybe if I understand how the logic behind or if it was a test to say –

I Ja.

P …let's see how this works and then if they get frustrated we'll [INDISTINCT] if they like it we'll…so just to understand that thinking –

I Okay.

P …because some of the stuff doesn't make sense on the user end.

I Okay. Great. Thank you very much for your time. This was interview number seven.

Interview 12: Baby Boomer

I Right, this is interview twelve. The workplace training needs of different generations of adult learners within a corporate company in South Africa. Please state your date of birth.

P Twenty, five, fifty-eight.

I And please describe your current work responsibilities.

P I'm a human capital operations consultant.

I Okay. And your level of management?

P I'm [INDISTINCT] part of the senior management team.

I Okay. Senior management. Senior management. Okay. Right. First question in terms of learning needs, what are your current challenges you are facing in your work environment?

P My personal environment?

I Your work environment. Ja, what challenges are you facing here in your work environment as an individual?

P Consistent change in structures.

I Yip.

P So re-engineering just this…I normally say as soon as I got things to work then somebody change the structure and we start all over again.

I Okay, and that's frustrating because nothing settles.

P It's frustrating on the one hand and then it's challenging on the other hand so it at least not the same. Once you got a…I think I will die if you…if I have a structure and it works for…work the same structure the same thing over and over again.

I Yes.

P So change is nice, it also gives you an opportunity to enhance your structures and your models and things that you use and that you work on. So it feels

sometimes that it can be a little bit hectic and spread the change a little bit more but I kind of enjoy the change.

I Okay. And what do you think is the impact on your performance and your attitude at work because of this constant change?

P I think performance wise it is sometimes frustrating as you rightfully said if you just feel not again but you tend to learn that you just need to get your head down and do it.

I Okay.

P It's as easy as that.

I Do you think your company is aware of this frustration or this challenge you're experiencing or not?

P No.

I Not really. Okay. And what do you feel they can do to assist you?

P I think the changes sometimes happen which you feel if you'd just asked me then it would have been a lot easier to implement.

I So communication should improve regarding the change?

P Ja, communication is one of those wonderful words that somebody invented to write doctorates about but I think you need to…to make it really…to make things effective and make them really work you need to, before you change anything, just sit…just go one step further down to the people that's actually got their nose on the ground.

I Okay.

P I honestly believe if I've learned more from people my junior who's got life experience and…than what I've learned out of a book –

I Okay.

P …and I've learned lots of things out of books but –

I So before changing structures maybe just get down to the guys who actually work on the ground and hear whether it's worth it to change?

P Say guys if we have a new scenario, if we go this way, what will it involve in changing your system –

I Okay.

P …because sometimes people in the senior management…and I hate it when they say to me but it's been approved by the senior management. Ja, so what? They have no idea…if you look at the system and you say we'll just change this then just change that is two months' worth of work but in their mind it's elementary, it's stupid, it's a day then it's done –

I Yes.

P …and you can be up and running again.

I Okay.

P So I think before people just make the decision to change, it's important just to speak to the guys that actually do the work –

I Okay.

P …and –

I To understand the impact.

P Understand what your decision of change involves –

I Okay.

P …because that will assist in making sure that the changes that needs to be implemented downstream would be scheduled in a way that you have…I don't want too much time but you at least have appropriate amount of time to implement them –

I Okay.

P …'cause it sometimes sounds silly just…we'll just change but a simple…what looks like a simple change on the system is sometimes two weeks of work for the programmer –

I Yes.

P …and then another three, four weeks of work to change data to move it into different boxes and implement and rewrite the procedure and make sure that everything works before you just…it's not a –

I Okay.

P …it's not a light switch you put on and off.

I Ja.

P Okay.

I Okay, next question. What are your current challenges in your personal life?

P I want to do something total different from what I've been doing for the past thirty years.

I Okay.

P I've had enough.

I Okay.

P I had a friend that's [INDISTINCT] many years ago said that the rats in the rat race is caught up to him and I somehow feel that the rats is nibbling at my heels.

I Okay. So for you, it's to make a change regarding your career now?

P Ja, I've heard that there's a line of sort of a second career –

I Ja.

P …so I think I'm seriously at that point in my life where I seriously consider this second career –

I Okay.

P …and that is nibbling at my heels.

I Okay. Do you think your company is aware that you feel this frustration?

P No.

I Okay, great. And do you think that they can assist you with this second career you talking about here in your company?

P No.

I Not?

P No.

I It's gonna be something totally different?

P Ja, no. I've made up my mind is if I…I have a wife that says I'm sleeping about things. Now I've slept a lot about this one and it's gotta be something total different. I've been working with people and I love working with people, please don't get me wrong, but I had enough of people now.

I Right, next question. What are your current learning needs at work? Where do you feel you need to learn about now at work?

P Ja, my mindset that I'm in at the moment is I sometimes feel I'm too old to learn new things but then…'cause Carly [SP] has said you can't teach an old dog new tricks is even a [sic] insult to old dogs. I think I…there's not a…there's new changes I've picked up over the past week or two, three, there's new changes in labour legislation and for some interesting reason I'm quite interested in IR, industrial relations, work so –

I Okay.

P …but it becomes [INDISTINCT] and it would be interesting just to get on top of the new legislation, what it requires and how would it impact in the company and, again, what do you need to change to ensure that you stay abreast of [INDISTINCT] that you don't create a risk –

I Yes.

P …for the company by –

I Okay. So that's a hard skill and that's regarding your job, IR. So are there any soft things you still want to learn about? Things on the softer side?

