



**GRADUATES' EXPERIENCES IN SEEKING EMPLOYMENT IN A COMMUNITY IN  
THE WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA**

**by**

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## DECLARATION

I, Eunice Njani, declare that the contents of this dissertation, "Unemployed graduates' experiences in seeking employment in an underserved context", represent my own unaided work and that the dissertation has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.



Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date 25.01.2023  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated lived experiences of unemployed graduates in an underserved context in the Western Cape, South Africa. The lived experiences were studied to understand the employability of unemployed graduates and to pay attention to the causes and barriers they are faced with. In other studies, the concept of graduate employability has been highlighted as the most centred issue that is rapidly increasing on a global scale. Thus, this study aimed to explore the factors contributing to the rising unemployment rate of graduates in the Western Cape, and how addressing this issue might lead to the creation of new job opportunities.

In conducting this study, a qualitative research method was applied and the data were collected through a structured open-ended questionnaire administered to a group of unemployed graduates at the selected community in the Western Cape, South Africa. The research questions focused on getting unemployed graduates to elaborate on matters such as how they apply for jobs, who provides job assistance in their community, what resources are available to them, how prepared they are for the world of work, and to share experiences while seeking a job, among others. Following data collection, Microsoft Excel was used to store the data and analyse the findings.

Findings show that the South African education system needs to be improved, entrepreneurship needs to be encouraged among students, employers need to restructure job requirements, and the South African government need to improve programmes and campaigns that may assist in improving community social ills.

**Keywords:** Unemployed youth, unemployed graduates, NEET youth, employment opportunities, higher education institutions, employer recruitment.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my two special souls, my grandmother (Madlamini) and my sister (Aseza), and all the youth, especially the unemployed youth.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

The major intervention this study sought to make was to explore the perceptions and experiences of factors influencing graduate unemployment. The *Economic Statistics Report* shows that in South Africa, the most challenging factor among youth is the unemployment rate which keeps on increasing (Festus et al., 2015). It has been acknowledged by the South African Department of Basic Education (DBE) that in order to eliminate the level of unemployment in South Africa, investment is required, beginning with the consideration of training and skills enhancement such as graduate programmes and internships, particularly for graduates in the age group 18-35 years.

According to (Levernier & Yang, 2011) unemployment is encompassed by causes and consequences,. To address the question of what causes unemployment, the author further highlighted the following categories of unemployment listed as: frictional, structural, cyclical, classical, hidden, and long-term. Structural unemployment is defined as the long-term unemployment exits due to structural changes in the economy. Frictional unemployment on the other hand is referred as the short-term unemployment associated with the job search process such as job seekers and matching employers while cyclical unemployment is the extra unemployment occurring when workers losing jobs during economic recession (Dean, Elardo et al., 2020). This research focused on structural unemployment.

According to Herz and Van Rens (2011), structural unemployment has been discussed as the type of unemployment that pays particular attention to problems that are unsatisfactory and cause difficulties for people. This becomes evident when people show a lack of skills needed as job requirements, or when they do not reside in areas where jobs are available (Restrepo, 2015). It is therefore an everlasting type of unemployment and even if there is improvement, it will continue to occur in the long run as a result of technological change (Oyer & Shaefer, 2011).

This chapter begins by highlighting the milieu of the problem statement, followed by the significance and rationale of the study, objectives and plan, study questions, literature review, definition of key concepts, paradigm, research method, research design and demarcation. Thereafter, the research methodologies, data collection instruments/fieldwork, data coding and analysis, principal consideration, outline of the dissertation, research aim and limitations of the study are highlighted.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Unemployment is perceived as a global economic problem and one of the developing problems to the community (Kenny, 2019). It is regarded as an unfavourable issue because those who are skilled are expected to acquire educational benefits as a result of their study efforts (Hossain et al., 2018; Statistics South Africa, 2015). It is of great concern that many graduates sit at home with their qualifications as a result of unemployment issues that hit South Africa at large (Mncayi, 2016; Giuliano & Tsibouris, 2014). Jacobs (2014, cited by Mizintseva et al., 2017) annotates that in 2007, the youth increased by 4 million, implicating that approximately 75 million youth are unemployed worldwide. Dubyk and Pozniakova (2013) emphasise the importance of equipping graduates with social entrepreneurial skills while they are still practicing education to combat the unemployment rate.

The South African educational system is not proficient in delivering sustainable education to ensure that the graduates they deliver have a good chance of finding employment in future (Festus, et al., 2015; Van Broekhuizen, 2016). Zahiid (2015) outlines graduates' poor understanding of the English language and the lack of employability skills they demonstrate. Mlatsheni and Rospabé (2002) mention some of the factors that have an effect on graduate unemployment, including employer requirements, low level of experience, and high wage expectations. The authors point to another problem leading to this situation—youth are experiencing challenges to collect data on career options that are in demand, while the way employers' judge when they recruit also affects youth unemployment (Florez & Jayaram, 2016).

Researchers have highlighted that while institutions produce a large number of graduates, they are not in high demand in the job market (Pham & Tran, 2013). There are also issues preventing the chances of graduates being employed, such as what kind of institution a graduate has attended and the perceptions of employers when they conduct recruitment. Some employers will choose to hire a graduate from a certain institution with the belief, trust and confidence they have in the education provided by that institution (Moleke, 2010; Neale-Shutte & Nel, 2013; Van Broekhuizen, 2016). According to the Talent-Corp World Bank assessment, "only half of the companies replied to the forum's structured internship program which could help university students develop the necessary soft skills", as they lack employability skills (Meyer, 2017; The World Bank, 2014).

## **1.3 Aims and objectives**

This study highlights that unemployment is a looming issue affecting the graduates in South Africa annually, and that this is on the rise. The study aimed to explore the perceptions, experiences, and challenges of graduates regarding their unemployment, the factors leading

to the increased rate of unemployment, and how the solution to this problem may lead to the creation of job opportunities. To achieve the aim of this research, a specific set of objectives had to be met. These objectives are stated as follows:

**Objective 1:** To explore the perception of unemployed graduates and youth in an underserved context that influences their transition into employment.

**Objective 2:** To unpack the reasons why unemployed graduates and youth in an underserved context are unable to find employment.

#### **1.4 Research questions (RQs)**

The primary research question is stated as follows:

**PRQ:** What are the experiences of unemployed graduates in finding employment within an underserved context?

The primary research question is supported by two research sub-questions (RSQs) to investigate the situation of unemployed graduates and youth in an underserved context:

**RSQ 1:** How do unemployed graduates perceived the transition into employment?

The reasons for the situation in which unemployed graduates find themselves are unpacked by the second research sub-question:

**RSQ 2:** Why do unemployed graduates experience difficulties in finding employment?

#### **1.5 Literature review**

Moving on from the introduction, it has been highlighted that employment is defined in many ways by researchers and there are many causes of unemployment, especially to graduates. However, it takes essential skills to get a job in the job market (Weligamage, 2009). The entire education system, from the quality of education provided by institutions to the job choices (fields of study) made by graduates, is viewed as a contributing factor to their unemployment.

According to Griesel and Parker (2009), there are four types of skills and attributes scrutinised by employers when hiring graduates. Interactive skills, practical knowledge, workplace skills, intellectual ability and basic skills are regarded as the most important. Most of the graduates apply for jobs where they may not meet the requirements and subsequently end up not making it to the enrollment stage. Pauw et al. (2007) posit that certain institutions do not completely equip their students to develop the skills that are demanded in the labour market – the shorthanded skills taught cause graduates to be disadvantaged.

As mentioned above, employers hire graduates according to their predilection of which higher education institution (HEI) they attended. Another reason, according to Baldry (2016), is that since the existence of White Historical Institutions (WHIs) and Black Historical Institutions (BHIs), employers have been subjective when employing graduates because of their personal views and strong belief in the education supplied by such institutions. In the recruitment phase, graduates from institutions such as WHIs are absorbed faster than graduates from BHIs because of the perceived difference in quality of education received (Laun, 2012). The researchers' opinions are that the workers' fundamental rights outlined in the public works infrastructure programmes such as Extended Publics Work Programmes (EPWP), public education system, social protection and international labour standards should go hand in hand to promote employment (Thwala, 2011). Programmes such as listed above should be promoted to the unemployed (Deranty & MacMillan, 2012). The freedom of reducing unemployment is grounded in the International Labour Organisation's Decent Work Agenda (ILO, 2014), which calls for the government of South Africa to responsibly protect the worker's rights and freedom from discrimination by means of a national employment policy to reduce unemployment and create a better industry for increasing employment (Hughes et al., 2021).

According to South African economic statistics, addressing the problem of unemployed graduates and understanding what causes it must be treated as a continuous problem, because the rising rate is disturbing. In fact, the primary concern is that even graduates may find it difficult to find work (Oluwajodu, Greyling et al., 2015).

### **1.5.1 Structural problems**

A structural problem is often related to structural unemployment, where it is a condition that is substandard and difficult to be resolved (Janoski et al., 2014). This has a negative effect on young people (the youth) and its primary cause is the mismatch of skills that the unemployed lack and the skills in demand by the employers. According to Altman (2007), in 2002, approximately 90,700 job opportunities were not filled because the skills of the candidates did not match the skills demanded for the job opportunities where this is still a rising issue as defined by the most researchers when highlighting structural unemployment.

In addition, (Ornellas, Falkner et al., 2018) highlighted that graduates have been gathering education experiences, skills and creativity that are not in the demand by the employers. The authors outlined authentic learning approaches such as Skill Up project connecting higher education (HE) curricula and the demand of labour market in partnership to enhance graduates' employability skills. Students are not obtaining clear instruction and training in the necessary abilities because it is a well-known fact that information can be received differently and is not completely coordinated (Vong & Kaewurai, 2017). As a result, skills mismatch is a

common occurrence (This is the void that must be filled by the institution and the economic industry. The graduates must be well-trained in the predicted future skills required in the economic industry in their time of studies to ensure they are well equipped for future employment (Franco et al., 2018).

### **1.5.2 Discrimination**

In the mid-1990s, a study conducted discovered a high rate of unemployment (up to 25%) for black graduates that attended BHIs, while for the white graduates the rate was only 2%. This high percentage of unemployed black graduates was seen as an example of inequality in the *South African Employment Statistics Report*. Dube-Addae (2019) recommends that to combat inequity and ensure that all graduates, despite their colour of skin, have the same employment treatment in the labour market; it is the responsibility of the institutions to effectively train their students with the necessary skills before they obtain their qualifications.

### **1.5.3 Quality of education**

In today's working industry, Matric candidates do not have many job opportunities because technology is rapidly changing and requires people with higher academic innovation skills. The education statistical data report an even worse scenario case—students who do not obtain full credits to enrol for their career choices end up studying any available choices they are accepted for, such as enrolments in Commerce and Humanities, which increases the skills mismatch (Palmer, 2017). As such, this exacerbates the oversupply of graduates that cannot be accommodated in the job industry.

## **1.6 Research paradigm**

This study sought to contribute a new dimensional analysis to graduates' experience in seeking employment in the Western Cape Metropole. For this, an interpretivist paradigm was adopted to elaborate on how new and relevant knowledge about this study was obtained. This assisted with formulating an adequate research strategy, problem statement, data collection, analysis and processing. The interpretivist paradigm was adopted with the view that qualitative and resourceful information would be acquired, thus making the findings of this study observable and relevant (Thanh at al., 2015).

## **1.7 Research methodologies**

Research methodology comprises a set of guidelines that is clearly identified, and techniques and tools used to study and collect sets of data. However, research methods are analogical, meaning it is independent from methodology and paradigms. Thus, research methods can be used in various research methodologies, thus indicating that a technique is a practical approach to research while a methodology is a hypothetical fundamental of a technique. This

shows that research design is a vital concept to link a suitable set of research techniques and methodology to answer the research hypotheses or questions (Strydom, 2011).

Research methods are defined as the blueprints, actions or capabilities deployed in the collection of information or validation for investigation in order to ascertain new data or generate an improved perceptive of a topic.

### **1.7.1 Qualitative research**

Qualitative research collects information about lived experiences, emotions or behaviours, and the meanings individuals attach to them. They are planned in a way to facilitate disclosure of the behaviour. This type of study is useful in exploring how or why things have occurred, interpreting events and describing actions (McCusker & Gunatdin, 2015).

### **1.7.2 Quantitative research**

Quantitative research resonates around gathering statistical data that can be ranked, measured or categorised through statistical studies. It serves as a tool for uncovering patterns or interaction, and for making generalisations. This research tool is useful in exploring 'how many', 'how often', 'how much', or 'to what extent (Elkatawneh, 2016)'.

The researcher in this study adopted qualitative research as she sought to understand the perceptions, experiences and difficulties encountered by the unemployed graduates in the Western Cape Province and the factors that led to the increased rate of unemployment. This type of research assisted the researcher in exploring the unemployed graduates' perspective.

## **1.8 Research design**

The researcher in this study followed an ethnographic design, which enabled her to observe, investigate and understand the underlying beliefs in a real-life context and obtain answers from graduates regarding their unemployment (Long & Johnson, 2000).

### **1.8.1 Data collection instrument**

In this study, the proposed data collection instrument was an in-depth interview, but due to the global coronavirus pandemic, the researcher instead used a structured questionnaire to gather data from the direct sources to reveals their behaviour, perceptions and attitudes and reflect on their experiences. This section is fully discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

### **1.8.2 Population**

Population is defined as a large general group of people with certain characteristics relevant to the research topic from which a researcher draws a sample (Hennink et al., 2010). In this study, the population therefore consisted of unemployed graduates of the Western Cape

(Overberg region) and HEIs. The population was extended to also include unemployed youth from similar contexts in Cape Town.

### **1.8.3 Sample method/sample size**

This research adopted a qualitative approach. A non-probability sampling method was used, as this method assists with obtaining a better result when electing the study's population and increases the understanding when looking for participants who are known to be rich sources of data (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). It furthermore enables the researcher to formulate judgments when observing participants in order to meet a study's objectives and answer the research questions. The population size of this study was set to 16 participants.

### **1.9 Delineation**

Delimitation includes the numerical investigation, populace of a study, variables and focus of the research. In this study, the population consisted of unemployed graduates of the Western Cape (Overberg region). The area was selected because it is an under-resourced area of low socio-economic status (Corti et al., 2016). The context was extended to also include participants in similar situations in Cape Town.

The study did not consider unemployment from the employers' perspective or from any other entities that assist people in finding employment. The study only considered the experience of finding employment from the graduate's perspective to determine their experiences and challenges in practice. The findings in this study are based on a selected group of unemployed graduates can therefore not be generalised.

### **1.10 Ethical considerations**

Ethical consideration in research study pertains to balance the good of many with the participants' entitlement to confidentiality (Evans, 2007). When performing research, various principles that protect participants' involvement should be considered. When dealing with informants participating in the interview, the researcher needs to observe and adhere to ethical standards before, during and after conducting fieldwork. When participants are engaged in a study, they may be exposed to harmful situations such as invasion of privacy, social disadvantage, psychological distress and discomfort, and physical harm. To reduce the risk of harm, it is advisable that the researcher follows ethical principles and provides participants with an informed consent letter that protects their confidentiality and permits them to withdraw at any time should they feel so.

The chosen participants of this study were made aware, both in written form and verbally, of the primary goal of the study and that the participation would be voluntary (Rubin & Babbie, 2005). An information sheet and consent form were designed to provide participants with the



needed information which enabled them to understand and provide consent to partake in the study. Anonymity or confidentiality was maintained, and participants were made aware of how their data would be used. Participants were informed that should they feel to withdraw from the study at any time, they are free to do so and they have the right to choose not to answer any question they feel uncomfortable with. Participants were assured that they would not be pressurised to stay when opting to withdraw from the research process. To ensure that the information is understood, each consent form was verbally explained and each participant was asked if they agree to the terms.

### **1.11 Limitations**

The sample size relating to this study was set (but not limited) to contain 16 participants, restricted to one geographical area. This study was conducted in a small area of the Overberg region (Grabouw) with additional participants from similar contexts in Cape Town. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to the rest of the Western Cape.

### **1.12 Main findings**

The main findings include similarities of the graduates' perspectives with regard to their employability and the type of HEIs that the graduates attended, while the South African education system was highlighted as a factor affecting graduate employability. However, the findings also reveal that HEIs provide more support compared to community support in enhancing the skills of graduates through including them in internships programmes even though the duration is not equivalent to what is required by employers. The community environment and employer recruitment policies were also found as factors contributing to the unemployment of graduates. The employers' recruitment strategies include experience and high-level skills.

### **1.13 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the research topic was introduced, the research questions were stated, and the research methodology process was outlined. Chapter 2 expands on the existing literature about the nature of unemployment involving an overview of unemployed graduates and solutions of improvement.

#### **1.13.1 Summary**

This chapter identifies graduate unemployment as an economical issue with a high rate in South Africa. It has been described as a prominent issue because the quality of education offered by the educational institutions in the country is considered a contributing factor to graduate unemployment. This study aimed to explore factors influencing the employment rate of graduates, and the objectives were formulated as understanding the experiences,

challenges and perceptions encountered by graduates in their transitioning towards employment.

### **1.13.2 Thesis chapter layout**

**Chapter 1:** Introducing the study with background information on the literature review outlining out the problem statement, research questions and research methodologies that were used.

**Chapter 2:** Provides a literature review on the concept of unemployment among graduates and its evolution to date. It further provides a view of the factors that may be contributing to unemployment among graduates and how it can be addressed.

**Chapter 3:** Concentrates on the tools used to collect data, and discusses the research methodologies and design.

**Chapter 4:** Reports on the data analysis, i.e. the data coding, findings, and interpretation of findings.

**Chapter 5:** The key findings of the data analysed in the previous chapter are summarised and discussed.

**Chapter 6:** The recommendations and conclusion are provided.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter commences with an outline of the NEET concept and comparing the NEET youth in advanced economies to the NEET youth in South Africa. It primarily addresses the literature sources on unemployment and unemployed graduates. It provides an overview of literature that examines how graduates and young people are affected by unemployment. The chosen topics cover the gaps on how the unemployed graduates experience and perceive unemployment in their everyday lives.

To achieve the purpose of this chapter, previous studies were explored in the form of journal articles, conference proceedings, research theses, projects, workshops and government websites to identify gaps that need to be addressed and to provide recommendations for future research. A discussion of the literature is done on the concept of NEET youth, unemployed graduates with its causes, consequences and solutions to unemployment. Regarding the causes, the discussion is based on the demand theory of unemployed youth graduates where demand is a high level working experience, followed by the skills in demand, whereas the graduates possess a mismatch of skills and qualifications not demanded in the labour market. The consequences are examined through the political impact and the psychological effects each individual may experience as a result of the unemployment. The literature on the solutions of unemployment is highlighted through Small Medium and Macro Enterprises (SMMEs), Basic Package of Support (BPS) and Entrepreneurship.

### **2.2 NEET youth**

NEET is a concept that is interpreted differently by individuals and is an acronym for “Not in Education, Employment or Training” (Follesø, 2015). It is a concept that is used to describe the youth-oriented policies (the youth who are generally outside the context of employment, education and training). It examines how the labour market allows for rapid changes and how these changes influence young people in various contexts. The discussion and comparison of NEET youth is divided into two subsections below (NEET youth in advanced economies and the NEET youth in South Africa). The purpose of the comparison is to highlight how NEET varies by country, with specific concepts, value and challenges that each state faces.

#### **2.2.1 NEET youth in advanced economies**

South Korea, New Zealand and Japan have acknowledged the existence of the NEET concept and that it gained popularity (Holte et al., 2019). This literature section introduces the existence and adoption of the NEET concept in several countries in Northern and Eastern Europe,

specifically in Finland, Denmark, Norway and Turkey, and also countries outside Europe, including the United States and New Zealand.

### **2.2.2 The Nordic countries**

According to the research statistics of Nordic countries, the NEET concept is used to describe youth unemployment or further categorised as young people who have left school or dropped out without obtaining the final grade. Generally, the concept includes all young people and those who are in the labour market. The *Eurofound Statistics Report* shows that these young people are a mixed population with a variety of sub-groups. They are outlined in the demographics of Finland and Norway to determine who they are, what they do, and what the prediction of their future is (Berg & Aaltonen, 2017). In the Nordic countries, young people are expected to contribute to the country's economy once they start working; those categorised as NEET are fashioned as a problem since they are not working and have no qualification and experience that enable them to contribute to the economy of the country. This is an alarming issue because young people provided with education should be employed as soon as they complete their studies, and those without education should receive training or at least a chance to have an education.

Unemployment has a scarring effect and affects future labour markets opportunities. This is a living example supported by the non-negligible extent of young people facing difficulties in attaching to labour markets as well as the fact that the youth unemployment rate is high in the Nordic countries. The Nordic regions' youth unemployment figure consists of large numbers of students seeking employment, and these figures are higher in Finland and Sweden than in Norway and Denmark (Holte, Swart et al.,2019). After the countries in this region recognised this matter, they embarked on a reorganisation plan to uplift the rise of participation of social development and investments with other programmes into the labour market because they play a significant role to the young people as they open more opportunities for them (Albæk et al., 2015).

