GIG WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: ADOPTING AND ADAPTING THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK OF SOUTH AFRICA

Fortune Aigbe[1,2], Clinton Aigbavboa[1,2] , Lekan Amusan[1,2]

[1]Department of Construction Management and Quantity Surveying, University of Johannesburg, Maropeng 198, SOUTH AFRICA

[2]CIDB Centre of Excellence & Sustainable Human Settlement and Construction Research Centre, Department of Construction Management & Quantity Surveying, Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, University of Johannesburg, Doomfortein Campus, Maropeng 198, South Africa

fortune.aigbe@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

In recent years, the gig economy has changed the way people work as traditional work designswill be increasingly complemented by smaller tasks – so-called gigs – that are mediated and coordinated via digital platforms. However, this form of employment lacks benefits comparedto standard employment. This study aims to address the issue of gig workforce development through the adoption and adaptation of existing policies such as the National Qualification Framework Act 67 of 2008, Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, and the Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999 in South Africa with a view to fostering a sense of belonging and reducing employment discrimination. The methodology adopted for this study is a review approach based on the systematic review of secondary data sources like journals and articles. The study reveals that the NQF Act, through its elements like Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), learning outcomes, etc., can be adopted and adapted for the development of the gig workforce.The study also revealed that the NQF, together with policies like the Employment Equity Act and the Skills Development Levies Act, can be adapted to protect against gig workforce employment discrimination and development. This study contributes to scholarly discussion on the workforce of the future, and empirically, the study contributes to ensuring a boundaryless and inclusive future workplace in South Africa.

Keywords

Technological changes, Gig, Gig workforce, Workforce Development, NQF, Employment Equity, Skill Development Levies

(Times New Roman 10).

1. Introduction

With the advent of technological advancements in Industry 4.0, companies have begun to virtually balance between the archaic full-time workforce model and the gig workforce model(Mahato et al.,2021). In recent years, the gig economy has changed the way people work as traditional work designs will be increasingly complemented by

smaller tasks – so-called gigs– that are mediated and coordinated via digital platforms (Gussek & Wiesche,2022). The futureworkforce will be a diverse population of workers in terms of their skills composition, who they are, their location and the time they work, and the type of employment relations they have,as their expectations of employment will be different to previous generations (Ware &Grantham,2003; Pwc,2018). Those who work full-time jobs today are in the minority as standard work exists alongside non-standard work, such as gig work, which has no legal protection and social benefits enjoyed by standard arrangement workers (McGrowern,2017; Howard,2017).

The gig work is a non-standard form of employment which lacks benefits. Meijerink and Keegan (2019) stated that intermediary platform firms are not responsible for the training and development of gig workers, as gig workers are responsible for their own training and development. Cotten (2007) defined workforce development from the perspective of an individual worker emphasizing that employee development is an ongoing process that must align with the organization's strategic priorities, which involves regularly reassessing the training curriculum to ensure its relevance to the organization's needs, cross-training, job rotation, temporary assignments, and shadowingwhich can enhance employees' skills, deepen their organizational understanding, improve communication, and foster creativity in problem-solving. There are four areas of workforce development which are related to how individuals enter or re-enter the workforce, how organizations provide learning opportunities, how changes that affect workforce effectivenessare being responded to by organizations, and how individuals undergo life transitions related to workforce participation (Jacob &Hawley,2009). There have been several studies on workforce development, but their focus has been primarily on the workforce with standard employment (Spagnoletto et al.,2019; Liou,2024), also the central focus of existing workforce policies like National Qualification Framework (NQF), Employment Equity Act has been solely on the workforce with standard employment (Allais,2010:34; Khunoethe & Reddy, 2023). Hence, this study aims to address the issue of gig workforce development through the adoption and adaptation of existing policies such as the NQF Act 67 of 2008, Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, and the Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999 in South Africa witha view to fostering a sense of belonging and reducing employment discrimination.