P It's not part of my make up to learn things on the softer side and it's got me into trouble many a times is to…I like to stick to facts because it makes my life easier –

I Okay.

P …and it’s sometimes difficult in the HR environment to do just that.

I Ja. How do you prefer to learn?

P I prefer to learn through experience –

I Okay.

P …through work...I think the fancy word is work integrated learning.

I Ja.

P I’m married to a professor so I know some big words. Although I spent many years at varsity, I don’t think I’m a good formal learner to sit in a class situation and listen to a lecture and go and write the exam.

I Okay.

P I don’t do that, I don’t enjoy it. Two, three years ago I did a course in advanced dispute resolution and the course was presented in theory but then the test at the end of the day was practical so you should know what you’ve learned make that practical in the work –

I Okay.

P …and that’s what I enjoy.

I Okay.

P I don’t like this formal class situation where I have to sit and attend a lecture –

I Okay.

P …for two or three days and get a –

I So for you it’s practical –

P Yes.

I …and basically on your own?

P Ja, it’s practical and on my own although I’d like to bump ideas off of people –

I Okay.

P …so if I've picked up new ideas, I would like to sit and think about them and then formulate them and then bounce them back at somebody else –

I Okay.

P …and say is that what we have learnt?

I Ja.

P And how do I make this practical?

I Ja.

P I'm not very much of a theoretical –

I Okay.

P …person.

I Have there been any learning interventions lately that you have found beneficial?

P I've attended a training course beginning of last year…what is the name of it? Something consultant which was very practical –

I Okay.

P …and which I really, really enjoyed and I think it is add value to me as a person and it's add value to me as an employee.

I Why did it add value?

P The principles made sense to me and I could implement the principles which I've learned in the theory, I could pull them through –

I So it's practical once again.

P Ja.

I You like that.

P I had this debates about…I'm not quite sure what your background is but you must've learned about Maslow and these guys. I one day said to a lecturer if I had to learn one more time about Maslow and his theory, I'm gonna die because it makes

no sense to me. My wife says I must still think about it but I need to learn things that is practical. I need to learn them now but they must be practical tomorrow.

I Ja. So there must be an immediacy.

P Ja.

I Okay. Have there been any learning interventions lately that you have found a waste of your time?

P No, not really. I tend to skip things which I…I read the curriculum of the learning intervention and –

I Okay.

P …if it does not fit into me or I cannot see the practical then I will go and I will ask the people that –

I Okay.

P …is presenting it what are you going to show me, teach me, give me on this thing and how is that gonna be practical and if I can't get it in…if you cannot tell me in ten minutes what is the practical value of –

I Yes.

P …I need to attend then I don't attend.

I So you've actually learnt your lesson through the years of all these learning interventions. So you go through the curriculum beforehand and make sure it's relevant to you and practical?

P Ja.

I So a typical training intervention that would be a waste of your time, if I would guess, would be something that's not practical, you can't apply it, it's just theory basically?

P Theory makes no sense to me. I understand that there's gotta be theory and baseline but I think I'm passed the point in my life that I need to have new theory.

I Okay.

P I have a lot of work experience behind and I have a lot of life experiences and I need to…it's not that I wanna stop learning but I need to have…there's gotta be a direct relationship –

I Yes.

P …what you teach me today I've gotta be able to –

I Yes.

P …make that practical tomorrow.

I Yes. Okay. Do you prefer to learn on your own or in groups?

P I'm not a good group person.

I On your own is better?

P Ja, as I say, on my own I like to take things away and digest them –

I Okay.

P …and I will go back to a group then or to another individual and say let me bounce this off you –

I Okay.

P …but I'm not this group [INDISTINCT] people person.

I Okay.

P That's not me.

I Do you have any learning needs regarding technology and the use thereof at work?

P I've made peace with the fact that I will never be keeping up with technology.

I Okay.

P …but, again, I have enough skills in technology to use it –

I Okay.

P …and then I have a theory in life is I know somebody that can explain it to me if I really need to or –

I Okay.

P …do it –

I Okay.

P …because they are better equipped and trained in that what I am and I'm more than happy to give you a part of the work and give you the responsibility to take this work and do it and I'll give you the feathers for it as well.

I Okay.

P So –

I So if there are areas you struggle with, you give it to people who are really good at that and they'll get it done?

P Ja, a simple example is cell phones –

I Ja.

P …my children says I'm a waste to have an iPhone because I say it must phone –

I Ja.

P …that's to me what a cell phone is about –

I Okay.

P …it must phone. I'll never be able to do this recording thing you do with your phone now. I don't know how. Most probably my phone can do it but –

I Yes.

P …my eldest daughter was…she visited…she was there for lunch yesterday and we going to England and she says but, dad, there's a [sic] app. I said what app? So, ja, she downloaded the app for me yesterday in two minutes and –

I Okay.

P …then explained to me how it works and then it makes sense to me but –

I Okay.

P …I'm not the kind of guy that loads apps because –

I Okay.

P …I don't want to have ten of them on my phone.

I And if your company could send you on any learning experience or intervention right now, what would you choose?

P I can't think of anything.

I So there's no burning issue right now that you feel –

P No, I don't have a burning [INDISTINCT] I gotta learn something about this. I've mentioned earlier on that the change in labour legislation and most probably if you tell me you can go on anything now I would love to attend a morning seminar on the changes in –

I Labour legislation.

P …labour legislation.

I Okay, great. Thank you very much. I appreciate your time. That was interview twelve in the workplace training needs of different generations of adult learners within a corporate company in South Africa.