NEET youth in the Nordic regions are individuals aged 16-24 years, comprising 8.4% in Finland and 6.7% in Norway. The low rates reflect a strong economy and labour markets which were achieved through emphasising the reorganisation plan in the labour markets. Many activities and programmes have been introduced to NEET youth in the Nordic regions where they are integrated to eliminate the number of young people in NEET through assisting them with obtaining employment, education and training (Holte, Swart et al.,2019). The Nordic region countries, specifically Finland, established a planned campaign for individuals named "Youth Guarantee". This campaign is designed for youth aged 25 years and younger who still need to engage themselves with practical or formal vocational training provided by the (Ministry for

Education and Culture 2012). The strategy of the campaign is to place each youngster in workshops and seminars that assist them in completing their education and seeking employment. The integrated employment and social services at the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) associated with the *Youth Guarantee* campaign organise and support NEET youth with allocating them to places that are closer to work opportunities and therefore help them to find employment (OECD, 2018). Free education with financial support is also provided to students to give all of them a chance of education.

### **2.2.2.1 NEET youth and status in European countries**

According to Mascherini et al. (2012) and Caroleo et al. (2020), the main study is analysed within the causes of the NEET status. From this study, NEET youth are categorised based on ages 19-30 years with no employment status while the study further sub-categorises the age groups into two age brackets, namely 19-24 and 25-30 years, which are treated differently. The status of those aged 19-24 years is impacted by school and employment factors, while the status of those aged 25-30 years, initially called “Not Young but Not Adult” (NYNA) are primarily influenced by the demand of labour markets and institutional requirements or factors.

Many European countries are experiencing an alarming unemployment rate towards youth that is rapidly increasing and has doubled compared to the overall population of Europe (Carrillo & Königs, 2015). The statistics of Carrillo reveal that the NEET status also originates from the characteristics, changes in policies, and institutional regulations ruling the labour market.

Typically, young people (NEET) are a mixed population and their circumstances are complex to comprehend (Guido, 2015). The author further highlighted that, in the late 1990s the NEET concept was formed by the UK specifically reporting on “Bridging the gap” and identifying unemployed youth aged 16-18 years not in education/studying and not receiving on-the-job training. The term also points to a mixed group of adults not in education, employment or training for different reasons. The concept has been described as an unbearable experience where people lose their sense of knowing their identities. Furthermore, falling under NEET is a risk related to personal circumstances, such as coming from a disadvantaged family, teenage pregnancy, disabilities, and place of residence but a risk that is not always a personal choice (De Luca et al., 2019).

Young people with low education or qualifications still encounter employment exclusion. European countries proposed a few notable factors; one of which is the Swedish universalistic regime with an inclusive education system that needs to succeed and invest in school-to-work transitions, and tertiary education that has to guarantee fast and stable transitional developments. Lastly, the Mediterranean regime imposed on Spain and Portugal, whose underdeveloped system provides permanent employment security but creates uncertainty for

temporary workers (Brunello & De Paola, 2014). According to Dolado (2015), an important change was made in Europe based on the nature of qualifications and the types of jobs compared to the Arab economies. An analysis of the definition of NEET shows that employment is an alarming issue in European countries.

### **2.2.2.2 Understanding and being a NEET in Turkey**

From previous studies it has been examined that the Turkish NEET youth status rate is higher than those of OECD countries. According to Turkey, NEET is described as the youth movement with four conditions: (i) unemployment; (ii) employment; (iii) education and inactivity; and (iv) youth who have looked for work over the period of a year with no success of finding employment (Bardak et al., 2015). Additionally, educational achievement and gender are the primary factors in explaining the NEET status. The population of Turkey is 77.7 million citizens with the youth aged 15-24 years, making up a total of 16.5%.

According to literature, being a NEET is caused by low levels of education both from themselves and from their families as they are facing the challenge of not completing their studies due to low levels of income at home. School leavers are at a critically disadvantaged stage as they do not have the skills to meet the job requirements (Erdoğan et al., 2017; Alfieri et al., 2015; Powell, 2018). According to Gökşen et al. (2015) and Susanli (2016), the migrant NEET youth in Turkey are not properly integrated into the job market and they tend to be more than the other NEET youth in the country. The overall factors that affect the status of the youth in Turkey are listed below with explanations by Alkan (2015):

#### **i) The Baby Boom cohort**

In Baby Boom times, youth unemployment increased and the proportion of these youths in the population was a major determinant of youth unemployment. Therefore, the relative rise in the young population has a negative impact on youth finding jobs Alkan (2015).

#### **ii) Lack of experience and skills**

The lack of experience and expertise are sources of youth unemployment. A lack of training and knowledge of NEET youth is regarded as a challenge to join labour markets. This is a significant fact that prevents young people from competing fairly Alkan (2015).

#### **iii) The overall level of education**

According to official statistics (Erdoğan et al., 2017), the third Turkish youth group is allowed to study further in tertiary education, but after completing their studies, many of them lack the skills demanded in a job market that could offer them a better future Alkan (2015).

#### **iv) Age**

The NEET status statistics of youth aged 18-29 years has shown that the highest NEET youth rate is predominant in the age bracket 25-29 years, at a record of 32.6%. The low NEET youth rate is within the age bracket of 18-19 years, being 16.8%, while the medium age bracket of 20-24 NEET youth is 26.3% Alkan (2015).

**v) NEET youth in households with low income**

The high number of NEET youth stems from households where parents earn a low income, and this has a detrimental impact on their level of education and skills. The economic situation of a household by national standards in Turkey has been shown in percentages from “above average with 15.6, average with 24.7 and below average with 44.4 percent” Alkan (2015).

**vi) Marital status**

Approximately half of the married population can be categorised as NEET while the other half is employed. The study’s analysis shows that a small number of married youth drops out of education, 19.1% of youth never married, and 49.2% were married at some stage. As a result of the high workload of a household, which includes raising children, marriage has been described as standing in the way of educational and job opportunities Alkan (2015).

**vii) Gender**

Gender is another factor which corresponds to the NEET issue, where the rate is mostly higher among females in comparison to their male counterparts. From studies, females from Turkey leave school earlier than men. The number one reason for this is families not coping with education expenses; they therefore send their sons to schools over their daughters’ education Alkan (2015).

**2.2.2.3 NEET youth in the United States**

According to a study on NEET youth in the United States (Schoon & Bynner, 2019), unemployment rates are identified as a contributing factor in a nation’s economy impacted by the labour market. However, unemployment rates do not include students and those who are economically inactive. Factors such as not being active in the economy, specifically not searching for a job, contribute to the NEET concept. This is especially applicable to women who are inactive in the labour market as a result of marriage, which demands providing care to children by looking after them at home (Schoon & Bynner, 2019). Furthermore, the NEET concept includes homeless youth, school leavers, and students taking gap years to travel without first obtaining an educational qualification.

A Norwegian study of the United States explored mental health problems predominantly among NEET females as a factor that increases school drop-out. The analysis highlighted those boys who dropped out of upper secondary school have poor self-perception and mental

health compared to the boys who are attending school. The Occupational Therapy (OT) services were developed to help young NEET to return to education or training (Stea et al., 2016).

#### **2.2.2.4 NEET youth in Auckland New Zealand**

According to the *Auckland Council Technical Report* (TR2018/029), young adult NEETs are considered a risk factor to the economy when they lack the skills to improve the economy, with the possibility of being socially excluded if their income is below the poverty line (Tuatagaloa & Wilson, 2018). The statistics of New Zealand describe young people from 15-24 years of age as unemployed youth who are not engaged in education and training (NEET) or not in the labour force (NILF) in Auckland, and they are identified by ethnicity, age and location. The substantial increase of the New Zealand NEET rate peaked within 1-3 years, from December 2006 to December 2009, with an increase of 52%—a total number of 31,800 youth. The absence of a connection between the Auckland youth and local employers was found to be the reason for the increased rate in the number of NEET youth.

In 2018, Auckland, which is the largest city in New Zealand, had 29,400 residing NEET youth; however, 10% of these youth were part of the Asian group. The Auckland NEET youth rate differs among the four ethnic groups, which comprise the Asian, Maori, European and Pacific people. The highest rate was found among the Pacific and European groups. The ethnic group of Europeans comprised 52% in June 2018 and the Pacific group showed a 30% increase of 8,900 youth. The latter group has been affected the most with a substantial increase of NEET youth from December 2009. The Maori ethnic group had the lowest rate of NEET youth, with 18%—5,400 young people. The remaining NEET youth of Auckland was found in the Southern Initiative area (Tuatagaloa & Wilson, 2018).

The local government authority of Auckland implemented the “Auckland Plan 2050” to increase the opportunities for education, training and skills development to ensure that this New Zealand city promotes an equal standard of living to every citizen. This is a digital plan that allows the users a journey based on their areas of interest such as employment opportunity and prosperity, belonging and participation, Maori identity and wellbeing, homes and places, transport and access, and environment and cultural heritage. The initiative’s programme (Youth Connections programme), youth employer pledges, and Fest youth employment events are also being measured in addressing the issue of NEET (Auckland Council, 2018).

#### **2.2.3 NEET youth in South Africa**

NEET is defined by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Dickens & Marx, 2020) as youth who are not employed, educated or trained, as well as youth who are inactive in addition to not being in education or skills development. They are included



as youth who are unable or unavailable to work due to them being discouraged, voluntarily, ill and disabled. The discouraged youth refer to youth who do not believe jobs exist or they are unable to find jobs due to the lack of information. The voluntarily NEET youth are those who are waiting to re-enter education, training or employment.

In South Africa there is a youth bulge. The term 'bulge' refers to a youth population that is rapidly increasing. The youth bulge highlights the high increase in number of young people and implies that a large number of young people need to be absorbed in the labour market as youth unemployment rising trends will cause them to remain unemployed for a long time (Mago, 2018). Globally, the youth who are not in any kind of "education, employment and training" are impacted negatively with factors such as social exclusion, substance abuse, discouragement, physical and mental health, increased risk behaviour and precarious job prospects, while they are seen as disengaged from society and the labour market (Dickens & Marx, 2020). In 2018, the number of NEET youth in South Africa aged 15-29 years was over 5.6 million, with 36.5% in the second quarter of 2018.

According to the OECD, an economy surrounded by the high state of NEET youth tends to experience a decline in human capital. In 2016, 6.6 million South African youth completed education lower than Grade 12, followed by 3.8 million people who completed Grade 12 education and 2.6 million who completed primary school (Sánta, 2016). This indicates NEET youth who are not equipped with the right skills and education, which is a worrying factor as it challenges their prospects to participation in the economy. It further shows that they need to improve skills that may open better chances of finding employment as they progress in their career.

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) published the highest level of educational attainment by gender (Harley et al., 2016). The report shows that the number of NEET females is higher than the number of their male counterparts across the age bracket group of 15-24 years. Women who attained a degree totalled 31.7% while men of the same age who improved their education level totalled 35.2%. This shows the gap between the two genders, where the reason for the difference is likely that the traditional women are the homemakers while men attend work. There were approximately 2.7 million NEET homemakers in 2016, followed by 2.5 million job seekers and 2.2 million new NEET entrants, indicating that most of these categories were not economically active.

The challenges or factors associated with NEET include: no jobs available; unable to find employment due to the shortage of skills; and lost hope in finding employment (De Lannoy & Mudiriza, 2019). The overwhelming details provided show that 58% of NEET youth aged 20-24 years are living in urban areas, with KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Eastern Cape, Northern

Cape, Free State, North West and Mpumalanga having the highest number compared to the Western Cape but excluding Limpopo. In South Africa, recruitment is person-centred with the focus on job requirements that include knowledge, skills, attributes and abilities. The majority of youth seeking jobs only have Grade 12 as their highest qualification. Wedekind and Mutereko (2016) argue that recruitment in South Africa is extremely individualised and based on employers' needs focusing on the "product system". The authors conclude that employability as measure should not only focus on applicants' traits but also acknowledge their needs and realities. Youth are a diverse group encountering individual problems and needs that include long-term employment. In this case, the majority of youth have dropped out of school and may not necessarily go back to education because they are seeking employment to look after their families (Tele, 2017).

According to de Lannoy and Mudiriza (2019), NEET youth are entangled in personal, household and community-based challenges and factors, which may happen too often. The household factors include a parent with a low education, household income, the number of individuals employed, and the number of children younger than seven years. The community-based factors include accommodation and type of residence area (rural or urban). Health status is also a considered factor; where it is a high probability, 43.1% of youth have poor health. This study's analysis also that 10.3% of female youth are more likely to be structured under NEET than males.

The circumstances experienced by each young person leading to unemployment may vary; however, the way each of them experiences unemployment is the same whether they are young or old. Once a young person is unemployed, there is a chance of them staying unemployed for a long period. According to the NEET youth from Engcobo in the Eastern Cape Province, they feel defeated and see themselves as failures as they are unable to look after and contribute to their families. They are not employed because jobs are scarce in their community town with low accessibility to job search and they possess low skills in education and employment (Tele, 2017). Recommendations proposed by Cloete (2015) include that the government provides opportunities for education and training by means of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to accommodate the transition of NEET into adulthood, where TVET shares the programmes they offer and indicated clearly how one can access them. This way, the options are open to NEET youth in rural areas in terms of technical and vocational education and training. In terms of employment opportunities, the government could make use of agriculture and farming as the key tool to eliminate unemployment by providing information on the use of land. The introduction of formal information systems should be put in place to facilitate job search (Cloete, 2015).

Brown and Prinstein (2011) suggest that the characteristics of being a NEET are manifested in the lives of young people, affecting their psychological, physical, and emotional wellbeing. Being categorised as NEET also impacts on other outcomes, with the possibility of affecting long-term future employment of the youth while exposing them to poverty and social exclusion. Besides the above-mentioned influences, it is not easy to be categorised as NEET because youth in today's labour market consider the youth who are engaged in education for a long period contributing towards the increase in human capital with competencies associated with higher levels of education.

The South African concept of NEET is summarised under the points below, showing that there is still a difference in the participation of the labour market in terms of race and institutional education attendance (Matibe et al. 2012).

**i) population group**

The Population group reported that coloured people have the highest chance of being categorised as NEET with a ratio of 3.48:1, followed by Africans with a ratio of 3.40:1 compared to whites. Indian youth are also compared to whites with a ratio of 1.80:1.

**ii) Gender**

In terms of gender, the increase in age provides evidence of gender inequalities correlated to institution attendance and labour market. The ratio of women in the age group 15-19 being educated is of 4:5. When it comes to employment, the ratio falls to 1:2 for the 20-24, 25-29, and 30-34 years age group.

**iii) Highest level of education**

When comparing youth in age group 15-19 years who completed secondary education to other age groups and to those who have an education level below a higher institution qualification, the 15-19 years age group is less likely to be NEET as they are easily absorbed into the labour market once completing their secondary education.

**iv) Province and geographical type**

The NEET youth age range of 15-34 years is higher in number in the Eastern Cape, Free State, North West, Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces compared to the same age group in Gauteng, while those from Limpopo, the Western Cape and Mpumalanga are lower in number than Gauteng.

The analysis presented above shows that close to half of the South African youth, both uneducated to overeducated, are faced with the challenge of unemployment. Therefore, a solution for South Africa is to respond to the challenges of the increasing number of

unemployed people in a competitive environment that requires a high skills base when recruiting. This requirement of a high skills base is a major problem for South African unemployed and educated people.

### **2.3 Overview of unemployment and skills mismatch between market demand and educational qualification**

This section covers the evidence of unemployment and the labour market mismatch while discussing how educational qualifications are a contributing factor to graduate employment. According to a previous study, the period from 2006 to 2014 comprised simultaneously unemployment and vacancy rates increases (Brunello & Wruuck, 2019) . According to the *2014 Global Employment Trends* made available by the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2014), a global financial crisis happened in 2008 and in 2013, approximately 202 million people were unemployed around the world, as indicated by unemployment statistics.

The concept of unemployment is one of the most important social issues, because it always affects the stability and economic development of society; it determines the image of society and how society will develop. According to the International Labour Office (ILO, 2014), the term 'unemployment' is understood as people who do not hold occupations; however, to describe people who do not hold occupations one must be:

- totally without work, meaning the person is not receiving any employment or self-employment income;
- currently available to accept employment, which means the person is ready to receive an income from paid employment or self-employment; and
- Seeking employment, meaning the person had or is going through stages of looking for paid or self-employment.

Unemployment has spread globally, and especially in South Africa. Current statistics (ILO, 2020) show a total of 19.7 million people of which 50% are not economically active and 18% are actively seeking employment, while only 31% are working. Unemployment and poverty are regarded as twins coupled with inequalities that can be described as a disaster cocktail. Statistics SA (2018) presents the demand for employment worldwide and in South Africa's economy. The South African unemployment rate is extremely complicated, with serious socio-political issues confronting the South African government. Its economy results in a high skills deficit towards youth and graduates, which leads to a skills mismatch and high demand for skilled labour (Patel, 2019). According to the calculations based on ILO Trends (2014)'s econometric models, when comparing South Africa as a developed country to emerging and developing countries. In South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2022) the unemployed rate is 34,5% with 40 million citizens – working age of which 51,5% are youth (15-34 years).

The youth unemployment rate in emerging countries was 5.6% in 2017 and decreased to 5.5% in 2019, while developing countries experienced the same rate of 5.3% from 2017–2019 (Kuhn et al., 2018).

#### **2.4 Skills mismatch between market demand and educational qualification**

A discussion on skills mismatch shows that the South Africa's economy is a result of skills deficit among the youth and graduates, and this has become the mutual factor globally. The term *skills mismatch* is a broad concept used to define the skills gap, field of study, undereducation, overeducation, unfilled and hard-to-fill vacancies, and skills shortages. Dos Santos (2016) defines skills deficit as a term indicating that unemployed graduates do not have the skills required by the labour market. Dos Santos furthermore indicates that the education levels or skills can be poor, below or above those of the job requirements.

In the case of vacancies, the degree to which the education and skills of an applicant meet the requirements of the hiring firm can be divided into measures of surplus and deficit of human capital. Surplus human capital is measured by being over-educated or over-skilled, and in alignment to the field of study, where workers are employed in jobs that are not relevant to the skills and knowledge acquired during their formal education (McGuinness, Pouliakas et al., 2018). Mismatches in human capital relate to workers who possess skills that are no longer required due to market conditions.

According to Chisoro (2018), the movement in a country's economy results in skills mismatch where the cause is the oversupply of graduate employees in the labour market with low levels of skills. A report titled "*Graduate unemployment in the face of skills shortages*" was published in 2006 by the University of Cape Town Development Policy Research which supports the occurrence of skills mismatch and low skills among graduates. The oversupply of these graduates is specifically Black Africans as a result of university separation for various race groups that was established during South Africa's apartheid regime.

Attention is needed to carefully examine the poor performance of South African learners both in primary and secondary school. This poor performance is influencing employers' negative perception when selecting candidates, both matriculants and graduates, based on quality of education because skills really do matter to employers (Ohei & Brink, 2019). Employers recruit graduates based on their perceived intellectual ability and skills even though it is difficult for employers to hire the current type and quality of graduates due to their skills shortages (Pollard et al., 2015). HEIs, and specifically TVET Colleges, have failed in promoting relevant skills that are in demand in the labour market to uplift their recruitment, of which graduate unemployment is a larger problem, and there is a lack of labour market differentiation scenarios for HE qualifications while the labour market in terms of employment patterns is misleading. In

a study conducted by Baldry (2016), it has been found that a sample of 1,175 graduate respondents who graduated between 2006 and 2012 completed an online survey about their experiences and influences in their employment status. The author points out that socio-economic status, race and the year of graduation were found to be characteristics that strongly demonstrate unemployment among graduates. A surprising point is that the marks obtained by each graduate, together with their level and field of study—considering whether they have received career guidance or not at their higher education institute—did not affect their unemployment/employment status. Therefore, this is evidence of the low-performance role contributed by educational institutions in contributing to the status of graduates' unemployment and challenges experienced because the educational system in South Africa seems to not address the cause of skills shortages or skills mismatch between labour market demand and higher education supply. The researcher posed a question to the study participants to understand whether higher education institutions and graduate employers promote social inequality with their graduate recruitment practices.

The skills and education acquired by an individual from primary school to higher education are the most important factors considered and play an important role in labour market entry (OECD, 2017). The South African education system does not promote efficiency, quality, and relevance, which are needed to be adequately skilled. These sources are essential in delivering opportunities to young people in the labour market and competence to businesses. Furthermore, the skills level of jobs in the labour market does not match the level of education, and this in turn causes a skills mismatch that is regarded as the foremost issue not only affecting individuals but also the economy of the country and businesses (Soni, 2017). The mismatch is worse between the labour market and the skills developed in higher and secondary educational institutions in the field of social sciences and humanities, while it seems to be less challenging in the field of health care and technology.

## **2.5 Nature of unemployment**

### **2.5.1 Barriers to employment**

In many countries across the world, unemployment is featured as an alarming issue that is rapidly increasing. The youth are faced with many challenges, including unemployment. Therefore, opportunities that can be solutions should be considered because youth are the future of the South African economy (Kunene, 2018). The author further highlighted that, general attributes influencing the unemployment rate vary from low economic growth where employers hire less employees when the business produces less goods as a result of less goods demanded, to high costs of living, structural imbalance in the supply of, and demand for, skilled potential employees, and minimum wages and labour market inflexibilities (Kunene, 2018).

The following barriers attribute to the persistent high rate of graduate unemployment: *insufficient work experience, employer partiality, lack of higher education, not knowing the right people in the right places, limited access to information and resources, graduate qualifications not in demand in the labour market, and people living with disabilities*. Additionally, *gender-related social norms* are also a barrier to finding employment, specifically for females. These barriers are discussed below:

**i) Working experience**

The challenge of this aspect is that new graduates complete a qualification with little or no work experience. In today's world, many job opportunities require a number of years working experience—something that a new graduate does not have. Even in-service training, internships or volunteer work to gain the relevant skills and experience are for a maximum of one year, while the required experience to work industry is normally more than that (Martin, Barnham et al., 2019).