2. Settings or Methods or Materials and Methods

A systematic review of secondary data sources such as articles and journals sourced from databases like Scopus, Google Scholar, and EBSCO (Aigbe et al.,2024). Individual and collective keywords, using Boolean logic, were used as the criteria for searching the literature included and to refine the searches (Bergh,2012). The keywords used were " Technological changes," "Workforce Development," "Gig Workers," "Regulations," "Policies," and "NQF," among others. A qualitative, inductive and semantic approach was adopted for the study (Caulfield,2023). Studies that addressed gig workforce development, challenges of gig work, and regulatory approach written in English were included in this study, while others which were written in other foreign languages and did not address gig work were excluded (Hu et al.,2024). Thematic analysis was used to identify themes and generate conclusions, in line with Braun and Clarke (2006) study of thematic analysis in psychology, which states that thematic analysis involves repeated reading and assessment of text to recognize patterns (coding) and constructs (theme development) drawn from across various scholarship claims (data interpretation). Furthermore, the study stated that thematic analysis is not a linear process but involves movement back and forth as needed throughout the phases (a recursive process)
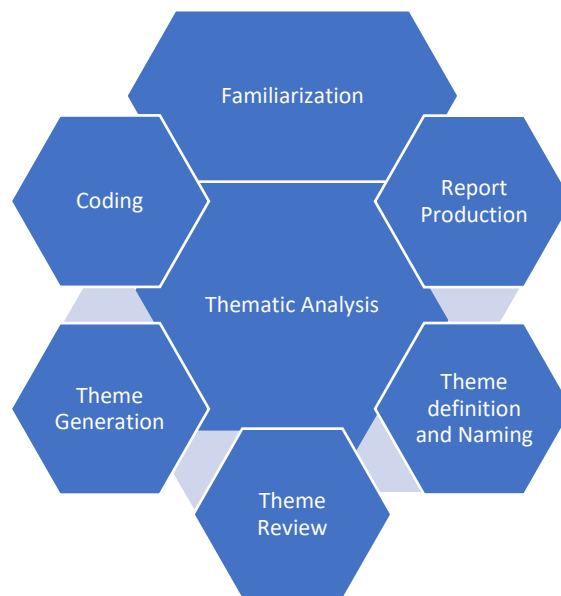

Figure 1. Thematic Analysis process by (Braun & Clarke,2006)

3. Workforce Development

Development is the growth and realization of an employee's ability and potential through the provision of learning experiences or through self-managed learning (Satyendra,2014). Short and Harris (2014) classified learning into informal, formal, and non-formal. The study further emphasized the approaches to teaching-learning in a work environment as; content delivery, modelling ways of being, cultivating ways of thinking, and facilitating personal agency etc. Satyendra (2014) stated further that development is a continuous process that utilizes both systematic and organized procedure to prepare individuals to meet their future responsibilities as well as to improve their personalities. Workforce development is the co-ordination of public and private sector policies and programmes that provides individuals with the opportunity for a sustainable employment and helps organizations achieve outstanding objectives in accordance with the societal context (Jacob &Hawley, 2009). Cotten (2007) defined workforce

development from the perspective of an individual worker emphasizing that employee development is an ongoing process that must align with the organization's strategic priorities, which involves regularly reassessing the training curriculum to ensure its relevance to the organization's needs, cross-training, job rotation, temporary assignments, and shadowing which can enhance employees' skills, deepen their organizational understanding, improve communication, and foster creativity in problem-solving. Jacob and Hawley (2009) identified four areas which workforce development covers which includes, The preparation of individuals to enter or re-enter the workforce by schools and agencies (i.e. the traditional systems of vocational-technical training, including initial training, cooperative education or apprenticeships that are designed to prepare people for an initial job or career), How organizations provide learning opportunities to improve workplace performance (lifelong learning systems, and trainings), how changes that affect workforce effectiveness is being responded to by organizations (through organizational development as well as classical strategies through training and development), How individuals undergo life transitions related to workforce participation (Adult education). Furthermore, Ozkan-Ozen and Kazancoglu. (2022) stated that Orientation programs and regular in-job trainings are some of the other activities that human resources departments should organize for successful workforce development. Short and Harris (2014) citing Awpa (2013) stated that workforce development involves matching appropriate training provision to the needs of the organization, individuals, and the wider community. Furthermore, Rowley and Jackson (2010) identified employee development as; career development, cross-cultural training, knowledge management, leadership development, organizational learning, training and development etc.