**ii) Employer partiality**

According to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in the United States, employer discrimination exists based on colour, race, nationality, religion, and gender. All these criteria are applicable to the spheres of employment, from promotions, hiring, firing, compensation and privileges of employment to the terms and conditions. Several studies have shown that almost everyone is subjected to discrimination based on race and gender. African graduates are particularly subject to scrutiny on the job in comparison to their white graduate counterparts, meaning they must be twice as good as their white colleagues to receive the same recognition in terms of employment and other treatment (Wirts, 2017). This racial inequality scrutiny on the job leads to higher unemployment rates and lower evaluations for African graduates when compared to the white workforce. Employers fail to decide between hiring and promoting an individual without having to look at the skin colour first or to discriminate against the individual because of their race. Instead, more employment decisions are subjective rather than being objective (Wirts, 2017).

**iii) Lack of higher educational qualification**

Generally, education offers a higher advantage than having no education. Many jobs need highly skilled individuals with a solid education, which poses a challenge to the NEET youth who only attained Grade 12 or less and who therefore do not meet the requirements. This challenge sometimes also applies to graduates who have obtained only diplomas, as most of the jobs in today's world require more advanced qualifications such as degrees and Bachelor of Technology (BTech) qualifications (Yadav, 2021).

**iv) Not knowing influential people in the right places**

Another factor that makes it difficult for the graduates to find a job is not having a connection with the “right people”. This indicates that most people are hired by knowing the right people in the right places and knowing the right people can open doors to employment (Mncayi, 2016). The author further highlighted that this is a kind of connections result in expensive bribery and in most cases, not having the bribe money leads to no job. The lack of skills is also highlighted as one of the complex issues that contribute to graduate unemployment. This may be attributed to most employers not wanting to employ candidates with low skills.

**v) Limited access to information and resources**

Koch et al. (2018) indicate that the lack of job sourcing is considered a factor that makes it difficult to find jobs. Most of the time graduates are looking in the wrong direction, not following current websites and platforms where jobs are advertised, so they are left behind. As some have limited exposure to work opportunities, they are not aware of the available opportunities and do not know these opportunities exist. Sometimes graduates even fail to use their existing networks effectively to communicate their needs appropriately, which leads to a loss of opportunities where they might have been assisted. Nowadays, new sourcing tools are available to find candidates faster through electronic and social media. A previous study shows that apart from candidates lacking information on the labour market, it appears to be South African researchers who pay no attention to the ability of social media in terms of attracting talent and how it has changed the recruitment process activated by the recruiters (Koch et al., 2018).

**vi) Graduate qualifications not in demand in the labour market**

Some of the qualifications obtained by the graduates are not in demand, for example, graduates in the fields of Humanities and Arts are in lower demand compared to Science and Engineering as the latter comprises critical skills. In a study by Mncayi (2016), the author argues that there is a mismatch between labour market skills required and qualifications delivered (Mncayi, 2016). Other findings include that in nearly all qualification programmes of the experiment universities, the practical work and the knowledge theory applied are not in alignment. This also supports the notion that in some higher institutions of learning, the courses offered often do not fully equip students for the workplace because these courses are too theoretical.

**vii) People living with disabilities**

In general, people with disabilities are restricted in terms of finding employment as employers might not accommodate them. The findings of a study by Bonaccio et al. (2019) revealed primary barriers of employment for people living with disabilities, which include: the concern



over costs; lack of awareness of disability; fear of legal liability; and accommodation reasoning from the employers. Particularly, employers do not know how to manage the needs of a person with a disability on the job and they are concerned about the extra time that co-workers may need to spend to assist workers with disabilities. They furthermore opine that people with disabilities cannot work according to the same standard as other employees, and are concerned that a disabled person may not have the necessary skills and experience (Bonaccio et al., 2019).

According to Baker et al. (2018), the gap between the actual capacity and the assumed abilities of people living with a disability affects their employment experiences as employers are concerned about work accuracy, efficiency, and full participation in the workplace compared to graduates employees without disabilities. Employers are also concerned about conditions such as absenteeism that could disturb the performance of the workplace and the additional costs involved in hiring persons with disabilities (Yin et al., 2014). However, employing people with disabilities could save money in terms of employer tax credits (Vornholt et al., 2018). Almost 3.7 million British Columbian youth aged 15 years and older are living with a disability; they are unemployed because employers fail to form additional collaborations with universities' office of disability services in facilitating an environment that best matches the skills of youth graduates with disabilities (Carswell, 2016).

#### **viii) Gender-related social norms**

According to Jayachandran (2020), gender-related beliefs and norms are a barrier to employment. Women are believed to be home-based and taking care of the family, which causes a decline in female employment. This mostly happens when couples move from one area to another, and the women are mostly forced with the challenge of dropping out of the labour force vs. childcare and seeking new employment. The female gender shows a lower rate in labour participation as a result of increased fertility and decreased time spent in economic production in agriculture. The longer the female gender focuses on childcare, the more economically productive men become, thereby making it even more difficult for women to find work due to parenting and not gathering work experience.

Anyanwu (2016) posits that gender equality in employment remains a challenge. In 2014, the global youth employment population ratio for males vs. females was estimated to be 48.2% compared to 33.7% respectively. For Africa as a whole, the male ratio was estimated to be 47.7% and the female ration 39.4%. It is said that females lack entrepreneurial knowledge as they have only a few (if any) networks of peer entrepreneurs because of gender-related norms limiting their movement. Networking with peer entrepreneurs can be resourceful in obtaining informal skills and data about the market.

### 2.5.2 OB preparedness/work readiness initiatives

Unemployment is a matter of concern and in South Africa the rate is extremely high—over 9 million people were unemployed in 2017, which included graduates under the age of 35 years. A previous study (Ramohale & Rachidi, 2018) presented the considerable rate of youth unemployment in South Africa and the programmes of SMMEs that contributed to decreasing the high rate of unemployment. SMMEs play a vital role in South Africa with its high unemployment rate; they contribute 80% of new job opportunities and 60% of the National Gross Domestic Product (NGDP). SMMEs do not only create job opportunities but also introduce innovative products and services, thereby improving people's lives (Ramohale & Rachidi, 2018).

Previous studies revealed that the lack of graduate involvement in SMMEs, and specifically in entrepreneurial ventures, can be attributed to lacking start-up capital for their businesses. In this regard, the government of South Africa realised this challenge and put in place several programmes and initiatives to develop and support SMMEs. The development of these programmes and initiatives falls in the range of the *Youth Entrepreneurship Promotion and Awareness Programme*. This programme aims to raise awareness and encourage the youth to view entrepreneurship courses as their first option to mitigating unemployment. Malebana (2014) posits that the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) offers support in youth entrepreneurship and develops businesses. The Youth Business Chambers and Associations focuses on unemployed graduates and those without education by developing programmes aimed at empowering them economically. The National Youth Policy and the Provincial Departments of Economic Development close the identified gaps and limitations facing the youth development sector by providing business development support to the youth (financial and non-financial). The National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) provides career guidance and training to unemployed youth to enhance their life and professional skills, thereby enabling them to be integrated into the economy. The NYDA creates and administers a database of employment opportunities. The most suggested commerce course is in the field of entrepreneurship. However, Ramohale and Rachidi (2018) reveal that the entrepreneurship course makes youth feel nervous and not confident enough to choose it because the lack skills and may therefore prefer guaranteed employment income rather than a new business venture.

Another study (Graham et al., 2019) revealed that South Africa has a rich policy environment with a Basic Package of Support (BPS) in the form of policy assessments and programmes for the South African youth to support young people and unemployed graduates in finding employment. The purpose of the Basic Package of Support (BPS) is to re-connect youth and graduates who are willing to avail themselves to job training opportunities (Graham et al., 2019). The mandated departments to manage the Basic Package of Support include the

Department of Employment and Labour, the Department of Health, the Department of Social Development, the Department of Basic Education (for younger youth), and the Department of Higher Education, Science and Technology. The Youth Employment Accord document (Republic of South Africa. Economic Development Department, 2013) proposes the following services offered by most of the above mentioned departments in making new programmes available to youth and graduates:

- *Work exposure*—such as job replacement schemes, work-readiness programmes (vacation programmes, job shadowing), internships and work-sharing arrangement to create part-time opportunities
- *Employment services*—such as the Employment Services South Africa [ESSA] database by the Department of Labour where it registers individual CVs on the database and employers can search for potential candidates
- *Job database public sector programmes*—such Youth Brigade (expanding on National Youth Services [NYS] programmes, National Rural Youth Service Corps, Expanded Public Works Programmes [EPWP], and Community Works Programme

In comparing South Africa to other countries such as Northern Africa and European, Work Integrated Learning (WIL) opportunities and government initiatives have been established to enhance job-specific and personal skills. Kiss et al. (2019) define WIL as a term that identifies in-service training with educational activities that integrate academic learning. In the educational institutions of Britain and the United States, graduates are prepared for work transitions through methods of work experience considered to be internships, practical work and fieldwork. Work Placement for International Student Programmes (WISPs) were introduced by six Australian universities for students to gain work experience and find permanent employment opportunities (Barton et al., 2019).

### **2.5.3 Transitioning into employment from a graduate to becoming an employee**

Being a graduate and eventually transitioning to the world of work is a path for many young people towards achieving their goals and enabling them to advance in future (Wilson-Clark & Saha, 2019). Youth unemployment should be considered in a broad life cycle, meaning that the future success of the youth is considered by exploring the influence of their childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood experiences, having many youths working while obtaining better education and skills training to facilitate the country's economy and smoothing passage to the labour market.

According to Molinsky and Pisman (2019), graduates struggle to transition from college/university to the professional world as this transition is typically cultural in nature. The cultural change takes place across three dimensions—feedback, relationships, and accountability—

which are considered the biggest challenge graduates face with when they change over to the professional world. In terms of feedback at university or college, it is clear and consistent; students have a syllabus that explains the detail and requirements of the semester. When writing and submitting assignments, they get feedback from lectures that make it easy to understand their performance. The feedback paradigm changes in the workplace, for instance, the feedback from managers may be less consistent depending on the manager leaving a recent graduate wondering how they can develop their skills to improve doing a task.

In terms of relationships in the professional world, students are forced to build working relationships with people they do not even like for many reasons, but they must collaborate because they have to work towards the same goal (Molinsky & Pisman, 2019). This means they need to remain productive and professional even when working with difficult people and keep a good working relationship with the superior because if the superior complains about work ethics or performance, it may be hard to obtain a good reference. As students, they could choose whom they would want to work and associate with. Accountability in a professional environment is much higher compared to university. During their university studies, students are accountable mainly to themselves or occasionally to a project partner in completing and submitting a task. In the 'real world', a recent graduate is accountable to the whole organisation and if they fail or mismanage interaction with a supplier or stakeholder, there can be serious consequences, which may damage their reputation and career.

Previous work, such as research conducted by Kinash et al. (2016), highlights an argument regarding the way Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) support the employability of graduates because the challenges experienced by graduates in their field of work have concerned employers. Griffin and Annulis (2013) found that the common complaints employers have concerning new graduates include the lack of skills in decision making, teamwork, self-learning, problem-solving and many theories without knowing how to apply the theory to practice.

Being a university graduate employed in the first job is a great achievement; however, the transition from the life of a student to the life of a professional worker is not an easy phase (Gericke, 2017). Most graduates are faced with the challenges of criticism and time management. Regardless of how smart they may be and whether they have a better education than their colleagues, they will still receive criticism at some point—this is the pressure or challenge they have to deal with within their workplace. In many instances, it is extremely difficult to be criticised for something you have worked hard on, for instance, when a senior colleague is not satisfied with the work done and demands improvement. Another challenge is time management—being an employee demands a person to adjust as some jobs require long hours. The author further highlighted that, working hours, tea times and lunch times are fixed

unlike at university where students may decide not to attend some of the classes or leave classes before the end of the session .

Many fresh graduates find it threatening to enter the workforce, similar to the scenario of challenges they encounter when transitioning from high school to university. While adjusting to the life of a professional, work conflict and challenges may arise, and recent graduates struggle to balance their social, family and work life. The most likely challenges include debt and financial pressure, having to manage not only cost-of-living expenses such as rent, food and transportation and other family needs, but also student loans that are due. The financial pressure also occurs because of good credit; new graduates may not be sufficiently financially stable to purchase cars and houses and as a result, open credit accounts for these purchases (Shanafelt et al., 2015).

Previous studies identified the gap between higher education and the world of work as one of the challenges that new graduates experience in their transitioning to becoming an employee. One of the participants of the study, a student at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) who graduated with BTech in Information Technology (IT), used the phrases, “*whole new culture*”, “*quite a steep learning curve*”, “*very rigid*” and “*it was difficult*” to describe this transition. According to the student, it was difficult applying their theoretical knowledge in the workplace because they were only taught simple basics at university; thus, when they entered industry, the learning concept differed and even felt like a whole new chapter in their career (Lourens & Fourie-Malherbe, 2017).

#### **2.5.4 Organisational and Griesel’s skills and attributes required for employment**

According to Marshall (2018), employers in South Africa require graduates to have four categories of skills, named Griesel’s skills, which include basic skills and understanding; knowledge and intellectual ability; workplace skills and applied knowledge; and interactive and personal skills. In comparison to Griesel’s skills, CPUT’s teaching and learning report identifies some graduate skills required by employers. These skills include the skills obtained in the training camp where training is provided to students by members of the nature conservation industry, e.g., City of Cape Town, SANParks and Cape Nature. Students are equipped with many of the practical skills required in industry.

This is followed by “service learning” as a project for the Nutrition II Consumer Science in Food and Nutrition Programme in the Department of Biotechnology and Consumer Sciences at CPUT. The main purpose is to (i) provide students with skills ranging from the ability to brainstorm to constructing a market plan, and (i) upskill youth in managing income and sales. The skills and experience students gain in such projects, sometimes referred to as Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programmes, is a product of the skills acquisition process (Smouse,

2018). WIL enables students to be aware of the requirements of employers; in other cases, the WIL programmes that provide graduates with such skills are *inter alia* cooperative education, internships, and volunteer work. For cooperative education, some companies offer students the opportunity to see the power of the connection between academic work and experience acquired in the workplace. Internships allow students to (i) earn academic credits upon completion of the course and (ii) be supervised by experienced professionals. Lastly, students volunteer work because of the benefits derived from the experience and the skills required by employers, which include confidence and enhancing their interpersonal skills and self-esteem, among others.

A survey was conducted with some employers in the built environment to determine which skills are needed across the field. The results of the responses highlighted soft skills, leadership, decision-making/problem-solving, self-management, communication, teamwork, professionalism and experiences. It was found that new graduates in the built environment must have the ability to think creatively and work collaboratively while being able to apply technological, cross-disciplinary and international experiences. Communication skills are ranked at the top, with *listening* and *effective communication* seen as a good combination of oral and written communication that helps build an effective project team with outside stakeholders of the organisation. *Decision-making/problem-solving* is another important skill, presented with the ability to (i) identify and analyse problems, (ii) take effective and appropriate action, (iii) transfer knowledge across situations, (iv) realise the effect of decisions, (v) create and have innovative solutions, and (vi) engage in life-long learning. The Built Environment (BE) field also values *self-management* as efficient and effective work habits, well-developed ethics, working well under pressure, and a sense of urgency to complete tasks. Professionalism is also expected as it defines an individual to be trustworthy with sensitive information, understanding one's role, and building effective relationships with stakeholders and clients (Crawford & Dalton, 2016).

This is not a new problem, in fact, the employability of graduates is rapidly increasing. Universities need to understand what skills are required by employers and the labour market in these changing times to equip graduates in the right direction. Sometimes, or in most cases when it comes to business graduates, employers are looking for graduates who are focused on business education, for example, skills focused on innovation, global organisations and SMMEs or wider management because SMMEs make an important contribution to job creation and productivity growth in the economy (Bushe, 2019). The most common skills demanded from IT graduates include problem-solving, communication skills, intellectual ability, organisational skills, confidence, teamwork, motivation and interpersonal skills. In terms of

numeracy tasks, employers expect graduates to be competent in data interpretation and have the ability to use spreadsheet software, calculate percentages and solve problems numerically.

Employers require new, direct types of skills, such as relational skills, which include teamwork, communication and interpersonal skills. These skills are broad and cited in many papers (Suleman, 2016). Employers often require categories of skills, for example, foundational skills that include oral and communication skills, and problem-solving that includes the ability to think outside of the box and solve a problem. A further skills category demanded by employers from a new graduate is adaptive capacity, which involves the capacity to adapt to new diversity and situational changes while still remaining professional at all times. Graduates are also expected to be innovative, i.e., being able to develop new ideas, work with teams, meet deadlines and become flexible.

At present, soft skills—a very popular term—is used to specify personal competencies such as language and communication capability, friendliness, social aptitudes, the ability to work in a team and other individual characteristics. Many employers in initiative and technical professions require soft skills; for the company to be competitive it needs to create good and effective teams and a collaborative working atmosphere; therefore, the quality of creativity depends on the human resources involved and their capability of achieving a common aim (Cimatti, 2016).

According to Ciappei (2015), soft skills are by far the most in-demand skills by the employers compared to hard skills. Soft skills can be organised into two categories: i) political and ethical skills; and ii) strategic and organisational skills.

## **2.6 Context and unemployment**

### **2.6.1 Unemployment in advanced economies**

Unemployment in developed areas like Europe is still high and reduces the capacity of the economy. Youth unemployment is a particularly serious problem. Europe was hit with a global financial crisis in 2014. At the onset of the crisis in 2008, youth unemployment stood at 23%, surpassing the 15% rate in 2007. This increased rate is attributed to the weakness in consumption growth in the economy. The growth of youth unemployment in most countries is complex—almost three times the adult unemployment rate, possibly because youth unemployment is concentrated around the complex sectors of the economy such as SMMEs, constructions and part-time/temporary employment contracts of younger workers. Ibrahim and Mahyuddin (2017) argue that the European unemployment trends as a problem are merely statistical, as young people move in and out of the labour force while pursuing their education. The unemployment rate in the Euro area is a sign of weak recovery as the unemployment rates are attributed to the depreciation of human capital in the form of skilled labour. Countries such

as Ireland and Cyprus experience a large increase in youth unemployment after the financial crisis, which is the main reason behind the high unemployment rate.

Across the EU countries, about 41.5 million people were unemployed in 2014. Countries such as Spain/Italy are faced with the high rate of unemployment with inflexible labour markets whereas other countries such as the UK have been successful in combating the high rates of unemployment by applying improvement measures in their labour markets (Bhattarai, 2016). The unemployment rate in OECD countries is explained in terms of trends, cycles, seasons, the mismatch between the creation and destruction of new jobs, and other random factors. Currently, the high unemployment rate and the decreasing growth in Europe is explained by the lack of inter-regional trade, low capital flows, high migratory movements, and a decrease in human capital in terms of technology and knowledge transfer processes that play an important role in the economy.

### **2.6.2 Unemployment in underserved contexts**

The South African unemployment situation is life-threatening to many young people and it remains high in underserved communities. An underserved community can be characterised as a community where there is a lack of access to basic services (Wiltshire, 2016). People living in these communities have low computer literacy skills, which results in employment barriers (Mmesi, 2015). A data report of the Western Cape Government (WCG) on the Youth Explorer website provides informative information on the youth based in disadvantaged areas of the Western Cape Province. The youth voices indicate the real struggle of them growing up in a needy environment where poverty is the most severe social problem as a consequence of unemployment. The community areas include (a) the youth of Theewaterskloof Municipality (Grabouw) with 19.8% unemployed graduates and a 64% youth unemployment rate, (b) Mitchells Plain Ward 82 with an unemployment rate of 58%, and (c) the youth in Bishop Lavis Ward 24 with a 47% unemployment rate. This study focused on the underserved community of the Theewaterskloof Municipality (Grabouw) and some youth in Khayelitsha (De Lannoy, Fortuin et al., 2018). Previous studies discussed the struggle of many young people in these underserved communities in the Western Cape, where only 28% of the youth in the age group 18-24 years attend universities or colleges. The official unemployment rate in 2011 was 41%, which increased to 52% when the discouraged work-seekers were included (De Lannoy, Storme et al., 2018). The lack of job sharing and job search plays a role in contributing to the high unemployment rate, as only people who are already working have facilitated access to networks in these underserved communities while the unemployed youth have limited exposure, placing them at a further disadvantage.



In 2011, the Western Cape Province had a total population of 5,781,361 of which 1,061,057 were youth in the age group 15-24 years (De Lannoy, Fortuin et al., 2018). Most of these young people were living in households with an income below the average threshold; and if there was an income, it was lower than R779 as many jobs were only seasonal. Many young people experience a low level of education, poor healthcare and very little economic opportunities because of their income poverty level. The income poverty has an impact on communities' health—funds to find the best medical care are insufficient, and this affects the youth's education, delaying or preventing them from completing their studies. This causes a delay in the chance of these youth getting employed, which further increases the unemployment rate (De Lannoy, Storme et al., 2018).

## **2.7 Unemployment in Grabouw**

Grabouw is a small area situated in Overberg in the Theewaterskloof Municipality district of the Western Cape that was built on a farm called Grietjiesgat obtained by Wilhelm Langschmidt who was a painter. The area is famous for its three large fruit packaging factories farms which started in the early 1900s and is also home to an Appletiser manufacturing plant. According to the data source revealed by the Department of Social Development about the socio-economic profile of the Theewaterskloof Municipality (Grabouw), the population is approximately 119,052 with 33,097 households. According to the Western Cape Government (2017), 65% of households were earning an income of less than R38,200 per annum while 17% had no income. The 2016 matric pass rate was 92.4%, with 31.7% of grade 12 dropouts. It is reported that the high teenage pregnancies rate of women under the age of 18 years who drop out in school also plays a role in the growing high unemployment rate. Another factor that increases the high rate of unemployment is the drug-related crime rate amongst youth in this area, which is sitting at 5.7%. These offenders are described as youth residents who are not part of the labour market; they are not looking for employment and are involved in drugs and crime. The Grabouw industry has attracted people, specifically from the Eastern Cape Province with no houses, looking for work; these people have to reside at the back of RDP houses belonging to other residents or build their cabins alongside the informal settlement areas of Pineview, Rooidakke and Siyanyanzela.

According to the researcher as a former resident of Grabouw, "in the area like this job opportunities are limited and the jobs available are entirely seasonal farm and casual work which makes the job security and duration of those employed not guaranteed. A high number of people are CWP workers working a total number of two days a week which are Monday and Thursday for a wage of R67 a day".

In 2015, the unemployment rate in Theewaterskloof Municipality was 11.5%; it has been rising rapidly over the last years, rising to 11.9% in 2016. In 2018, the overall number of working people in the age group 15-65 years was 81,483 with the dependency ratio being 46:1. This is an important factor highlighting the increase of the dependency ratio (people not working) from 2011 when it was 44:2. The high dependency ratio increase points to the high pressure on the social system and the delivery of basic services, meaning many residents, including youth, are unemployed. The 2016 Statistics South Africa's (SSA) Non-Financial Census of Municipalities shows that an increase in the poverty levels of the Theewaterskloof municipal area, rising unemployment levels, and household dependency on credit as key factors contributing to the economic decline (Currie, 2017). The SSA data also report that African females, children 17 years and older, people from rural areas, and those without education are the category group of people vulnerable to unemployment. Of the entire (community) population, only 8.8% of workers are permanent employees, while 28.8% are temporary employees, and seasonal workers contribute 62.4% to the total.

Puwana (2015) collected data in Grabouw on request of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVr). The author interviewed CWP participants, CWP supervisors, CWP coordinators, site managers, community members and local politicians. From the data collected, Grabouw shows a high rate of unemployment. The alarming rates of HIV/AIDS are leading to multidimensional poverty, because investors hesitate to partner with the fruit-producing industry as the demand for labour is scarce because of its seasonality. Unemployment is a looming factor, and housing presents an issue as the number of informal dwellings is rapidly increasing. Around 80% of residents are employed in season, meaning work is limited to four months per year, resulting in residents being without jobs for eight months; thus, most people including youth and graduates are unemployed. Other researchers argue that unemployment is the main reason for many families living in poverty and struggling financially, which has a huge impact on the lives of youth. Youth are vulnerable to becoming criminals because they find an easy way to make money by stealing and selling the possessions of others. Mudavanhu and Schenck (2014) in their study support the narrative that unemployment is a major obstacle in the community of Grabouw; there is nothing to do for the youth, no inspiration, and no leader is teaching them new skills.

According to the Annual Revision Statistics Report of Theewaterskloof Municipality (2015/2016), in 2009-2010, Theewaterskloof experienced a high rate of poverty as a result of the high unemployment high rate that hit the community at large. The unemployment rate of the Overberg District was 17.0% according to 2011 census data, which caused Theewaterskloof to have the second-highest unemployment rate in the region. The labour force had 47,644 economically active people in 2011. These economically active people (supplying

labour in exchange for income) were in the age group 15-65 years. Being categorised “economically active” did however not mean employment because out of the 47,644 people, 14.9% were unemployed and out of 23,559, 19.8% of the youth aged 15-34 years in the Municipality were economically active but unemployed. The poverty rates were at 35.0% in Theewaterskloof, followed by Swellendam with a rate of 30.7%% and Overstrand with 25.5%. The high rate of poverty was affected by the high economic growth in the Overberg district as the high number of dwellings were rapidly increasing without employment. This matter enforced the Municipality to provide low and average households with free basic services (Western Cape Government Provincial Treasury, 2014).

The development of the Community Work Programme (CWP) has been in place since January 2010 and was introduced to the Theewaterskloof Municipality by Malcolm Abrahams from the Elgin Foundation to help combat the unemployment rate in the community of Grabouw. However, the implementation of this programme after its commencement was a struggle because its dependency was on the ward committee as it was introduced to the structures and leaders of the community—there was no involvement of the community to discuss such a proposal. For this employment opportunity, 25 people were needed but because the programme depended on the ward committees, the committees employed their own family and later said it was difficult to get 25 community members involved. Three months the programme’s commencement, the concern of nepotism was raised and the programme had to close for a month. Information received from a former resident of Grabouw who was born and grew up there, stated that “in a community like Grabouw that is surrounded by a lot of poor socio-economic profiles including the high unemployment rate and disadvantaged residents, proper recruitment must be well scrutinised, especially in government programmes because there is bound to be problems” (Wessels et al., 2019).

## **2.8 Conceptual framework**

The following concepts reviewed in related literature were used for this study as depicted in the proposed conceptual framework (Figure 1).

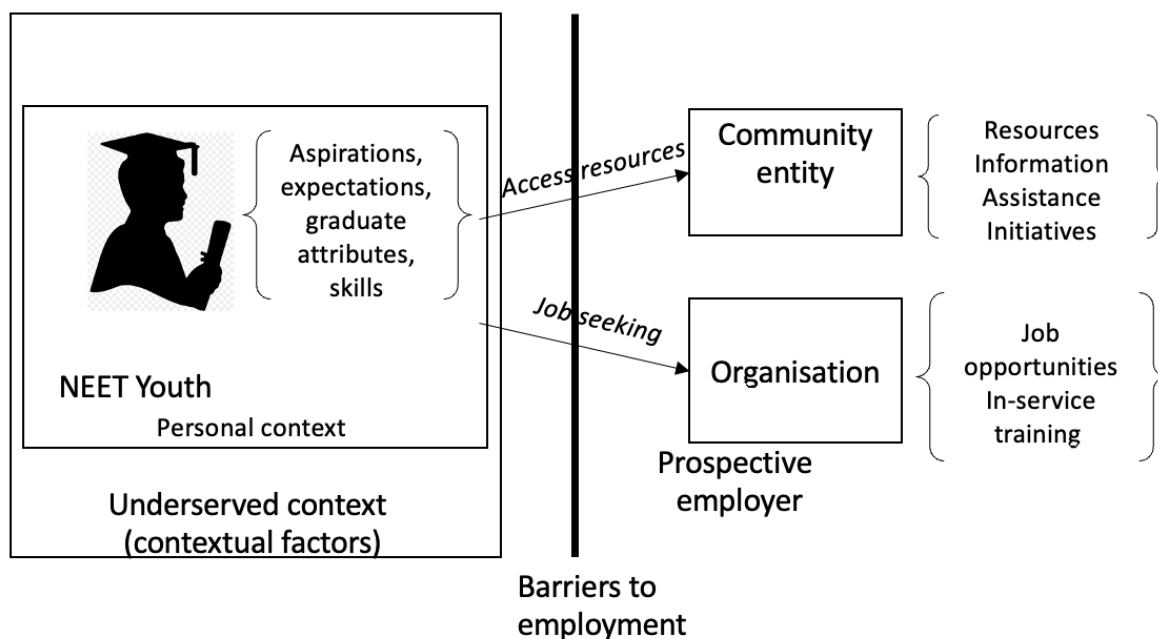


Figure 1: Conceptual framework based on the related literature

## 2.9 Summary

In this chapter, the literature was reviewed by searching for related studies using the keywords. Concepts relevant to this study have been identified to guide the data collection. The concepts and their relationships are presented in a conceptual framework (Figure 1). The target of the study was NEET youth in a specific underserved context who experienced barriers to being employed. NEET youth search for work at different organisations with the assistance of community entities. These entities provide assistance to NEET youth through the provision of resources, information and initiatives to address unemployment in their respective communities.

## 2.10 Conclusion

This chapter offers insight into NEET youth and the definition of NEET. The status of NEET youth in countries with advanced economies are compared to those in South Africa. South Africa’s NEET youth is a diverse group, with the majority being black and coloured young people in the age group 15-29 years who face multiple individual and household challenges.

The chapter also presents the perceived view of literature on unemployed graduates, focusing on the causes of unemployment and detailing the required skills and attributes that unemployed graduates are lacking. From literature reviewed it can be concluded that the qualifications acquired by graduates are not in demand in the labour market. It is furthermore perceived that organisations provide more job opportunities in Science and Engineering compared to other disciplines; however, most graduates seeking employment obtained qualifications in Humanities and Arts. Thus, the demand is low and this increases the rate of

unemployment. The challenges of transitioning from being a graduate into a working environment are also highlighted. The policy debates on current measures put in place to combat the issue of unemployment are indicated. Other measures include the SMMEs and BPS provided by the government.

The significance of the chapter is that it provides an understanding of the research problem by exploring the experiences of unemployed graduates in an underserved context where they are affected by the socio-economic status of the respective communities in their transition to employment.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research paradigm, approach, methodology, strategy and methods to conduct the research are identified. The data collection and data analysis phases are discussed, and research ethics are explained.

### 3.2 Research design

Research design is described as the structure and procedures chosen by the researcher in conducting research (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). The structure of the research in this study was formed by the insights and findings of the author, the participants, and the research onion design of Saunders et al. (2019) presented in Figure 2.

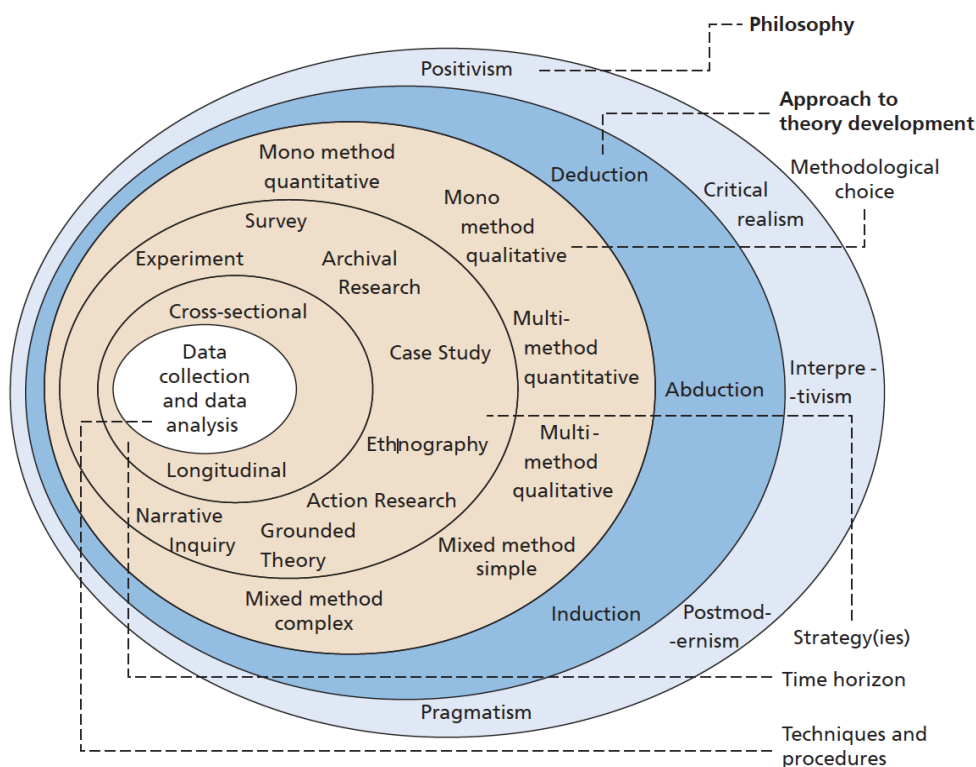


Figure 2: Research Onion (Source: Saunders et al., 2019:130)

### 3.3 Research paradigm/philosophy

The research paradigm focuses on the theoretical scope of an academic discipline. It is defined as an elementary theory that guides how the world is understood and the way the researchers behave (Jonker & Pennink, 2009). The two main paradigms considered for this study are the constructivist (interpretative) and positivist paradigm. Both paradigms offer a structure that

guides the research procedures, methods, strategies and ways of investigating, and they are influential in life information-seeking research (Markwei, 2013, cited by Abdulkareem et al., 2018).

### **3.3.1 Constructivism**

A constructivist (interpretive) research paradigm focuses on qualitative data. It gathers data that do not involve numbers and provides a means for making the voices, concerns and practices of individuals in particular place(s) visible (Camp, 2001). In social research, researchers take their time to address an issue, which is the primary goal of the interpretative paradigm, i.e. clarifying partial information that lies behind social actions. Researchers utilise methods such as observations, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews when gathering information using the interpretative approach.

### **3.3.2 Positivism**

According to O'Neill and McGuirk (2014), the positivist (objective) research paradigm focuses primarily on quantitative data, which comprise information about quantities and numbers. A positivist approach views understanding as something exterior to the individual, not based on the meaning individuals have, and therefore adopts an objective stance. The investigator precedes the relationship between variables and poses this as questions or hypotheses. Researchers test a hypothesis by specifying and narrowing down possible interpretations and collect information to support these hypotheses. The positivist paradigm was not deemed appropriate for this research as the unemployed graduates' lived experiences of their situation needed to be understood, which required a subjective view.

## **3.4 Research approach**

An inductive approach associated with qualitative research was deemed suitable for this study. This approach uses specific techniques such as studying lived experiences, actions and behaviours of human beings (Moyo, 2019). For this qualitative research, the experiences of unemployed graduates and how they seek employment in the Western Cape, South Africa, were studied and observed.

The researcher began by observing the area of the research, i.e. where it took place. This enabled the recruitment of the study participants. The data collection techniques used to collect qualitative data included a structured open-ended questionnaire administered to a group of unemployed graduates at the selected community in the Western Cape, South Africa. The research questions focused on encouraging unemployed graduates to elaborate on their lived experiences.

### **3.5 Methodological choice**

According to Mehrad and Tahriri (2019), with qualitative research as methodological choice, the researcher gathers information about lived experiences, feelings or attitudes and the meaning attached to them by the individuals participating in a study. It is helpful in analysing how or why things have happened by explaining the events. Quantitative research as methodological choice, on the other hand, focuses on testing a hypothesis using numbers and analysing the data using statistical techniques. It is an analysis into a perceived problem; therefore, quantitative research was not deemed suitable for the study.

This study adopted qualitative research as methodological choice to understand unemployed graduates' opinions, experiences and the difficulties they encountered in the Western Cape Province and the factors leading to the increased rate in unemployment. This methodological choice assisted the researcher in exploring the challenges from the unemployed graduates' perspective. In conclusion, qualitative research assisted the researcher with evaluating and interpreting textual data patterns and themes to address the research questions at hand.

The methodological choice was applied by following an interpretivist paradigm where qualitative data were collected and analysed through thematic analysis and with an ethnographic design which allowed the researcher to observe and investigate experiences, and obtain answers from graduates on unemployment using a purposive (non-probability) sampling method by means of a structured open-ended questionnaire to obtain the perceptions and experiences of unemployed graduates in the Western Cape (Harrison, 2018).

### **3.6 Research strategy**

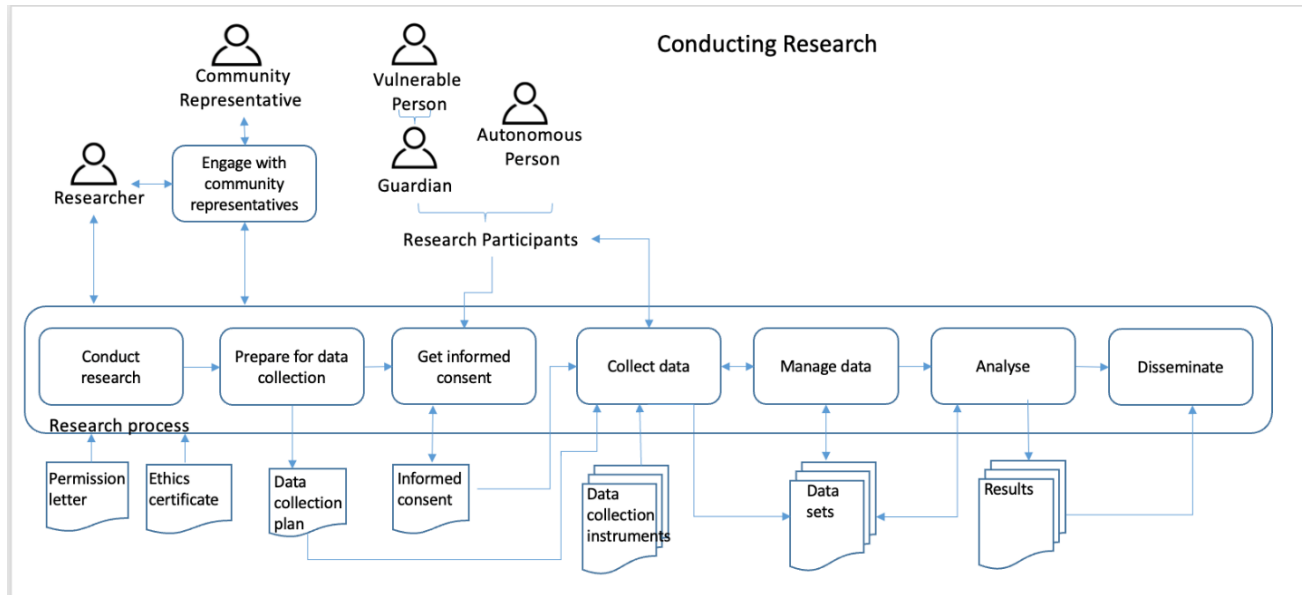
The study adopted ethnography as research strategy to assist the researcher with observing and interacting with participants in their real-life environment. The aim of this study was to understand the real causes of the research problem. Jones and Smith (2017) describe ethnography as a data collection method that focuses on understanding, interpreting and perceiving reality through engaging with participants in their natural worlds. The authors further highlight that ethnography is one of the earliest qualitative methodologies that focus on learning and studying people and has been defined by close observation of groups of people, considering the historical and cultural conditions that shape social interactions (Jones and Smith, 2017). As a theory, ethnography begins with fundamental concepts based on people's lives, worldviews, actions and words in ways that are unique to that group (McGranahan, 2018). Although the principles of an ethnography strategy were followed, it was not possible to engage with the participants in face-to-face situations due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the researcher is from the same place where the fieldwork was done and therefore had an insider view of the lived situation of the participants to supplement the online methods used.



### 3.7 Data collection

Kabir (2016) defines data collection as the process of collecting and measuring information on variables of interests in a defined systematic fashion that allows one to address specified research questions and/or test hypotheses.

Before collecting the data from the study participants, the researcher followed a number of steps. The diagram below (Figure 9) shows the process of data collection from the selected participants of the study, ranging from main preparation to data analysis phase.



**Figure 3: Data collection process (Source: De la Harpe, 2020)**

Figure 3 provides an overview of the steps followed by the researcher in the data collection process. Firstly, the researcher obtained a permission letter from the community of the Theewaterskloof Municipality (Grabouw) to proceed with the collection of data from the selected participants of the study. Ethics documents were submitted to the Faculty's Research Ethics Committee together with the permission letter (Appendix A) to obtain approval to proceed with data collection. Upon ethics clearance, an informed consent (Appendix B) form was sent to the selected participants as a requirement of ethics consideration. The informed consent form was prepared together with the questionnaire (Appendix C) and sent to the selected participants in an online Google Forms format. The collected data were made available in an Excel Spreadsheet, showing the detailed responses from the participants. This enabled the researcher to analyse and categorise the data into different data sets, code responses, and formulated themes. The researcher discusses the results of the study further on in this chapter.

### Data Collection instruments

The collection of data for the study was achieved through the data collection instrument, a Google Forms questionnaire (open-ended questions). Google Forms questionnaires are responsive to such an extent that they allow participants to fill in their opinions freely and confidentially, providing feedback in their own time given a maximum period to complete (Nayak & Narayan, 2019). The Google Forms questionnaire was used for the purpose of adhering to the rules and regulations of social distancing between the researcher and participants due to the national lockdown of the global coronavirus pandemic. The open-ended questions enabled the participants to elaborate on their experiences in details to help discover their perspectives, emotions and behaviours through feedback in their own words.

The online Google Forms questionnaire was prepared in conjunction with an informed consent form and similar questionnaire guides were designed for all participants of the study (unemployed graduates). Each participant was asked 25 questions in total; the first section of the questionnaire comprised the informed consent form with a “Yes” or “No” answer relating to the ethics of the research as well the highlighting the option of withdrawal should any participant wish to do so without any negative implications for the respondent. The second section comprised seven questions related to demographics, such as name, age, home language, work experience, gender and educational background. The last section comprised questions related to the main research problem of the study. Hair and Page (2019) reveal that demographic questions collect sufficient information to help the researcher developed meaningful answers to the research questions.

#### **3.7.1 Population**

Population is defined as a large general group of people with certain characteristics relevant to the research topic from which a researcher draws a sample (Hennink et al., 2010). Mabaka (2019) describes population as any group of individuals sharing certain sets of features. The population for this study consisted of unemployed graduates of the Western Cape (Overberg region) and higher educational institutions in the Western Cape.