3.1. Adapting the South Africa's National Qualification Framework (NQF) for Gig Workforce Development.

Jacob and Hawley (2009) identified four areas which workforce development covers, which includes, The preparation of individuals to enter or re-enter the workforce by schools and agencies (i.e. the traditional systems of vocational-technical training, including initial training, cooperative education or apprenticeships that are designed to prepare people for an initial job or career), How organizations provide learning opportunities to improve workplace performance (lifelong learning systems, and trainings), how changes that affect workforce effectiveness is being responded to by organizations (through organizational development as well as classical strategies through training and development), How individuals undergo life transitions related to workforce participation (Adult education). These aligns with the intent and purpose of the NQF of South Africa.

The National Qualification Framework (NQF) was introduced in 1995 as an ambitious attempt to address the educational, social, and economic problems caused by apartheid, which was aimed at replacing all existing qualifications in the country with a set of new qualifications and part qualifications (called unit standards), expressed in the form of learning outcomes (Allais,2010:34). The Act governs all training and education in South Africa, providing for a single, integrated national framework for learning achievements and ensuring an integrated system that encourages lifelong learning. It comprises ten (10) levels of education and training, including basic education, adult education and training, and various academic, vocational, occupational and technical qualifications (Reddy et al.,2018; Van Den Heever et al.,2021). The SAQA Act provides for an NQF that is learning outcome-based and

establishes recognition of prior learning to address historical unfair discrimination in education and training (Khunoethe& Reddy,2023).. NQF was established as a result of weaknesses in the education and training system in South Africa with the aim of rectifying such weaknesses and emphasizing people's ability to do a job rather than their formal qualifications while promoting lifelong learning by recognizing prior learning (Mohlala,2011).

3.1.1. Application of the NQF Act 67 of 2008 for Gig workforce Development.

a) **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** Development is the growth and realization of an employee's ability and potential through the provision of learning experiences or through self-managed learning (Satyendra,2014). The SAQA Act provides for an NQFthat is learning outcome-based and establishes recognition of prior learning to address historical unfair discrimination in education and training (Khunoethe & Reddy,2023). Furthermore, the purpose of the recognition of prior learning could be for personal development, further learning and development in the workplace, and recognition for qualification registered on the NQF (Authority,2013). The recognition of prior learningcould be for access and credit: Jacob and Hawley (2009) stated that one of the areas which workforce development covers, includes; the preparation of individuals to enteror re-enter the workforce by schools and agencies (i.e. the traditional systems of vocational-technical training, including initial training, cooperative education or apprenticeships that are designed to prepare people for an initial job or career. Authority(2013) stated that the RPL could be for further learning at accredited institutions or workplace-based training. It could also be for the award of credits for or toward a qualification or part-qualification registered on the NQF. This is also applicable to gigworkers who have micro-credentials (Wheelahan & Moodie,2022) and educational qualifications, as they could take advantage of the RPL to further develop themselves by further learning or obtaining a formal qualification.

b) **Learning Outcome:** There will be a technological gap due to race and income level, which affects the digital competence of disadvantaged groups (Ford & Whaley,2003:477). The NQF can be used to bridge this gap through its learning outcomes, which seem to be a mechanism for a curriculum which will not allow the knowledge of the elite group to take precedence over those of the socially disadvantaged. Furthermore, it acts as a mechanism for ensuring social integration (Allais,2007). This can be applied to the development of disadvantaged gig workers from the low-income class (Graham et al.,2017).

c) **Level-Based Learning:** The NQF comprises ten (10) levels of education and training,including basic education, adult education and training, and various academic, vocational, occupational and technical qualifications (Reddy et al.,2018; Van Den Heever et al.,2021). This level-based learning can be beneficial for the gig workforce in that it can help ensure continuous development and enhance their chances for job opportunities and security. Also, since technology is ever-evolving, the level-based learning provided by the NQF can serve as a means for continuous upskilling and reskilling for the gig workforce (Bolton et al.,2020).

d) **Flexible Structure:** Flexible learning can be defined as flexible forms of assessment that cater to

different learning styles, possess a mechanism for recognition of prior learning and credit accumulation and transfer, and provide a diverse mode of learning delivery such as distance, online on campus and a blended option (The University of Southern Queensland,2011**;** Jones & Walter,2015). Jones and Walter. (2015) stated thatthe NQF is a key lever toward embedding lifelong learning, portability, flexibility and accessibility. This can help address the needs of gig workers who want to develop themselves without having to leave their jobs.

3.2. Applying the NQF with the *Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, and the Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999*

The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 helps promote equity and democracy, eliminate unfairdiscrimination and achieve a workforce representative of the demographic diversity in South Africa. Also, the Employment Equity Act provides for affirmative measures, including skills development in terms of the Skills Development Act, to overcome the legacy of disadvantageand disparities in the workplace (Khunoethe & Reddy, 2023). The Act gives effect to section 9(3) of the 1996 Constitution and Convention 111 of the International Labour Organization, aswell as preventing discrimination and compelling organizations with more than 50 employeesto produce employment equity plans and show progress in instituting affirmative action measures (Ferreira,2005:203).

The Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999 provides for the financing of skills developmentthrough a levy-grant scheme and the National Skills Fund (Khunoethe & Reddy,2023).The gig workforce lacks benefits like those of the full-time workforce because of the nature oftheir employment, as they are basically responsible for their own training and development (Meijerink & Keegan.,2019). Hence, the Employment Equity Act and the Skills Development Levies Act could be amended to address any form of discrimination against the gig workforce,and levies could be demanded from intermediary platforms for the training and development of the gig workforce since the gig workers contribute to their productivity and profit margins.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The National Qualification Framework provides a very good foundation which can be adoptedand adapted for gig workforce development through its Recognition of prior learning (RPL), Learning outcome, Level based learning, and flexible structure. This agrees with Walters and Isaacs (2015), which stated that the NQF is a framework for coordination, communication and collaboration across education, training and development, and work. Also, Authority (2008) stated that the NQF Facilitates access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths and accelerates the redress of past unfair discrimination in education,training and employment opportunities

The NQF and other policies like the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, and the Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999 can also be adapted to address any form of discrimination against the gig workforce and promote the training and development of the gig workforce. Thisagrees with Graham et al. (2017), Kiane and Josserand (2019), and Oyer (2020), who stated that policies should be enacted that provide benefits for gig workers, level the playing groundand make classification less contentious.

It can be concluded that the NQF provides a good foundation which can be adopted and adaptedfor the gig workforce development, and also, the NQF together with other policies such as theEmployment Equity Act 55 of 1998, and the Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999 can beadapted to further strengthen the gig workforce development in South Africa.

Reference

Aigbe, F., Aigbavboa, C., Aliu, J. & Amusan, L. 2024. Understanding the Future Competitive Advantages of the Construction Industry. *Buildings,* 14.

Allais, S. M. (2007). Why the South African NQF Failed: lessons for countries wanting to introduce national qualifications frameworks. *European Journal of Education*, *42*(4), 523-547.

Authority, S. A. Q. (2008). South African Qualifications Authority. In.

Authority, S. A. Q. (2013). National policy for the implementation of the recognition of prior learning. *SAQA, Pretoria,*

Bergh, G. 2012. Systematic Reviews in International Development. *Internal. London: ODI*.

Bolton, H., Matsau, L., & Blom, R. (2020). Flexible learning pathways: The national qualifications framework backbone. *Report for the IIEP-UNESCO Research 'SDG4: Planning for Flexible Learning Pathways in Higher Education*.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

Caulfield, J. 2023. *How to Do Thematic Analysis | Step-by-Step Guide & Examples*. Scribbr.

Cotten, A. (2009). *The Seven Steps of Effective Workforce Planning*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272747065

Ferreira, G. M. (2005). Developments in labour relations in South Africa: Ten years of democracy (1994-2004). *Politeia*, *24*(2), 197-214.

Ford, J. D. L., & Whaley, G. L. (2003). The digital divide and managing workforce diversity:A commentary. *Applied Psychology*, *52*(3), 476-485.

Graham, M., Lehdonvirta, V., Wood, A., …, H. B. O. I., & undefined. The risks and rewards of online gig work at the global margins. *ora.ox.ac.uk*. https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:8c791d5a-e3a5-4a59-9b93-fbabea881554

Gussek, L., & Wiesche, M. (2022). The gig economy: Workers, work and platform perspective.