#### **3.7.2 Sample method and sampling size**

A sampling size was drawn after the population had been defined. The study participants (unemployed graduates) were purposively selected (i.e., non-probability sampling) to participate in the study with the advantage of assisting the researcher in formulating judgments when observing which participants meet the study objectives and are able to answer the research questions. The study participants were selected from an underserved setting in collaboration with a community organisation already involved in youth development initiatives. A representative of 16 participants were deemed appropriate for this study; however, of the 16

questionnaires that were administered only 15 were completed, and of these, only 14 questionnaires were found to be valid and were used in the study.

### **3.7.3 Data collection instrument**

According to Rowley (2014), a questionnaire is a series of questions about a particular topic intended to extract information from an informant or respondent. Pozzo et al. (2019) comments that questionnaires are used to gather information from a large number of people in a short time at a relatively low cost, and it is easy to analyse and interpret the data obtained.

For the fieldwork, face-to-face sessions in the lived world of the participants were not possible due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. A decision was taken to collect data using an online platform and the questions were formulated to incorporate the ethnographic aspects of the study.

The questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument designed in an open-ended question format to allow participants to elaborate on their experiences in more detail. In administering the questionnaires, special care was taken to ensure that the questionnaires were completed at the most appropriate time and that participants felt comfortable and relaxed when questionnaires were administered. The final version of the questionnaire was distributed to the selected participants of the study through the Facebook and WhatsApp platforms and they were given a maximum of two weeks to complete the questionnaire. This also allowed the participants sufficient time to carefully think and provide reliable answers to the research questions.

## **3.8 Data analysis**

This section explains the analysis process of the data collected. Lutz (2020) defines data analysis as a series of processes and procedures conducted on the qualitative data that have been gathered to explain, understand or interpret people and situations under investigation. *Qualitative* refers to words and observations, and the aim was to transcribe and interpret the data in a more meaningful way. The data analysis was performed using thematic analysis. The six-phase guide of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to explain the analysis of the data gathered. The phases are explained below.

### **3.8.1 Familiarise oneself with the data gathered**

According to Lutz (2020), the purpose of data analysis is to obtain a common sense of the data and become familiar with what the data entail; it is necessary to read and re-read the data, take notes and make recordings.

### **3.8.2 Generate initial codes**

In this phase, the data are reduced into smaller meaningful pieces of data by organising it through coding (Lutz, 2020:84). Once the researcher became familiar with the data, transcriptions followed, and colour coding was used to code each initial response based on the research questions.

### **3.8.3 Generate initial themes**

During this phase the broader themes are established; therefore, initial identification of themes is done. Themes are described as patterns that are significant to the data and/or research question(s) (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017:6). In this study, similar data were identified in the groupings set out in the second phase and initial themes were generated.

### **3.8.4 Review themes**

At this point, the themes generated in the third phase are reviewed. Themes should be clear and different from each other. To generate better themes, a researcher has to think whether the themes make sense, whether the data support the themes, and if there are sub-themes and themes within the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). At this time, the researcher used highlighters to identify the themes applicable to the context of the entire data set.

### **3.8.5 Define and name themes**

This phase is to “identify the essence of what each theme is about” (Braun & Clarke, 2006:92). The main aim is to determine what each theme says, if there are sub-themes, and how they relate to the main theme. In this study, after careful analysis, theme names emerged from the data.

### **3.8.6 Write up the report**

The final phase is identified by Braun and Clarke (2006) as explaining the data once the themes have been analysed, concluded and ready for producing the final report, which often is done in the form of a journal article and/or thesis/dissertation.

## **3.9 Ethical considerations**

Ethics relate to balancing the good of many with the right of participants' confidentiality. Essentially, acceptable ethical protocols encourage the researcher to obey certain standards that minimise harm to the study participants. Evans (2007) comments that the rights and principles of participants must always be taken into account to avoid collecting information at their expense. This study complied with the research ethics by adhering to the confidentiality of the participants. Also, the participants were informed of voluntary participation and anonymity, and they were educated about the consent form and that the study intended not to harm the rights of the selected participants.

### **3.10 Delimitation**

In this study, the population consisted of unemployed graduates of the Western Cape (Overberg region). This area was selected because it is under-resourced with low socio-economic issues (Corti et al., 2016). O

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This chapter outlines the research methodology and design followed during the study to meet the aim, objectives and research questions. An interpretivist paradigm was adopted, and the data were analysed using thematic analysis. This paradigm enabled investigating and obtaining graduates' perspectives on their unemployment using a purposive sampling method. The data collection instrument—a structured open-ended questionnaire—was designed to collect data and allow participants to provide more details about their lived experiences.

## CHAPTER 4: FIELDWORK AND FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the questionnaires as feedback from the participants of the study. The first section of this chapter presents an overview of the respondents' demography, which includes gender, age, home language, employment period, residential location and educational level. This is followed by the research design supporting the practical part of the research. Thereafter, the specifics of the research design are discussed dealing with the data collection process, data collection instruments and identifying (recruiting) the participants. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the analysed data and associated findings.

### 4.2 Respondents' demography

According to Hair et al. (2019), demographic questions collect sufficient information to help the researcher develop meaningful answers to the research questions. The demographic information of the selected participants is illustrated in this section by the means of graphs and pie charts, comprising gender, age, home language, employment period, residential location and educational level. The results depict the profile of the participants. The results cannot be generalised because only a limited number of unemployed youth participated in the study.

#### 4.2.1 Gender

The structure of the participants in relation to gender distribution is depicted in Figure 3.

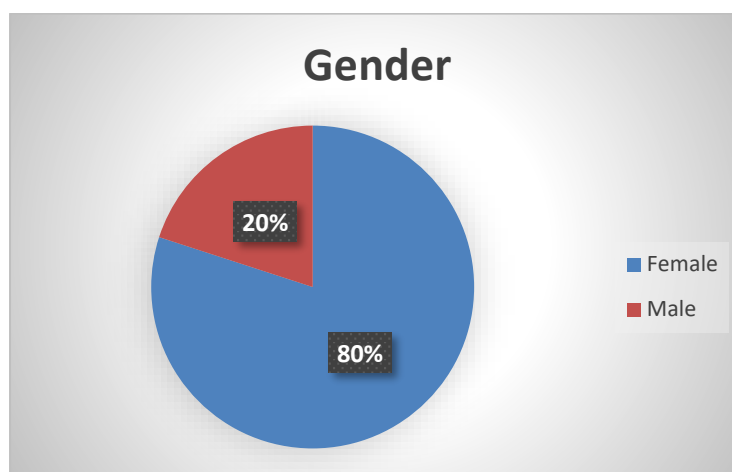


Figure 4: Gender

In figure 4, more female graduates are unemployed than male graduates in the selected underserved community based on the participants of the study. Unemployed female graduates represent 80% and unemployed male graduates 20% of the respondents. This is mainly because the number of female in the selected community who obtained educational

qualification were higher than those of male. Many males did not even make it to the matric grade as they dropped out of school to look for work and in order to provide for their families (Puwana, 2015).

#### 4.2.2 Age of respondents

Figure 5 shows that the highest category of graduates falls within the age group 24-26 years, representing 60% of the sample group. This is followed by the second highest age group 23 years and younger. The smallest group with 13% of respondents falls in the age group 27-29 years of age. The age group of 24-26 years was the most group that attended higher institutions than the age of 27-29. This provided evidence that the age group of 27-29 years were the youth who played a big role in their families by looking after their siblings as the result that others could not further their studies. The selected participants of this study come from an underserved community where poverty is a complex issue and requires attention.

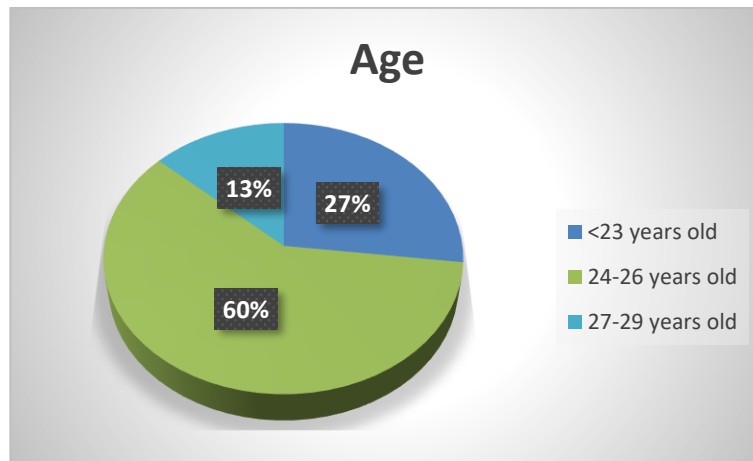
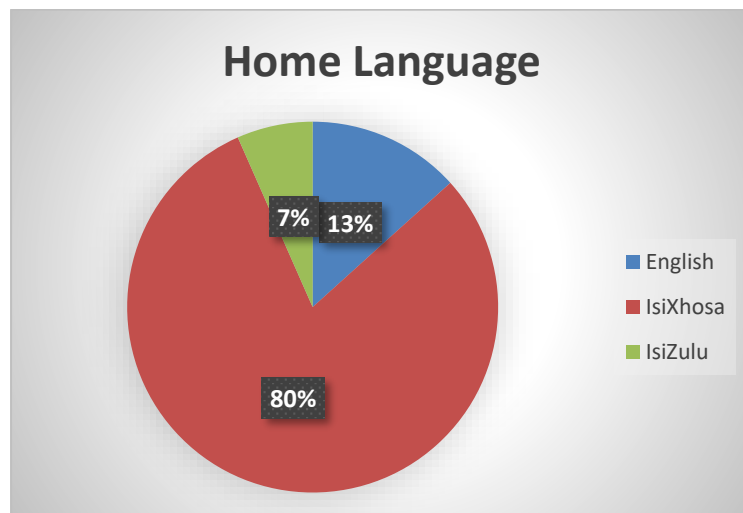


Figure 5: Respondent age distribution

#### 4.2.3 Home Language

The study's respondents comprised three language groups: IsiXhosa, IsiZulu and English.



**Figure 6: Home Language**

In Figure 6, most of the respondents indicated that they speak IsiXhosa as their home language, representing 80% of the sample group. This is followed by 13% of the respondents speaking English as their home language. The smallest percentage is 7%, representing the respondents speaking IsiZulu. The research participants were selected in a community where most of the residents speak IsiXhosa as their home language. The data collection was collected using questionnaires using a platform of Social Media where the researchers' contacts and referrals were speaking IsiXhosa as their home language.

**4.2.4 Unemployed graduates and qualifications**

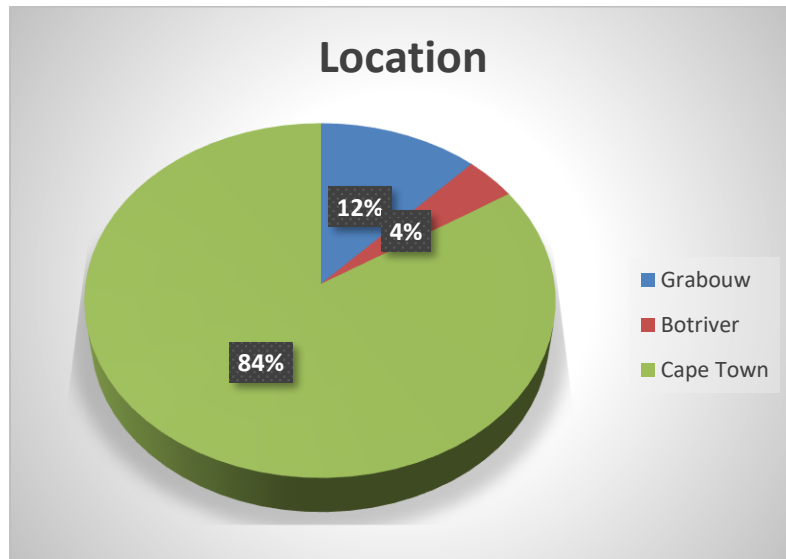
Figure 7 shows that the youth unemployment rate of the respondents is very high, and the case is even worse for university graduates. According to the responses of the study participants, 53% of graduates holding a university degree and 33% of graduates with university diplomas are unemployed with 14% employed. This section highlights the unemployed university graduates and not those from colleges. The key point is to determine why graduates still lack jobs despite the educational levels they have achieved.



**Figure 7: Unemployed graduates and qualifications**



#### 4.2.5 Residential location

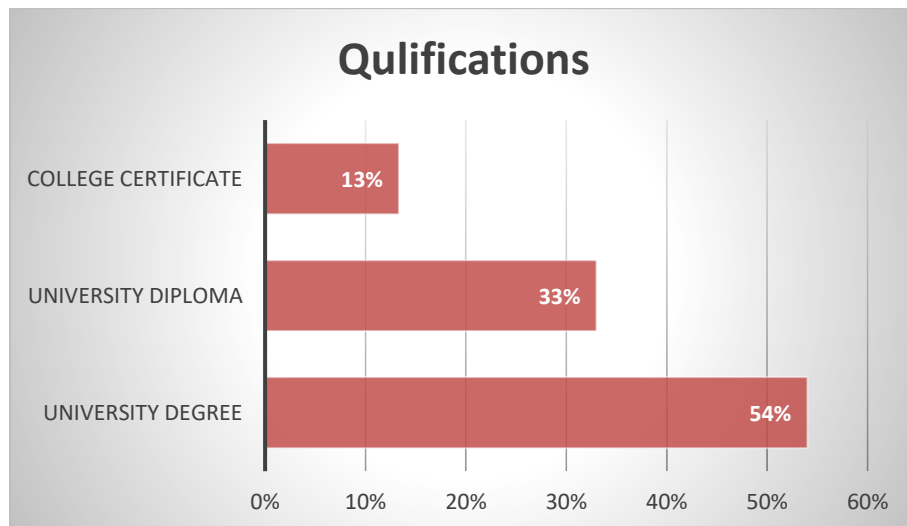


**Figure 8: Residential location**

In figure 8, most of the study respondents (84%) indicated that they live in Cape Town Central, followed by the Grabouw residents with 12%. The smallest group (4%) indicated that they live in Botriver in the Overberg region of the Western Cape.

#### 4.2.6 Educational qualification

In figure 9, the majority of respondents (54%) obtained a university degree. This is followed by 33% obtaining a university diploma as a second educational qualification. The smallest group (13%) indicated that they have a college diploma.



**Figure 9: Highest educational qualification distribution**

### **4.3 Ethnographical study**

The ethnography design used participant observation as data collection technique; it is best recommended for discussing the main features of participant observation as it aims to describe the lived experiences of people in their naturalistic environment. Among its qualities, it is richly detailed and realistic of what it depicts (Ingold, 2017:21-26).

In this study, data were collected from primary and secondary sources, which enabled the researcher to gather useful data and write a full report based on the derived findings. The ethnography design was used as a research design tool, which allowed the researcher to collect the data from participants by observing the context of what they say and do in their natural environment.

The primary goal of the study was achieved through the data collected from members of the society that were selected as participants who assisted the researcher to understand their experiences, behaviour and perspectives in terms of the research problem. Using the ethnography design provided the best opportunity of collecting current data that are reliable, specific and complete, and which presented meaningful answers to the relevant questions of the research. This study focused on people's culture and characteristics to understand the socio-cultural phenomena with the aim of analysing humans' way of life or culture (Suryani, 2013).

By using the ethnography design tool, the researcher planned to establish effective communication between the researcher and all participants, where the researcher first created a social relationship with the participants suitable for friendly familiarisation and for creating a comfortable space for disclosure. This was followed by considering first hand observation and participant observation necessary to understand the participants' beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. The researcher was therefore able to revise the research questions that were formulated from the beginning to the completion of the study using the ethnography design. One of the authors recommended the reliability of ethnography as a cross-cultural frame of reference, where cross-cultural comparisons enhance the breadth and depth of data interpretation (Suryani, 2013). Although an ethnography research strategy was no longer possible in practice, the decision to continue with this was based on the researcher's familiarity of the community (the researcher lived in this community) and therefore has an insider perspective of the lived experiences of the participants.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic with the highest level of restrictions during the data collection, the researcher used an online platform to communicate with the participants. Individual WhatsApp chats took place between the researcher and the participants. The participants were able to raise concerns or seek clarification. The researcher was able to communicate in the

home language of the participants. The link to the online questionnaires was also sent via individual WhatsApp chat messages. One of the challenges was that youth participants did not have data to participate in the online questionnaire, which is typical of an underserved context where most people are poor.

The decision to purchase data vouchers to enable participation resulted in a huge administrative load to issue the vouchers from the different service providers. Each participant also had to indicate their commitment to participate in the study before receiving a voucher.

#### **4.3.1 Entering the field and recruiting participants**

The sample of this study consisted of 15 participants, all of them unemployed graduates recruited from a community in the Western Cape, South Africa, from an underserved setting in collaboration with the community organisation already involved in youth development initiatives.

The process of entering the field, identifying and recruiting participants, was not an easy journey due to the impact of the global coronavirus pandemic and national highest level lockdown that started in March 2020. The impact of the pandemic resulted in the restriction of many activities and in rules and regulations that have changed the living standards of citizens. In this study, the researcher had to work in accordance with the rules and regulations of the national lockdown implemented by the South African President. The number of participants was limited to 16 participants; however, only 15 participants have responded to the questionnaire.

This number of participants considered was appropriate given the qualitative nature of the research, with collecting data through distributing questionnaires to gain in-depth knowledge about a particular group of people (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2016). Thus, participants were chosen using the purposive sampling technique (non-probability method), as this type of sampling technique increases the researcher's understanding when looking for participants who are known to be rich sources of data. Thus, the researcher could formulate better judgments in observing which participants met the study objectives and provided insightful answers to the research questions.

#### **4.3.2 Collecting data**

In this study, data was initially collected from the community of the Overberg region (called Grabouw) situated in the Western Cape, South Africa. However, due to the limited number of unemployed graduates in Grabouw, which is a small area with only a few educated youth, the researcher had to combine the number of participants residing in Grabouw and Cape Town to reach the participant limitation of the study. The data collected from the respondents enabled

the researcher to learn more about the experiences and perspectives of the graduates regarding their unemployment. The data collection process took a period of two weeks. The respondents comprised eleven (11) females and four (4) males, all belonging to one ethnic group (Black) except one male belonging to a foreign group.

In collecting the data, the researcher recruited participants by first communicating with them through social media using the WhatsApp and Facebook platforms. These platforms were used to communicate with the participants and sending the online Google Forms to them. The Facebook and WhatsApp platforms also enabled the researcher and participants to communicate fast and more effectively, providing clarifications by taking screenshots and giving proper explanations on some areas of the research questions. The participants were asked to first send a message text where they agree to the use of the data vouchers for the purpose of the research. Each participant was provided with a 1GB data voucher using funds was received from the National Research Foundation (NRF) as the sponsor as part of the bi-lateral project with the title, “Live design, transform life: Relevant technologies and digital services for the wellbeing of youth@risk”.

The vouchers were sent to all participants to enable them to complete the online Google Forms open-ended questionnaire. Obtaining the commitment and participation of the participants was not an easy journey. Each participant was given a maximum of two weeks to provide their feedback; still, it was challenging to get everything back on time and completed. To achieve the feedback deadline, a daily follow-up reminder was sent to each participant. However, only 15 of the 16 respondents completed the questionnaire.

#### **4.4 Data analysis**

During the analysis phase, the collected data were interpreted using the thematic analysis of the narrative responses. This section commences with restating the aim of the research, flowed by a review of the objectives, research questions and data collection methods used for this study. Finally, the process followed to analyse the data is presented.

##### **4.4.1 Aim of the study**

This study aimed to explore factors influencing the unemployment rate of graduates living in a community in the Western Cape, South Africa.

##### **4.4.2 Objectives of the study**

To achieve the aim of the research study, the following objectives were formulated:

**Objective 1:** To explore the perceptions of unemployed graduates and youth in an underserved context that influences their transition into employment.

**Objective 2:** To unpack the reasons why unemployed graduates and youth in an underserved context are unable to find employment.

#### 4.4.3 Research questions

The main research question focuses on understanding the experiences of unemployed graduates in an underserved community. The research questions address the 'what', 'how', and 'why' of unemployed graduates' experiences in finding employment. The interview questions (IQs), presented in the form of an online questionnaire, are linked to the research sub-questions as well as the associated key concepts derived from the literature.

Table 1: Research questions and interview questions

<b>Main Research Question: What are the experiences of unemployed graduates in finding employment within an underserved context?</b>		
<b>RSQ 1: How do unemployed graduates experience the transition into employment?</b>		
<b>Interview questions</b>		<b>Key concept</b>
1.1	(IQ1) What strategies do unemployed graduates use to seek employment?	Job seeking
1.2	(IQ2) How do unemployed graduates seek for information about jobs?	Information
1.3	(IQ3) Who are the stakeholders involved in career development and employment in the setting?	Job assistance
1.4	(IQ4) What resources are available to unemployed graduates seeking for employment?	Resources
1.5	(IQ5) What are the experiences of unemployed graduates seeking employment?	Job seeking experience
1.6	(IQ6) What is the wellbeing state of unemployed graduates?	Wellbeing state
<b>RSQ 2: Why do unemployed graduates experience difficulties in finding employment?</b>		
<b>Interview Questions:</b>		
2.1	(IQ7) How prepared do you think graduates are for the world of work?	Job preparedness
2.2	(IQ8) What contextual factors influence the employment of graduates?	Contextual factors
2.3	(IQ9) What skills do unemployed graduates have?	Perceived skills
2.4	(IQ10) What were your expectations for getting a job when you graduated?	Employee expectations
2.5	(IQ11) Job requirements	Job requirements

#### 4.4.4 Data collection

The data of the study was collected using semi-structured questionnaires from the graduates who were unemployed within their selected population/community. The semi-structured questionnaires were an open-ended set of questions posed to each participant to enable the researcher to determine more detailed responses from the viewpoint of the participants about their experiences, challenges as well perceptions with regard their unemployment.

The questions posed in the questionnaire were categorised into three different formats; where the researcher formulated the first questions related to an informed consent understanding the purpose of the research with option of choosing a response of “Yes or No” as an answer. The second formatted questions were related to personal biographical details, such as name, age, home language, residential (specifically to just the area), educational details (specifically to qualification obtained, institution and the year). The last format of the questions that were confronted to participants were questions related to the aim of research study to obtain varying views of the participants with regards their experiences and challenges. [The research questions are attached as Appendix A].

#### 4.4.5 Process of analysing data

The process of analysing data and bring meaningful data collection, as cited by Caulfield (2022), was applied through the phases of Braun and Clarke (2006) as a guide to conduct thematic analysis. Figure 10 showed the six phases of Braun and Clarke (2006).



Figure 10: The six phases suggested by Braun and Clarke (Source: Researcher, 2020)

Conducting the phases of Braun and Clarke (2006) as a guideline for thematic data analysis enabled the researcher to discover information, interpret the data and approach large data sets more easily by sorting them into broader themes, and the thematic steps are used as a guideline in relation to the research questions (Caulfield, 2022). Below is a brief discussion of how the researcher followed the steps:

##### i) Phase One: Familiarising oneself with the data gathered

This step requires the reading of the data conducted from the participants, then re-read the data and become familiar with the details of the responses. After obtaining the data from the participants, the responses were carefully read and summarised, followed by the interpretation of initial ideas to understand the content as this helped to generate initial themes.

##### ii) Phase Two: Generating initial codes

In this phase, the data is reduced into smaller meaningful amounts of data by organising it with coding (Lutz, 2020:84). Once the researcher familiarised herself with the data, transcripts followed and colouring was used to code each initial response based on the research questions.

##### iii) Phase Three: Generating initial themes

During this phase, broader themes emerge; therefore, initial identification of themes is applied. Themes are described as patterns that are significant in the data and/or research question (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017:6). In this study, similar data were identified in the groupings set out in phase ii) and initial themes were generated.

#### iv) Phase Four: Review themes

At this point, the themes generated in phase iii) are reviewed and re-entered. Themes should be clear and different from each other. To generate better themes, the researcher has to think whether the themes make sense, whether the data support the themes, and whether there are themes and sub-themes within the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). For this study, themes and sub-themes were identified from the data coded and the researcher used highlighters to identify such themes and sub-themes that worked in the context of the entire data set.

#### v) Phase Five: Defining and naming themes

This phase is to “identify the essence of what each theme is about” (Braun & Clarke, 2006:92). The main aim is to determine what each theme says, if there are sub-themes, and how they relate to the main theme. After careful analysis, theme names were defined that emerged from the data.

Table 2 is an example of themes generated; it illustrates the relationships between themes and incorporates what unemployed graduates feel and want.

**Table 2: Summary of themes**

UC	IQ	Key Concept	P Code	Response	Code	Category (refined)	Sub-theme	Theme (refined)
24	1	Job seeking	EP69	Sent out my CVs in different sports organisations around CPT, I also updated my resumes on the LinkedIn website and have been browsing through indeed and sending out my CV.	Send several CVs	Job seeking	Application actions	Job Application process
68	4	Access to resources	EP79	Advice to have attractive CV or start your business.	Social media	How to start own business	Assistance needed	Job Application process

In the above extract from the data set to illustrate the thematic process, the following headings are used: *UC* is the unique code of the response; *IQ* is the interview question number; *Key Concept* relates to the concepts identified in the literature review; *PCode* is the participant code; *Response* is the answer provided by the participant; *Code* is the initial code allocated; *Category (refined)* is the category after duplications and synonyms were removed; *Sub-theme* is the categories grouped into sub-themes; and *Theme (refined)* is the final allocated theme.

#### vi) Phase Six: Writing up the report

The final phase, as identified by Braun and Clarke (2006), entails the explanation of data once the themes have been analysed, concluded and ready for producing the final report, which often comprises a journal article and/or dissertation.

#### 4.4.6 Organising data

Dillard (2017) posits that there is often too much information available to make a clear decision from the data collected. With so much data to sort through, the researcher needs to know more about the data – whether it is the right data for answering research questions, and whether the data inform the decision-making process to draw an accurate conclusion from it. Therefore, following the right data analysis tools strictly provides rich data that can be read, edited and analysed.

For the data collected, the researcher transcribed the responses in table format. For the researcher to identify, separate and comply with the anonymity of the participants, the responses of the participants were identified by the allocation of codes. The participants identified for this study form part of a larger cohort of youth participants. Each participant was allocated a unique number with a specific prefix linked to a study. In this case, the participants of this study were allocated the prefix “E” with their participant number. The participant identifications were formulated as follow:

**Table 3: Participants Identification Code**

Respondents	Allocated Codes
Participant 1	EP68
Participant 2	EP73
Participant 3	EP77
Participant 4	EP80
Participant 5	EP65
Participant 6	EP75
Participant 7	EP74
Participant 8	EP66
Participant 9	EP67
Participant 10	EP76
Participant 11	EP69
Participant 12	EP70
Participant 13	EP64
Participant 14	EP79
Participant 15	EP15



#### 4.4.7 Transcription of data collected from the structured questionnaire

The research study included 15 participants selected in an underserved community in the Western Cape to participate in the structured open-ended questionnaire. The data collected were detailed responses entered by the participants on the questionnaire, which were transcribed into word format stored on an Excel spreadsheet. The researcher did not record the data as there were no interviews done.

#### 4.4.8 Coding process

In generating a rich report based on the findings, the researcher coded phrases or sentences of the responses, as coding was used in reviewing transcripts and labelling sections of the responses. An Excel spreadsheet was used to capture the generated initial codes and reviewed themes. Below (Table 4) is the coding example as illustrated in Excel.

**Table 4: Coding**

Key Concept	Code	Category	Sub-theme	Theme

In the above illustrated spreadsheet (Table 4), each code describes the idea or feeling expressed by the participant. During this stage, the researcher went through the transcript of each questionnaire and highlighted all phrases and sentences corresponding to the mentioned codes into different colours and originated shorthand codes to describe participant responses. New codes were added as the researcher continued. The codes helped the researcher to gain a summarised overview of the main points and common meanings that reappear throughout the data. In the case where more than one idea was included in a participant's response, the response was repeated with a code allocated to each part of the response that was relevant to the study. From the 15 participants, a total of 221 responses for the 12 questions were deemed relevant to the study.

The codes were checked to ensure that these represent the participants' responses. The codes were then considered for synonyms, and related ones were replaced with a category that represents that code. The data were categorised into 121 unique categories. The categories were then considered to derive the themes. There were too many themes, therefore the related categories were then coded for sub-themes and 31 unique sub-themes were identified. The sub-themes were then grouped into eight (8) unique themes.

## 4.5 Results

### 4.5.1 Themes, sub-themes and categories

Below are the themes and associated sub-themes that represent the thematic analysis. A category count is also included to indicate the frequency of the responses in the different themes.

**Table 5: Results**

Theme	Sub-theme	Code Counts
Job Application Process (Five sub-themes)	Application actions	37
	Application process experience	10
	Assistance needed	3
	Different sources	12
	Job seeking	4
Development for Employment (Three sub-themes)	Additional skills needed	5
	Development programmes	1
	Further development	9
Environment (Seven sub-themes)	Community influence	6
	Employment restrictions	2
	Expectations versus reality	1
	Job opportunities	5
	Living conditions	4
	Support	4
	Unemployment experience	5

Requirements for Employment (Eight sub-themes)	Additional skills required	3
	Competition	1
	Expectations versus reality	7
	Experience needed	8
	Job requirements	2
	Prepared for work	3
	Sufficiently skilled	7
	Well-rounded employee	4
Resources (Four sub-themes)	Being connected	2
	Community support	3
	Connectivity	1
	Media	1
Support (Six sub-themes)	Academic support	3
	Assistance needed	2

Theme	Sub-theme	Code Counts
	Community support	4
	Job opportunities	2
	Networking	3
	Work preparedness	7
Value of Education (Six sub-themes)	Expectations versus reality	15
	Personal aspirations	2
	Sufficiently skilled	2
	Unemployment experience	1
	University influences	1
	Work preparedness	4
Wellbeing State (Four sub-themes)	Perseverance	2
	Personal aspirations	2
	Unemployment experience	7
	Wellbeing compromised	5

Below is the discussion of the themes indicated in Table 5, with some sub-themes supported by direct quotes from the participants. The themes and sub-themes are matched and linked to the theory applicable to this study and existing literature by other authors.

#### 4.5.2 Job application process

The **Job Application Process** theme has five sub-themes: *application actions*; *application process experience*; *assistance needed*; *different sources*; *job seeking*. For the job *Application actions* themes, the participants indicated that they do prepare their CVs for these applications:

“Created a new CV and registered it in different recruitment sites” [EP68].

Six participants indicated that they apply for any job:

“Graduates needs [sic] to make it a norm to apply for any kind of job available until they find a job that is related to their qualifications” [EP65].

In this theme, most categories appear in the *application actions* sub-theme (37), followed by *different sources* (12) and *application process experience* (10).

The finding derived from the data regarding the job application process is that unemployed youth unsuccessfully apply for many different jobs using different strategies such as email, online recruitment agencies, and word of mouth without receiving feedback.

It was clear from the data that the continuing unsuccessful applying for jobs influenced their wellbeing state since they find the job application process stressful and their unemployed status is not sending a positive message to others in the community wanting to further their education.

An example from the data received, participants said the following:

“It's not good because I myself [am] the first person to go to university at home and I was I role model to young people now they don't see me as that person anymore” [EP75].

“Life after tertiary is hard, I mean after years living in res, one has to go back home because we cannot afford to rent out flats to keep on looking for jobs in the city. We live in underprivileged villages and so is [sic] our homes. Living in villages has so many disadvantages, for instance your mind is so narrowed, you don't really know what the real world is like out there until you are exposed to it for the period of varsity and that's not enough time to make contacts that can help you lift you up and get you a job in the nearest future” [EP69].

This theme was generated as the initial theory to explain the process followed by the unemployed graduates when applying for employment. It indicates that unemployed graduates in their daily lives prepare their CVs and seek to use recruitment agencies as part of their process when trying to find employment.

#### **4.5.3 Development for employment**

The **Development for Employment** theme has three sub-themes: *additional skills needed; development programmes; further development*. For the *further development* sub-theme, the participants indicated that it takes up much time for graduates to become self-developed for the world of work:

“I believe to some extent graduates are equipped for the world of work. But it takes a whole lot of time and further self-development to make sure a graduate is prepared” [EP15].

Nine (9) participants indicated that the skills they obtained were sufficient but further development is needed:

“I believe it was self-sufficient but further development is needed” [EP15].

The finding based on this theme is that the nine (9) unemployed graduates indicated that their education sufficiently prepared them, but further development (9) in skills is needed in order for them to be fully prepared for the world of work.

#### 4.5.4 Environment

The **Environment** theme has seven sub-themes: *community influence; employment restrictions; expectations versus reality; job opportunities; living conditions; support; unemployment experience*. For the *community influence* (6) versus *unemployment experience* (5) sub-themes, participants indicated that the communities they live in affect their process of job seeking. The financial challenges they are faced with contribute as a factor in the process of job seeking:

“Finding a job is not easy, I hardly get enough sleep sending my resumes to different organisation with no luck, and coming from a small village like Grabouw it is unlikely for us to get the job. Grabouw is so small, so small that sometimes it makes me wonder if the government has not forgotten that the area exists, there are no equipment and facilities to aid us with most of the careers we choose to follow” [EP69].

“Struggling to get money for updating my CV and data” [EP68].

The finding derived from the data regarding the impact of the environment on unemployed graduates is based on their unemployment experiences (5) that job seeking is a difficult journey. Apart from their underprivileged communities they struggle to look for employment due to financial constraints that contribute to the challenge of seeking online employment.

#### 4.5.5 Requirements for employment

The **Requirements for Employment** theme has eight sub-themes: *additional skills required; competition; expectations versus reality; experience needed; job requirements; prepared for work; sufficiently skilled; well-rounded employee*. For the *experience needed* versus *well-rounded employee* sub-themes, participants indicated that experience is needed by graduates to get a job. An example from the data obtained, the participants indicated:

“They look for experienced graduates” [EP65].

For the *well-rounded employee* sub-theme a participant indicated that,

“Employers are looking for disciplined individuals who are loyal and who work very hard to reach the goal of the organisation, they are looking for individuals who are willing to develop themselves and grow with the company” [EP73].

Employers look for well-skilled employees, and graduates indicated that employees must have skills and experience in the field, and be well-prepared but in their *expectations versus reality* (7), participants indicated they are prepared for the working industry; however, in their time of studying they are not educated and equipped with more experience, which is needed when they are job seeking. An example from the finding is:

“They are prepared but the problem is that sometimes they do not have the experience required for a job” [EP73].

In this theme, the author sought to understand the graduates’ perspective of how they understand and view the job requirements needed from them by employers. It is clear that in the job market, employers are looking for well-experienced graduates in their organisations and some qualifications from certain fields are in higher demand than other qualifications, which leaves those graduates with facing unemployment.

#### 4.5.6 Resources

The **Resources** theme has four sub-themes: *being connected*; *community support*; *connectivity*; *media*. For the *community support* sub-theme, participants indicated that they get support for job applications from their community assisting with resources:

“Well in terms of that, two years ago Grabouw’s residences were provided with an Internet centre whereby one can go at any time during the day and browse through [sic] Internet, so Internet is what is provided for us” [EP69].

The finding derived from the data in terms of available resources that assist unemployed graduates in job seeking is that “job network” strategies in the form of social media, friends and internet are used by graduates, and that *community support* (3) resources include an e-learning centre that comes with community Internet access. However, not all participants (unemployed graduates) of this study receive community support; some unemployed graduates still face a lack of *connectivity* and Internet access, which is a factor that influences the availability of jobs to graduates.

#### 4.5.7 Support

The **Support** theme has six sub-themes: *academic support*; *assistance needed*; *community support*; *job opportunities*; *networking*; *work preparedness*. For the *academic support* versus *community support* sub-themes, participants indicated in terms of job search that they are mostly assisted by the institution(s), and that only a few unemployed graduates receive community support. The data received from the participants were recorded as:

“The university used to place students in different companies for in service training, some of them they got permanent posts” [EP73].

“During my last year one of the lecturers brought someone that works for a sport organisation and kind explained and give us some heads up about being a sport management, and some of the research assignments given were a great aid in finding info about the career” [EP69].

“Councillor Northlink College assist[s] by giving graduates letters for internship and they help us to find internships” [EP77].

The finding based on this theme is that the employment support received by unemployed graduates stems from academic support with little support received from the community. For academic support, institutions invite guest speakers to provide educational information about careers and job creation, while internship support is also implemented.

#### 4.5.8 Value of education

The **Value of Education** theme has six sub-themes: *expectations versus reality*; *personal aspirations*; *sufficiently skilled*; *unemployment experience*; *university influences*; *work preparedness*. For the sub-theme *expectations versus reality*, participants shared their expectations of getting a job after completing their studies:

“I expected to get job immediately after I graduated since education is the main regarded source of possibly getting a job” [EP65].

Another participant indicated that,

“As I did Engineering, I expected to get a job as soon as I graduated. I didn't think that it will be this hard to find a job” [EP75].

The response of another participant is as follows:

“I thought that as soon as I complete my qualification, I would get a job in reputable company. I chose Marketing because it is a qualification that teaches you on how to position the business in consumers mind so that they can see value to the products you sell” [EP73].

For the *university influences* sub-theme, the participant felt that the type of institution a student attends has an influence on the chances of students getting job placement:

“Individually I believe academic institutions a graduate attends may influence and what an individual can provide to the institution” [EP15].

The finding based on this theme is that many graduates value education and feel that it will bring a change in their lives, where their expectations are to be employed after completing their studies.

#### 4.5.9 Wellbeing state

The **Wellbeing State** theme has four sub-themes: *perseverance*; *personal aspirations*; *unemployment experience*; *wellbeing compromised*. For the *unemployment experience* sub-theme, participants shared their experiences while seeking employment:

“It is so hard to find a job even if you are a graduate most employers wants people with a minimum of 3 years' experience but how can you have experience while you are

coming straight out university and how can you gain experience if employers won't give you a chance to learn and prove ourselves" [EP80].

Six participants shared a similar experience:

"It has negative influence on me because after studying one expects that you will be directly employed and be able to change your home situation and it is stressful to be unemployed" [EP66].

The finding based on this theme is that the job seeking experience with getting no employment affects the wellbeing state of the unemployed graduates both emotionally and physiologically; they become depressed during the process of job seeking as they are the first generation of students in their families to graduate.

#### **4.6 Summary of key findings**

In this chapter, the results of the data analysis are presented, outlining the demographical details of the respondents. The female gender in the 24-26 year age group shows the highest unemployment rate. The recruitment of participants and the data collection process are presented, followed by the data analysis and derived findings. The key findings resulted in eight (8) themes. The themes are ranked according to the most found in the data. The themes are discussed in detail in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS

### 5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of unemployed graduates. The key findings of the themes discussed in this chapter refer to the total outcomes of the research according to the research objectives of the study. This chapter reflects key findings of the study that relate to the literature review. The main findings discussed in this chapter are the themes summarised in Table 6, mapped onto the conceptual framework proposed in Chapter 2 based on the literature reviewed.

### 5.2 Summary of key findings

**Table 6: Summary of key findings**

	Theme from data	Key findings	Theme from the literature
1	Job Application Process	Unemployed youth unsuccessfully apply for many different jobs using different strategies such as email, online, recruitment agencies, word of mouth without receiving feedback. The continuing unsuccessful applying for jobs influenced their wellbeing state since they find the application process stressful and their unemployed status is not sending out a positive message to others in the community wanting to further their education.	2.5 Nature of unemployment
2	Development for Employment	Unemployed graduates indicated that their education sufficiently prepared them but that further development (9) in skills is needed in order for them to be fully prepared for the world of work.	2.4 Unemployment and skills mismatch
3	Environment	Unemployed graduates shared their unemployment experiences (5), stating that job seeking is a difficult journey; they struggle to look for employment due to financial challenges that contribute as a challenging factor when they have to seek online employment.	2.6 Context and unemployment
4	Job Requirements	Employers look for well-skilled employees, and graduates indicated that employees must have experience in the field skills and be well-prepared, but in their expectations versus reality (7) they are prepared for working in industry, however in their time of studying they are not educated and equipped with the experience needed for when they are job seeking.	2.4 Unemployment and skills mismatch

	Theme from data	Key findings	Theme from the literature
5	Resources	The available resources assisting unemployed graduates in job seeking were indicated as “job network” strategies found as social media, friends and the Internet used by graduates in their job seeking, and the community support (3) resources provided to them, such as the e-learning centre that comes with community Internet access.  However, some graduates were facing lack of connectivity and/or Internet access, which is a community factor that influences the availability of jobs to graduates.	2.5 Nature of unemployment
6	Support	The employment support that unemployed graduates receive comes from academic support, with fewer support received from the community. The academic support that institutions provided once invited guest speakers to give educational information about careers and job creation while internship support is also implemented.	2.5 Nature of unemployment
7	Value of Education	Many graduates valued education and felt that it will bring change to their lives, with the expectation of being employed shortly after completing their studies.	New
8	Wellbeing State	The job seeking experience without receiving feedback affects the wellbeing state of the unemployed graduates; they are becoming emotionally and physiologically depressed in the process of job seeking as they are the first generation of students in their families to graduate.	2.2 NEET youth

The themes derived from the data are mapped onto the conceptual framework proposed in Chapter 2 based on the literature reviewed.

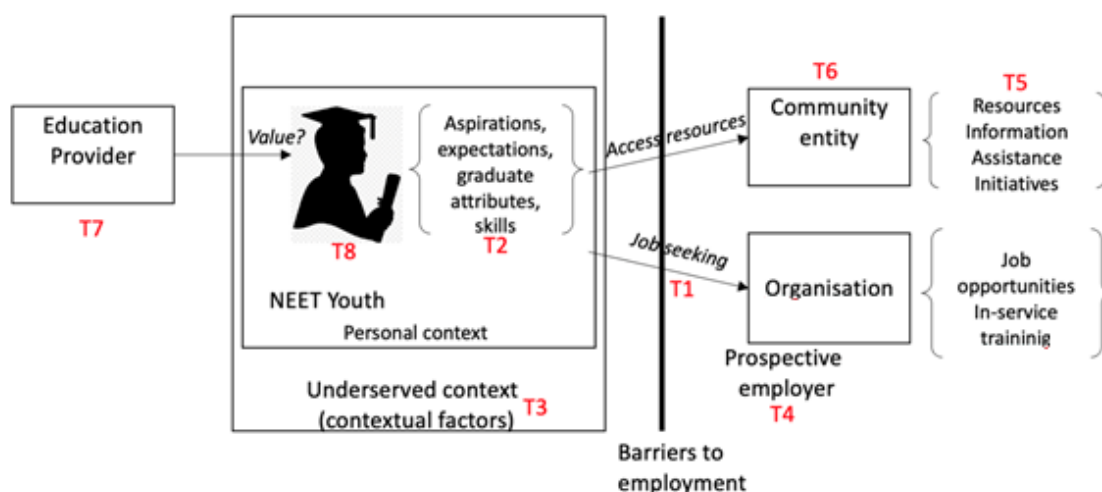


Figure 11: Conceptual framework with the themes derived from the data mapped

### 5.3 Discussion of themes

#### 5.3.1 Theme 1: Job Application Process

The finding from the **Job Application Process** theme elaborates on how unemployed graduates view the job application process as the initial process in the series of processes aimed at finding a new job. Wanberg et al. (2020) state that the job application process includes a wide range of activities when searching for jobs, for instance, the following participants indicated:

“They create [a] new CV and registered it in different recruitment sites” [EP68]

“I would send emails, go to door-to-door and ask friends to inform me if they hear of any possible vacancy” [EP64].