Howard, J. (2017). Nonstandard work arrangements and worker health and safety. *American*

Hu, J., Chen, J., LI, P., Yan, J. & Wang, H. 2024. Systematic Review of Socially Sustainable and Community Regeneration: Research Traits, Focal Points, and Future Trajectories. *Buildings,* 14**,** 881.

Jacobs, R. L., & Hawley, J. D. (2009). The emergence of 'workforce development': Definition, conceptual boundaries and implications. *International handbook of education for the changing world of work: Bridging academic and vocational learning*, 2537-2552.

Jones, B., & Walters, S. (2015). Flexible learning and teaching: looking beyond the binary of full-time/part-time provision in South African higher education. *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning*, *3*(1), 61-84

Kaine, S., & Josserand, E. (2019). The organisation and experience of work in the gig economy. *Journal of Industrial Relations, 61*(4), 479–501.

Khunoethe, H., & Reddy, P. S. (2023). Challenges in South Africa's Post-School Education and Training System on Local Governance Performance. *Administratio Publica*, *31*(3),17-39.

Liou, K. T. (2024). Applying Work Redesign Strategies in Chinese Government Reforms: Lessons for the Government Reform Study. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 0734371X241233537.

Mahato, M., Kumar, N., & Kesari Jena, L. Re-thinking gig economy in conventional workforce post-COVID-19: a blended approach for upholding fair balance. https://doi.org/10.1108/JWAM-05-2021-0037

McGovern, M. (2017). *Thriving in the gig economy: How to capitalize and compete in the new world of work*. Red Wheel/Weiser.

Meijerink, J., & Keegan, A. (2019). Conceptualizing human resource management in the gig economy: Toward a platform ecosystem perspective. *Journal of ManagerialPsychology*, *34*(4), 214-232.

Mohlala, G. (2011). No title. *Effects of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 on transforming management training and development: A case study of the Greater Tubatse Local Municipality*.

Oyer, P. The gig economy. https://doi.org/10.15185/izawol.471

Ozkan-Ozen, Y. D., & Kazancoglu, Y. (2022). Analysing workforce development challenges in the Industry 4.0. *International Journal of Manpower*, *43*(2), 310-333.

PwC. (2018). Workforce of the future. In (Vol. 2023).

Reddy, V., Wildschut, A., Luescher, T., Petersen, I.-h., & Rust, J. (2018). Skills development legislation as a lever of change to reduce poverty, inequality and unemployment. Routledge.

Rowley, C., & Jackson, K. (2010). *Human resource management: The key concepts*.

Satyendra. (2014). Training and Development Process. In (Vol. 2023).

Short, M. N., & Keller-Bell, Y. (2019). Essential skills for the 21st century workforce. In *Handbook of research on promoting higher-order skills and global competencies in life and work* (pp. 134-147). IGI Global.

Spagnoletto, L., AlabdulJabbar, D., & Jalihal, H. (2019). HR4. 0: shaping people strategies in the fourth industrial revolution. World Economic Forum: Geneva, Switzerland,

University of Southern Queensland, Australia (2011). 'Learning and teaching excellence: Flexible learning' from http://ifla.net.au/flexible-learning-and-education/usqs-flexible-learning/ Retrieved May 26, 2024.

Van Den Heever, M. S., Hattingh, M. S., Singaram, M. J., Arnesen, M. J., & Maree, J. (2021). The Role of the Association for Skills Development in South Africa (ASDSA) in Facilitating Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET): Confronting the Challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and Covid-19. *SAQA BULLETIN*, 200.

Walters, S., & Isaacs, S. (2015). National qualifications frameworks: Insights from South Africa1. *Adult education in an interconnected world*, 147.

Ware, J., & Grantham, C. (2003). The future of work: Changing patterns of workforce management and their impact on the workplace. *Journal of facilities management*, *2*(2), 142-159.

Wheelahan, L., & Moodie, G. (2022). Gig qualifications for the gig economy: micro- credentials and the 'hungry mile'. *Higher Education*, *83*(6), 1279-1295.

*IMPORTANT: Please carefully read "Submission / Author Guidelines" on the conference website before preparing your paper and do not exceed 6-8 pages (minimum 4 pages). If you need to reach more than 8 pages, an approval of the lead conference coordinator should be requested in advance (email **CITCpapers@gmail.com**) .*