The job application process/and action is a ‘job search behaviour’ where there are several categories of job search behaviours undertaken by graduates, namely as formal and informal channels. The formal channels typical involve employers’ listings set out to help job seekers, whereas the informal channels are referred to as social networks. Studies indicated that social networks are the most used and were indicated to be used by the participants of this study as most jobs are obtained through informal referrals from relatives, friends and by “whom you know in the right place” (Klehe & Van Hooff, 2018).

In addition, another key finding in this theme was the unsuccessful job application process which affects the wellbeing of the graduates:

“I have been applying but I did not get any response yet. The last time I worked was during in-service training while was still at school” [EP68].

Another participant indicated:

“I applied on the internet, I was called in some of the places for interviews, and I attended them but I never got a Job” [EP73].

This finding is similar to what was discovered in the NEET youth literature section of this study where one of the authors argue the negative characteristics of Youth NEET (Not in Employment, Education and Training) that impact their lives; it was explained as the characteristics that impacts their wellbeing in a psychological, physical and emotional way.

Thus far, it was attested in other studies that recent graduates are overeducated when they start their careers, and this relates back to what was discussed in the NEET youth literature section of the analysis, namely that close to half of the South African youth are overeducated and faced with the challenge of unemployment. The overeducation is described as having a higher level of education than is necessary to perform a specific job effectively (Meroni &

Toscano, 2017). Regardless of the previous statement, it is said that young graduates continue to accept employment for which they are overqualified and the explanations for that includes the scarring effects of staying unemployed after graduating. Discussing findings on the **Job Application Process** theme in this chapter relates to the NEET discussion in the literature review because it was emphasised in both these sections that applying for jobs (job application process) without feedback impacts on the wellbeing of the graduates and youth that formed part of this study.

### 5.3.2 Theme 2: Development for Employment

In this theme, the emphasis is on understanding the opinions of unemployed graduates with regard to their employability skills set and the labour force preparedness. The finding from the data collected indicates that participants' responses were different, with each participant having a different perspective or view of the level of employability skills set they have acquired to be effective and efficient for their successful transition into the labour force. Some participants reported that graduates are more than prepared for employment because of the skills they have gained during their in-service training while other reported that they are not prepared and that further skills for job development are needed. Below is a response from one of the participant elaborating on how prepared they are for the world of work, mentioning that they feel prepared because of the in-service training workplace they were part of, which was for a period of six months. The response was recorded as follows:

“I feel that from the learning during the 6 months of us being in the workplace we gain[ed] new skills that make us prepared for the workplace” [EP66].

From the findings it is clear that participants' views and opinions do vary, and can therefore be correlated to the response of participant [EP15] below, which contradicts the above finding and response. Participants reported that graduates are prepared but at the same time need further self-development. The participants' responses were recorded as follows:

“I believe to some extent graduates are equipped for the world of work. But it takes a whole lot of time and further self-developments to make sure a graduate is prepared” [EP15].

“They are prepared but the problem is that sometimes they do not have the experience required for a job” [EP73].

“They are not prepared for the real world because no one tell[s] us that we need MORE experience” [EP80].

From the above findings, participants feel they are prepared for the world of work; however, further self-development is needed to enhance their preparedness. This point highlights that notwithstanding the experience and skills they obtained both in theory (academic) and practical

(workplace, usually in-service training) there are still some employability skills sets needed for the implementation of strategies and ideas, which they might lack. A similar case was also discussed in the literature with the evidence from one of the reports published by the University of Cape Town titled, "*Graduate unemployment in the face of skills shortages*". The findings elucidate the skills shortages in graduates as also indicated by the participants of this study in their responses and in the literature chapter. This is an indication that graduates lack the skills set required in the job market; the reasons vary from skills mismatch and low skills to qualifications obtained that are not in demand.

The gaps in experiences and skills were identified in various industry sectors as reported by employers when seeking to employ graduates. These gaps have been analysed in terms of graduates' work-readiness, with the outcome that they have demonstrated specific skills deficiencies. These findings, in conjunction with the literature of this study as mapped in the conceptual framework above (Figure 11), articulate that graduate attributes and skills acquired from South African Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) education shows a skills mismatch with economic expectations, which is a result of skills deficits among the youth and graduates. It does not promote efficiency, quality and relevance as these are the primary sources in education that are essential.

Further discussions about the findings for this theme inter-relate with the literature review done in Chapter 2. It is clear that recent graduates lack the employability skills required in industry, while the current economic downturn has increased the burden on HEIs to produce graduates with the necessary skills to enter the workforce. This is supported by Mari et al. (2019). Nawab (2017) argues that support from course facilitators is required to equip the students with skills and ideas to sustain further development in strategies and overcome other barriers. It is argued in literature that South African education needs to be examined carefully, that students need to be encouraged to engage in Entrepreneurship courses, and that the Basic Package of Support (BPS) must be used in the form of policy assessments and programmes for the South African youth to support young people and unemployed graduates with finding employment.

### **5.3.3 Theme 3: Environment**

Theme 3 focuses on the influence of the community environment on unemployed graduates seeking employment, for i.e., who provides assistance to graduates looking for employment within the community, and what community factors influence the availability of jobs to graduates. Graduated highlighted several responses regarding assistance from their communities and factors coming from the community that influence their employment status.

For this theme, participants indicated that they receive no or little assistance from their respective communities. For instance, some participants responded with “No one” [EP64] and “Never heard of anyone helping us to get jobs” [EP68].

The finding for this theme is that there are no people assisting graduates with looking for employment. One responded indicated the following:

“So far, I have been going through the Internet and sometimes find it hard to sleep. I would be browsing through it until morning, so there is no-one that I know of that assist[s] graduates around Grabouw in terms of getting [a] job” [EP69].

The above participant’s response shows that their community does not have the capacity to provide job assistance or support. For this finding, a further analysis was done to determine the reasons for the barriers that make the community unable to provide support to its community members, which include graduates. A similar finding was found in literature, where the Western Cape Government (WCG) reported on the youth who described their experiences and challenges growing-up in a disadvantaged environment with social ills that affect their chances of obtaining employment. In addition, the above participant’s [EP69] response of lacking job assistance relates back to what was discovered in the literature review of this study, namely that the lack of assistance contributes to the high number of unemployment.

Haysom (2007) points to an increased realisation of the current approaches to development of one of the underserved communities (in this case Theewaterskloof Municipality Grabouw) not meeting the needs of the growing population. The author continues by highlighting the lack of access to resources in the Grabouw region of the Western Cape, and articulates new approaches on how to seek out the issues. The overall purpose of the new approaches is to encourage community engagement in the development and design of the project that will transform Grabouw and surrounding area to eventually become a national model of sustainability with a community that is resilient and inclusive, meeting current needs equally, while preserving resources for the future generations of Grabouw residents and South Africans. This finding is also supported by Cerbach and Wedin (2010) who argue that Theewaterskloof is an area with many faces, all of which are marked by a low socio-economic status.

Another participant from the Theewaterskloof Municipality (Grabouw) responded by saying there is little support from their community towards their graduates seeking employment. The little support is an issue discussed in the findings from the study’s literature review. The participant said the following:

“As I did film production in my community there is zero chances that you can get a job; it is like nobody recognise[s] it” [EP74].

When analysing and gaining an understanding to this response, it becomes evident that the community has little knowledge of corporate qualification(s), which, in turn, causes people within the community to show no support to graduates as the community itself lacks educational knowledge.

Graduates are faced with employment restrictions in the context of their community’s behavioural or social norms. In some instances, graduates’ unemployment is influenced by the way communities handle job opportunities; an example is where available jobs are given to relatives and friends without cautiously looking who deserves the job and qualifies for it. Some participants responded as follows:

“The influence in the community is that there is nepotism, and they choose the ones they like” [EP77].

“Employment gap between races” [EP65]. (This response connects with the response of EP77 above).

This finding of community nepotism regarding availability of jobs resonates with the study conducted by Akuffo and Kivipöld (2019). The authors emphasise how leaders' basic principles of justice, fairness and equality benefit friends, families and political partners, which promotes unethical conduct. This unethical conduct is used to serve self-interest rather than the organisation’s interest. The overall finding for this theme resonates well with literature and data from previous studies conducted in the Theewaterskloof Municipality (Grabouw) where the author highlighted that the Community Work Programme was brought forward to combat the unemployment rate in the community; however, after the commencement of the programme, community leaders employed their own people and family. This similar finding was discovered by the author while investigating lived experiences of unemployed graduates from one of the participants of this study through data collection.

#### **5.3.4 Theme 4: Requirements for Employment**

This theme is aimed at gaining a constructive, in-depth opinion of graduates about their understanding of the job requirements, skills and experience expected from them by respective employers. These skills, experiences and job requirements were listed as sub-themes linked under the **Requirements for Employment** theme. The following participant shared experiences encountered while seeking employment without feedback because of the job requirements listed in the Labour Market that plays a part in contributing to the barriers affecting unemployment:

“Lack of a feeling for reality at given moment; to be honest it's high and low confidence about your qualification, sometimes you doubt your qualification” [EP79].

Consequently, the gap as described in the context of HEIs is highlighted to be a functionality of the education provided to its graduates. This is used to analyse the workplace expectation and the skills acquired by the graduate, which indicates that the qualification acquired by most graduates are not in demand or in conformity with the skills required when there is a job opportunity or job vacancy (Ramy & Abdella, 2020).

It has been determined that South Africa's unemployment crisis is structural; less educated employees who form the majority of the labour supply, are unable to find jobs due to a lack of demand in the type of qualification they obtained, their field of study, and the quality of HEIs (Oluwajodu et al., 2015). This fact resulted in the rationale for studying the increase in unemployed graduates. It has been highlighted in previous studies that the population of Western Cape graduates, which includes the participants in this study, is rapidly increasing while there is a limited number of listed in the labour market because of mismatch qualifications (Van Broekhuizen, 2016).

It was further highlighted that graduates are well-skilled in their areas of specialisation, but they lack soft skills. In the literature it is argued that in the Built Environment field, employers seek to employ graduates with soft skills and experience. Studies highlight that the perceptions of graduates regarding their understanding of exact job skills and requirements needed is totally different to the perceived expectations of employers. The difference in the perception of employers and new graduates is ascribed to “expectation” and expected outcomes. It is evident from the data collected in this study that some new graduates are not prepared for their first year of employment because of a lack of, or inadequate experience. Stress becomes a norm, as they expect to be overwhelmed with too much training and coaching support in their first year of work practice. However, employers expect high performance from such graduates equivalent to the experienced employees (Pfaff et al., 2014).

Regarding this theme's findings, studies discovered gaps in many aspects of the first-year work experience that have not been discussed in terms of the experience of recent graduate recruits where the depth of the first-year job experience is an important factor for organisations that recruit new graduates. For instance, according to the participants of this study who are recent graduates, their understanding of job requirements is all about ‘experience and skills’ for a particular role. However, studies have shown that new graduates joining the work industry tend to face challenges that go beyond their ability (experience and skills) to perform specific tasks, where they get challenged to fit into their roles and the organisation (Korte et al., 2015).



### 5.3.5 Theme 5: Resources

This theme focuses on resources provided to graduates by respective communities. The theme is the outcome of the intention to determine how communities play a part towards graduates' unemployment, i.e., what resources they provide to graduates in assisting them with finding employment. Thus far it was found that in some communities, there are no resources to assist unemployed graduates to look for employment. The participants had the following to say:

“Lack of Internet” [EP67].

“In our communities most of the time there are no resources available to us that can help us find jobs” [EP66].

The responses above point out that there are no resources and people available in their community to assisting them with finding employment. Communities are operating in poorly resourced areas, and this makes things even worse for the fresh graduates who need assistance with resources to seek employment, as in today's world jobs are shared online. This statement is also seconded by the response of a participant EP69. The challenge experienced by this participant was explained as follows:

“Life after tertiary is hard, I mean after years living in res[idences], one has to go back home because we cannot afford to rent out flats to keep on looking for jobs in the city. We live in underprivileged villages and so is our homes. Living in villages has so many disadvantages” [EP69].

It was pointed out by this participant that unemployed graduates encounter challenges that stress them more in a case where they first spend a few years of living in the university's residences where resources such as the Internet were provided to them, but now after university, they are forced to return to their underprivileged homes because of the unemployment they are faced with.

The findings of this study show that unemployed graduates are faced with many challenges and are usually not meeting their living lifestyles because lack of finances; nonetheless, there were few participants of the study who received community support resources. Furthermore, it has been reported that there are no community programmes in place to assist unemployed graduates' in looking for employment, the lack of resources forces most of them to rely on institutions for assistance. In the literature of this study, it has been discussed also that “households with low income where NEET youth belong is one of the contributing factors that affect the employability of the youth.

The finding of this theme relates to the data in literature, where it is highlighted that communities are living in poorly resourced areas, which impact on their ability to provide

employability support to the graduates. The Grabouw and Khayelitsha communities in the Western Cape were found to be the areas facing the most socio-economic issues.

### **5.3.6 Theme 6: Support**

This theme focuses on graduate employability support. In this theme, it was found that the most job search support received by unemployed graduates stems from within their institutions (academic support) rather than from their communities. Below are some of the participants' responses:

“CPUT opens vacancies for unemployed graduates to apply” [EP65].

“I applied at MERSeta provided by CPUT for unemployed graduates” [EP75].

“Councillor... Northlink college assist by giving graduates letters for internship and they help us to find internships” [EP77].

The above responses highlight that institutions play a vital role in enhancing graduates' skills while they are still completing their studies. It has been said that higher institutions deploy measures such as internships programmes to enhance the employability of students as it becomes difficult for new graduates to obtain graduate-level work (Helyer & Lee, 2014).

The findings of this theme also provide evidence of the limited support graduates receive from their respective communities, as discussed in the previous theme. In most communities, graduates do not receive the support that aids them in obtaining employment; reiterating the reason is the challenges communities face, being engulfed in low economic lifestyles, and living underprivileged lives. Furthermore, the support participants received from their respective institutions (such as internships programme employability support) shows that these participants were permanently employed by some companies. One of the participants said:

“The university used to place students in different companies for in-service training, some of them they got permanent posts” [EP73].

With the evidence from literature, findings from other studies were used to compare South Africa and countries in Northern Africa and Europe; it was highlighted that graduates are prepared for work transitions through internships, fieldwork and Work Placement for International Student Programmes (WISPs). The finding confirms that graduates' employability stems from the HEI they attended rather than from their respective communities. This is the same finding annotated in sections above, which highlights how communities are struggling to keep up with the current economic lifestyle because of their areas being under-resourced.

### **5.3.7 Theme 7: Value of Education**

This theme was derived from understanding the experiences and insight of unemployed graduates on the perception of the extent their value of education plays a role in their employability status. The participants had different views and perspectives on the subject, with contradictions and different opinions on value and role education plays in their employability status. One of the participants said:

“Individually I believe academic institutions a graduate attend may influence and what an individual can provide to the institution” [EP15].

With the contradicting views of the participants, some indicated that the value of education they received prepared them for the workforce, for instance, “The skills that I gained at CPUT has prepared me well for the workplace” [EP67], while some described the value of education received as not being adequate as yet as they were still unemployed and their expectation was to get employment after completing their studies. One participant said:

“It has [a] negative influence on me because after studying, one expect[s] that you will be directly employed and be able to change your home situation and it is stressful to be unemployed” [EP66].

The finding for this theme, from the different perceptions and understandings of the participants’ responses, is that the higher academic institution a graduate attends, partially or fully, affects the chances an individual has to obtain employment. This resonates with the study conducted by Riddell and Song (2011) that the value of education has a considerable effect on labour market results, such as employment and earnings. Nonetheless, a study by Baldry (2016) indicates a different perspective, with the author stating that graduates’ level of study, field of study, marks obtained, higher institution attended or whether the institution provided career guidance to the graduate do not substantially influence their employment or unemployment status. The reason for this difference in opinion and perception can be attributed to the graduate recruitment practices and services by some employers in the workforce and their social inequality employment policies.

From the above findings, the participants highlighted a key area and factor regarding employability. Employability describes the set of skills gained by an individual in an educational institution that prepares students and graduates for the workforce. This definition highlights the importance of employability, and in conjunction with recent literature on the concept of employability, it illustrates that if graduates and students can acquire the appropriate skills needed in the labour market, they will be absorbed and excel in their prospective fields (Small et al., 2018; Römgens et al., 2020). The findings of this study in correlation with the data from the literature point out that the type of higher institution a graduate attends, plays a role in their

employment status; in some cases, employers choose to hire graduates from certain institutions because of the value and quality of education provided by such institutions.

### **5.3.8 Theme 8: Wellbeing State**

This theme aims to describe the experiences of the participants' employment status and the possible effects this can contribute to the wellbeing and state of health of the participants. For instance, on the influence of wellbeing of the graduates, participants said the following:

“It affects both emotional and physiological wellbeing” [EP15].

“It was a very difficult journey. I had to make sure I apply at least twice a month and I was at home for 5 months after graduating” [EP66].

“It is stressful and depressing not having a job” [EP80].

These responses indicate that unsuccessful applications in job seeking or being unemployed has a degrading impact on the psychological and emotional wellbeing of individuals, and if there is no one to approach for guidance, it can be a stressful factor leading to depression. This scenario resonates with the study conducted by Drydakis (2015), in which the author highlights that unemployment has a negative effect on the health and mental state of graduates. The author further pinpoints that the effect of unemployment on the state of wellbeing and mental health is detrimental in periods with high unemployment. The finding relates back to what was discussed in the literature, namely that the high unemployment rate has a negative impact on youth and graduates seeking employment.

### **5.3.9 Summary of themes and key concepts**

Table 7 presents the key concepts mapped to the themes derived from the data.

**Table 7: Themes**

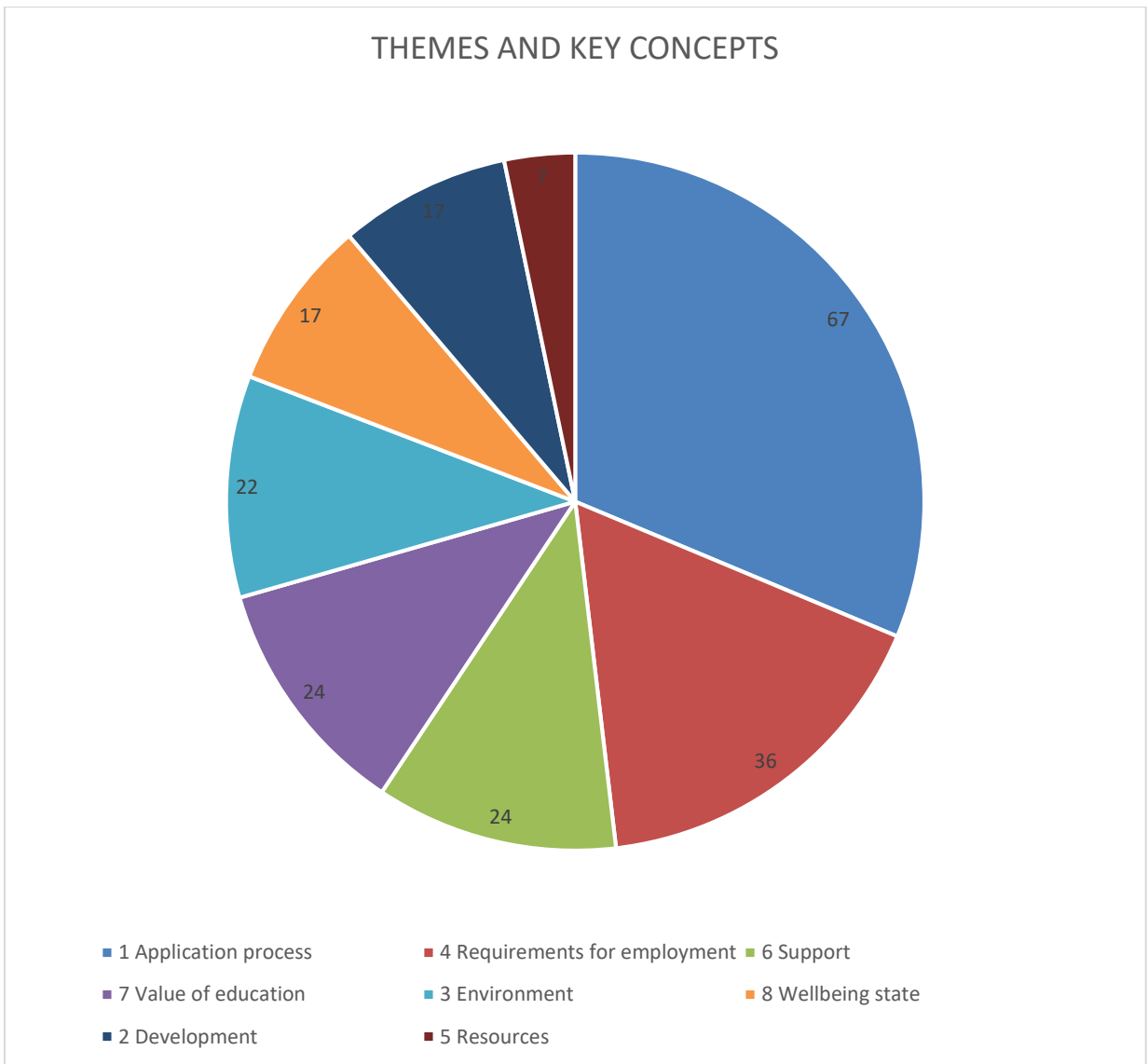
Theme No.	Theme	Number of codes
1	Job Application Process	67
4	Requirements for Employment	36
6	Support	24
7	Value of Education	24
3	Environment	22
8	Wellbeing State	17
2	Development for Employment	17
5	Resources	7

Below is a breakdown of the key concepts with more than one occurrence linked to each theme. The number of codes for each theme and key concept is indicated in brackets next to each theme or concept. The key concepts were derived from the literature reviewed as depicted in the conceptual framework and are also linked to the themes. The key concepts were used to formulate the questions used for the data collection.

**Table 8: Ranking of themes**

Rank	Theme No.	Ranking of Themes	Key Concepts	Key Concepts	Key Concepts
1	1	Job Application process (67)	Job seeking (30)	Information (12)	Suggestion (10)
2	4	Requirements for Employment (36)	Job requirements (15)	Job preparedness (8)	
3	6	Support (24)	Assistance to get a job (9)	Access to resources (7)	
4	7	Value of Education (24)	Employee expectations (14)		
5	3	Environment (22)	Contextual factors (8)	Wellbeing state (5)	
6	8	Wellbeing State (17)	Wellbeing (10)		
7	2	Development for Employment (17)	Perceived skills (7)		
8	5	Resources (7)	Information (3)		

The chart below illustrates the themes and the number of codes linked to each theme. The **Job Application Process** theme have (67) codes, followed by **Requirements for Employment** (36), **Support** (24) and **Value of Education** (24) with an equal number of codes, followed by **Environment** (22), **Wellbeing State** (17), **Development for Employment** (17) and lastly, **Resources** (7).



**Figure 12: Themes and key concepts**

RSQ 1 aimed to investigate how unemployed graduates experience their transition into employment. According to the study’s findings, the following themes together with the generated codes as shown in Figure 12 were formulated to answer RSQ 1. The themes are: **Job Application Process** with the most code categories (67), with **Requirements for Employment** (36) second. The **Job Application Process** theme has many codes because it describes the process of graduates searching for jobs, with the intention of all attributes and skills meeting the expected description of a job vacancy; this application process is the first step graduates and individuals have to take when seeking employment. These themes further annotate that unemployed youth experience the transition into employment as frustrating since they seem not to be able to move beyond the application process; as a result, it seems that they are not sufficiently prepared for employment based on the requirements of jobs. Many of the participants (unemployed graduates) follow many different strategies to apply for jobs, and

they do not receive feedback to their applications. The significance of the respondents' unsuccessful applications is argued to be the high level of job experience required by industry and the employment requirements (36), which are not met because the type of qualifications they obtained are not in demand.

The following themes with generated codes were formulated in relation to the findings for RSQ 2 of this study aimed at investigating why unemployed graduates experience difficulties in finding employment. The themes were ranked as follows: the **Support** theme with (24) codes, **Value of Education** (14), **Environment** (22), **Development for Employment** (17) and **Resources** (7). The **Support** theme has many codes; unemployed graduates receive employability support from their respective academic institutions, which assist graduates with developing the necessary skills and experiences for the future. However, it was still difficult for them to find employment because of the short duration of their in-service training they attended with assistance from their institutions. The **Environment** seems to be an important factor; it indicates why unemployed youth find it difficult to find employment, with factors typical of an underserved context preventing them from receiving the necessary support, and this affects their wellbeing state negatively.

The main research question of the study aimed to investigate the experiences of graduates in an underserved context. The data findings with regard to the main research question were obtained through RSQ 1 and RSQ 2. The experiences of graduates in an underserved context were based on environmental factors that block them from finding employment. These factors include lack of support, resources, and the high demand of employment requirements.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter provides insight into the findings through the derived themes, categories and codes. In total, eight themes were derived. The themes are ranked as follows: **Job Application Process** (67), **Requirements for Employment** (36), **Support** (24), **Value of Education** (24), **Environment** (22), **Wellbeing State** (17), **Development for Employment** (17) and **Resources** (7). The derived findings and what is found in literature are the same (or similar) in most cases; there are no contradictions between what was said by the participants and previous research studies.

In this chapter, the themes derived from the findings are compared with literature, with the focus on the research problem. The themes are discussed in terms of the perceived experiences of unemployed graduates in an underserved context. From the findings, it is shown that the **Job Application Process** theme has many codes as the participants were struggling to transition into employment using different applications strategies. This study shows that unemployed graduates lack the experience required by employers; however,

according to their perception, employers demand too much experience as part of the job requirements, while newly graduates just completed higher education with little experience received.

In this chapter, the participants' responses are indicated verbatim to support the findings of the data analysis relevant to the literature. Each theme is discussed and compared with literature to show whether correlations or contradictions exist in the findings, and how so.



## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the research conducted and a detailed summary of what was done in comparison with what was proposed. Through the data gathered, findings regarding the nature of graduate unemployment were examined. The causes of graduate unemployment and the difficulty in their transitioning into employment were highlighted, supported by previous studies with similar findings.

In this chapter the research questions are revisited, followed by a reflection on the research conducted. The research contribution is stated and future research is suggested. The chapter ends with a final conclusion.

### **6.2 Overview of research conducted**

The purpose of this study was to understand and provide a detailed comparative analysis of the experiences of unemployed graduates in an underserved context. Therefore, research questions were proposed to explore the experiences of unemployed graduates in their context. The key findings of the research questions were attained through the qualitative methodological process that was employed using an open-ended structured questionnaire. Below is a summary of the chapters in terms of what was done compared to what was proposed.

#### **6.2.1 Chapter 1: Introduction**

In this chapter, a proposed outline of the study was presented by providing an introduction to the study and concise background information on literature to be reviewed to ensure it reflects the study's purpose, rationale and objectives.

#### **6.2.2 Chapter 2: Literature review**

In Chapter 2, literature on previous studies relevant to the current research was reviewed to identify a pre-existing gap and measures to address this gap, and also to compare, correlate and contradict existing literature and this study. The literature reviewed was an approach to compare and explore various key factors of the NEET youth concept in advanced economies and in South Africa. It also focused on the experiences of unemployed graduates and explored how graduates and youth are affected by unemployment.

#### **6.2.3 Chapter 3: Research methodology**

This chapter focused on the methodology adapted for the study, giving a detailed description of the guidelines and procedures on how the study would be conducted and which methods would be selected and appropriated for the study.

#### **6.2.4 Chapter 4: Fieldwork and findings**

This chapter provided an analysis of the data collected and the findings derived from the analysis. Key findings were coded and themes were derived from the data to provide a meaningful understanding of the data collected.

#### **6.2.5 Chapter 5: Discussion of key findings**

The themes derived from the data were interpreted and discussed in this chapter, with a comparison of what was reviewed in the literature as a result of the formulated research questions.

#### **6.2.6 Chapter 6: Conclusion and further research**

The chapter first provided an introduction, followed by a research overview, conclusions and recommendations for further research in relation to the experiences of unemployed graduates in an underserved context in the Western Cape Province of South Africa.

### **6.3 Research questions revisited**

The main research question was to investigate the experiences of unemployed graduates in finding employment in an underserved context. The main research question is supported by two research sub-questions to investigate the situation of unemployed graduates and youth in an underserved context:

**RSQ 1:** How do unemployed graduates experience the transition into employment?

**RSQ 2:** Why do unemployed graduates experience difficulties in finding employment?

The data collected were analysed to assess graduates' experiences of transitioning into employment and the difficulties with finding employment. This assisted the research with understanding graduates' perspective and gathering data for the main study. In terms of the first objective, the study highlights the experiences of graduates transitioning into employment. Despite the difficulties faced by graduates when looking for jobs, in their transitioning from being a graduate to becoming an employee, the challenges encountered include relationships, accountability and the struggle between one's social life, work life and family life. The reasons for these challenges that unemployed graduates find themselves in are unpacked by the second research sub-question. In terms of RSQ 2, the findings of the study reveal that the employer's partiality, community nepotism, mismatch of qualifications, lack of skills and inexperience from graduates caused by the type of education received are factors presented in the body of literature as barriers contributing to graduate employability. Furthermore, according to graduates' perspectives, their immediate environment was found to be a

contributing factor to the unemployment challenges they encounter because of facing many social ills.

The research sub-questions addressed the main research question, which focused on the experiences of unemployed graduates in finding employment in an underserved context.

The key findings identified the perspectives of unemployed graduates during the data analysis; they view education as an aspiration that can change their lives; however, they unsuccessfully applied for jobs without feedback, which later affected their state of wellbeing.

#### **6.4 Reflection on research**

This research aimed to investigate the lives of graduates' experiences in their context with regard to unemployment. Before the data collection happened in practice, the clearance form for ethics to participate in this research study was obtained from the Faculty, followed by the consent letter obtained from the Theewaterskloof Municipality in the Overberg Region (Grabouw area) to investigate the unemployed graduates as participants of this study. For the data collection process, the researcher could not interview the participants face-to-face as this research happened in the time of the coronavirus pandemic. The data were collected by means of an online survey—a structured open-ended questionnaire was sent to participants via the WhatsApp and Facebook platforms. This was made possible by the funding received from the research institution. Participants were allocated a total of 1GB data each to enable them to complete the online questionnaire. However, challenges were faced in terms of time spent to collect the data as it took more than what was planned for the researcher to receive data from all participants. A further challenge encountered was during the data analysis where some participants' responses were irrelevant. In conducting a research study, carefully planning and time management are the fundamental aspects of the research to make sure the study contributes to knowledge for further research. However, the data collected provided sufficient insights into the experiences of unemployed youth in finding employment in underserved contexts. Furthermore, the responses from the participants were honest and even though an online platform was used, they provided sufficient details about their experiences.

#### **6.5 Research contributions**

This section presents some of the pre-existing gaps and what was found by this study by outlining the knowledge contribution and practical contribution. This study examined the experiences of unemployed graduates in an underserved area in Western Cape, South Africa. Firstly, the investigation looked at the NEET concept in advanced economies and in South Africa. A qualitative approach was used to study the challenges and experiences of unemployed graduates, and they were asked to reflect on their lives.

This research provides knowledge about graduates' employability in terms of factors impacting on unemployment, which is a clear indication of primary data findings. The study contributes through providing information on gaps from previous studies in relation to the main research problem of this study. Furthermore, information is provided to government and non-government organisations facilitating graduate employment programmes on improving issues of graduate unemployment.

The practical contribution of the study includes clarifying factors such as social development, economics, human relations and health. The clarity will allow the stakeholders responsible for graduates' employability to restructure the education and skills necessary to equip such graduates. The study will also be published in reputable journals and conference proceedings, which will further enhance the standard of this institution.

## **6.6 Further research and recommendations**

Further research may focus on the improvement of graduate employability in the Western Cape, South Africa, in an underserved context as the main aim of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of unemployed graduates while it intended to enhance the understanding of the NEET concept. The further development areas of research are detailed in three ways.

Firstly, the key findings of the study were derived from the views of unemployed graduates. The data revealed that HEIs together with community and employers' recruitment policies upon graduate employability is affecting the graduates' application process. Firstly, a possible recommendation is to improve the higher education system for students to be in line with job requirements in the working industry together with careers that need to be aligned with those required by the employers. A variety of different institutions/organisations should work together and fulfil different interests, including advisory institutions able to advise and interview students to determine their views regarding unemployment as education quality improves.

Secondly, for the communities facing social ills, it could be required for the Western Cape Government to properly implement government programmes, projects and campaigns that can be facilitated by relevant departments to implement solutions on critical development issues. For the implementation of such programmes, all necessary areas and people should be taken into consideration to prevent any form of inequality from occurring.

South Africa needs to successfully contribute to growth in the skills system, it is still faced with poor alignment of systems such as the linking of post-school education and training systems, sector education and training authorities, and with employers which make it difficult to tackle the skills mismatch. All of this needs to be further addressed by creating a joint policy that requires educational reform to interlock with the macroeconomic sector, and further

strengthening of the industrial and labour market reform so that their combined impact will have a better chance of meeting the new conditions for global competitiveness (Jamieson, 2017).

To combat this issue, the South African economy needs to: (i) support and strengthen the low value-added production in the labour market to absorb the growth of the populace, mainly focusing on the youth as it is their first time entering the labour market; (ii) concurrently endeavour to improve and grow the mass production of products for the export market, which caters for the intermediate skills sector of the economy; and lastly, (iii) expand export of the production of products in the direction of higher value-added products which absorb the high skills spectrum of the economy. Lastly, the employment recruitment process should be improved. Hiring the right employees with a positive attitude results in a positive company image, and besides the necessary skills that come with extensive experience demanded, the new employees can still develop skills by attending training, as skills requirements change rapidly—what is used and needed today may be different in a few years' time. Moving onwards, job requirements should be redefined in terms of level of experience required. When a job is placed at entry level, a maximum of one year experience is suitable for newly graduates entering the labour market. It was revealed in the key findings that most graduates attended 6-12 months in-service training; it is, therefore, unrealistic to expect of them to have a minimum of three years' experience as is normally required by most employers.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

The research data collected from the selected unemployed graduates focused on their perspectives on employability by first examining the concept of NEET in advanced economies and in South Africa. Looking at the nature of the research, the findings were relevant to what is reported by other studies in literature similar to the current study. From this study it can be concluded that inexperience, mismatched skills, graduate employability, category of tertiary education received, the immediate environment and social background of a graduate are contributing factors to unemployment in a South African setting.

The South African education system has been articulated to be the most at risk in terms of supplying under-skilled graduates, which later affects the outcome of their job applications. The research further highlighted the nature of unemployment, causes of graduates' unemployment and solutions to these barriers. It is therefore concluded that the South African education system should be improved; this includes the improvement of governmental programmes and campaigns by the South African Government.

In conclusion, the research objectives were met and appropriate areas for further research were identified.

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## Appendix A: Ethics Certificate



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<b>Office of the Chairperson Research Ethics Committee</b>	<b>Faculty: Business and Management Sciences</b>
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The Faculty's Research Ethics Committee (FREC) on **28 April 2020**, granted ethics **Approval to Eunice Njani (215203056)** for **MTech: Business Administration** research activity at Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

<b>Title of dissertation/ thesis/ project:</b>	<b>UNEMPLOYED GRADUATES' EXPERIENCES IN SEEKING EMPLOYMENT IN AN UNDERSERVED CONTEXT</b> Lead Supervisor(s): Prof R. De La Harpe
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**Comments:**

**Decision: Approved**

 <hr/>	<b>20 May 2020</b> <hr/>
<b>Signed: Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>

## Appendix B: Data collection during the Covid-19 Pandemic (supervisor guidelines)

### Data collection during Covid-19 lockdown levels for research purposes

Due to the restrictions on movement and request to keep social distance, we need to reconsider our data collection strategies.

We need to, as far as possible, use technology to limit the need for face-to-face contact.

### Alternative data collection methods

	Data collection method	Alternative data collection method	Possible challenges	Benefits
1.	Interviews	Using a technology platform for online interviews, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zoom</li> <li>• WhatsApp audio/video</li> <li>• Google hangouts/meets</li> <li>• Blackboard collaborations</li> <li>• Microsoft teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited Connectivity</li> <li>• Data costs</li> </ul>	The technology provides for recording and the audio document can then be transcribed.
2.	Questionnaires	Google forms or sheets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited Connectivity</li> <li>• Data costs</li> </ul>	The technology provides for recording and the audio document can then be transcribed.
3.	Workshops/ focus groups	Create Facebook or WhatsApp groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May need to moderate posts</li> <li>• Need to control access</li> <li>• Participation is not anonymous</li> </ul>	Posts are already stored.

The next consideration is to obtain informed consent using online methods.

### Online interviews

At the beginning of the session, the researcher explains the purpose of the research and interviews and reminds the participant of their rights of participation in a research study. Participants can then be asked to give consent for each part of the research aspect. The responses are then recorded as part of the interview.

The same process can be followed for workshops or focus groups except each participant must then give informed consent for each research aspect. This may take up too much time and it may be an option to obtain informed consent prior to the online session. In this case,

informed consent can be obtained via WhatsApp, Email, SMS or any other appropriate technology platform. The proposed text to send to the participant is:

I, *{firstname surname}* have read the document that explains the details of the project *{Project short name}* in which I will participate. I agree that I understand the purpose of the research and what is required of me and that my participation is anonymous and voluntarily and that I can withdraw at any time.

The above text can be send to the participant following a short description of the purpose of the study, details of the researcher and instructions of giving informed consent (to copy the provided text and insert the name of the participant between the { } ). The participant will then be given the details to which cell number/email the text must be sent. Always provide options for the participants and allow them to use what is easier for them.

### **Online forms/sheets**

An informed consent component can be added to each Google form. The online form needs to include the purpose of the study for the participant to know what they are consent to. The link of the form needs to be sent to the participants with an explanation of the purpose of the study and what is expected of them.

An example: <https://forms.gle/RKoHCjG58EbJURW97>

### **Recruitment of participants**

It is important to recruit participants prior to starting the data collection. It is also important to keep track of the participants and this can be done as a Google sheet with all the participant details. It is also important to record the informed consent for each participant by copying it from the text the participant has sent and paste it in the sheet.

An example:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1nWH2KN5\\_VGiO95DHP8mO6ScvSjXkZKnLkKTh-bUF9mM/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1nWH2KN5_VGiO95DHP8mO6ScvSjXkZKnLkKTh-bUF9mM/edit?usp=sharing)

### **Data vouchers**

It is possible that the participants do not have data to participate online in which case it may be considered to provide the participants with a data voucher. It is important to administer this carefully since the vouchers may be used for other purposes that have nothing to do with the research. In the case of issuing vouchers, it is important to get the participant's use intent before issuing the voucher. The participant is approached and if they agree to participate with the intended use, they need to send their commitment to the contact number provided. The

commitment must then be copied to the Google sheet and the voucher number captured before sending the voucher.

An example:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1btYTAqolzZa-0qGzyevE4zVHBB0CnPch4rUp202a61s/edit?usp=sharing>

## Appendix C: Questionnaire

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### Unemployed Graduates

In light of the Covid-19 situation, data will probably be collected via an online platform. The proposed Google form appears below:

We would like to obtain your opinion on unemployment. The research targets are to look at the unemployment of Graduates/Youth. The intention is to gain data regarding the challenges experienced by graduates in finding employment.

**\*Required**

1. What is your highest qualification?\*

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2. Where did you obtain your qualification?\*

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3. When did you graduate?\*

---

4. Have you been employed since you graduated?\*

Yes

No

5. If you answered yes to the previous question, please indicate the period that you were employed and the name of the employer, otherwise you can skip this question.

---

---

---

6. What did you do to find a job since you graduated?\* Please elaborate and provide details about the strategies you used, the stumbling blocks you encountered, your experiences, etc.

---

---

---

7. Where do you find information about possible jobs?\* Please provide details about all the possible the sources such as media, individuals, organisations, etc.

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---

---

8. Who in your community provides assistance to people looking for jobs?\* Please elaborate on any individuals, organisations, etc. to explain the kind of assistance provided. You may also want to explain what your university has done to assist graduates.

---

---

---

9. What resources are available to graduates to assist them in finding a job?\* Please elaborate on initiatives, events or programmes offered to graduates to find employment.

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---

---

10. Please share your experience while seeking for a job.\* Please share your feelings.

---

---

---

11. What do you think is the influence of being unemployed on your wellbeing state?\*

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---

12. How prepared do you think graduates are for the world of work?\*

---



---

---

13. What factors typical of the context of the community influence the availability of jobs to graduates?\*

---

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14. How do you feel about the skills you gained during your university training in preparing you for the world of work?\*

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15. What were your expectations for getting a job when you graduated? In this case, you may want to refer to the reasons why you choose your course or university.

---

---

16. What do you think employers look for in graduates that influence the ability of graduates to find employment?\*

---

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17. Anything you would like to add that could help graduates to find a job? We are interested in your thoughts and ideas.

---

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This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

## Appendix D: Editing Certificate

12 May 2022

**EUNICE NJANI**

Faculty of Business and Management Sciences  
Cape Peninsula University of Technology  
District Six, Cape Town

**RE: CERTIFICATE - EDITING OF MASTER'S THESIS**

I, the undersigned, herewith certify that the editing of the Master's thesis of Eunice Njani, "GRADUATES' EXPERIENCES IN SEEKING EMPLOYMENT IN A COMMUNITY IN THE WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA", has been conducted and concluded.

The finalised thesis was submitted to Prof. Retha de la Harpe on 12 May 2022.

**Sincerely**



*Professor Annelie Jordaan*  
*DTech: Information Technology*  
*Ph: 065 990 3713*

**Member: SATI 1003347**



South African Translators' Institute (SATI)