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Cape Town employer perspectives on government initiatives addressing graduate youth unemployment

by

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DECLARATION: PLAGIARISM

I, Sinazo Likywa Ntleki, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own unaided work and that the thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

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Signed: **Date: 08/11/2022**

ABSTRACT

As unemployment grows significantly, the need for government to promote collaboration with employers in business and the private sector has been identified as a way to alleviate this crisis. In the South African government, 60% of the initiatives are government and business/private sector collaboration, and 53% provide short-term and temporal employment through skills training and learnerships. Therefore, the government needs to examine its current policies and initiatives and determine how they can attract the participation of employers in the creation of long-term employment, especially employers considering collaborating with the government in addressing the graduate youth unemployment crisis in South Africa.

Literature indicates the detrimental effects of the high unemployment rate among the youth as it results in inequality and a rise in poverty and crime. As such, the government needs to reduce unemployment by offering incentives such as grants, tax exemptions, and investment boosts to employers who appoint and employ youth, as well as giving support to employment agencies or using creative techniques to enable unemployed youth to secure employment. This study, therefore, aims to explore employers' perspectives about collaborating with the government in addressing youth unemployment in South Africa.

Only 20% of government initiatives provide a platform to discuss job creation, whereas business/private sector and government partnerships are crucial. So exploring employer perspectives will create platforms whereby government goals are communicated, understood and executed on behalf of the state.

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GLOSSARY

Terms

Business   This organisation or enterprising entity engages in commercial, industrial or professional activities. Businesses can be for-profit entities or non-profit organisations. Business types range from limited liability companies to sole proprietorships, corporations and partnerships.

Employer   refers to an "organization" meaning any number of employers ociated together for the purpose, whether by itself or with other purposes, lating relations between employers and employees or trade unions" ublic of South Africa Government Gazette, 1997). An employer is a on or business that hires for wages or salary.

Graduate   refers to someone who has obtained an undergraduate or postgraduate ee, completed secondary school, or obtained a certificate or diploma of ast six months' full-time duration. A young graduate in this study refers uth aged 18-35 years.

Initiative   is a new development, a fresh approach to something, a new way of ing with a problem.

Private sector   This part of a country's economic system is run by individuals and companies rather than government entities. Most private sector organisations are run to make a profit. The part of the economy under government control is the public sector.

Unemployment   This means difficultly finding jobs for those who are eligible and able to work, a macro-economic and socio-economic problem caused by insufficiency and inaccessibility of jobs to match the growing population (Kenny, 2019). *Unemployment* refers to individuals capable and willing to work but not absorbed by the labour market. The term *unemployment* is used with the factors of production regarding labour that is idle and underutilised for production, but if labour engages, there is employment (Kenny, 2019).

CHAPTER 1:   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction and background of the study

This research will specifically focus on employers' perspectives on collaborating with the government in addressing graduate youth unemployment in South Africa. In South Africa, unemployment remains one of the most persistent and contentious economic complexities (Mncayi, 2016). This is a national crisis. There is a decrease in the number of employed persons in all provinces, with Limpopo, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu Natal and Mpumalanga recording the biggest decrease in employment of all the provinces in the fourth quarter of 2019 (Statistics South Africa, 2019d). Although there has been some improvement in meeting sustainable development goals (SDG) in eight of the 17 goals prioritised globally, the situation has worsened in Sub-Saharan Africa Cieslik *et al.,* 2021). The SDGs aim for full productive employment and decent work for all, which should, in turn, address poverty (SDG 1) and lead to zero hunger (SDG 2) (Sustainable Development Goals, 2022). Cieslik *et al.,* (2021) recommend better research to understand the supply side of African labour markets. Fox and Gandhi (2021) suggest that the youth employment policy agenda should be part of an economic transformation agenda to address challenges and explore opportunities for youth employment during the post-pandemic period. The unemployment situation is not only about youth but is a serious economic problem due to structural constraints within African economies (Sumberg *et al.,* 2021).

Since 1997, South Africa's unemployment rate has measured above 20%, increasing rapidly by 30% in the first quarter (Statistics South Africa, 2020a). This was even more critical among young people (Gervais *et al.,* 2016), undermining the country's long-term economic growth, development prospects and social security (Nel & Rogerson, 2016). Even though the youth aged 18-34 constituted almost a third of the population in South Africa in the second quarter (Statistics South Africa, 2019b), young people made up a significant figure of 63.4% of people unemployed in the first quarter of 2019 (Statistics South Africa, 2019a). The increase in graduate supply is not parallel to labour market demand, where younger graduates (15-24 years and 25-34, respectively) are twice as likely to be unemployed than older graduates, where the term 'older graduates' refers to those individuals in the 35-65-year age category (Zheng *et al.,* 2018).

Despite the government's initiative with employers to elevate the situation, such as the Employment Tax Incentive (ETI) to encourage employers to hire young work seekers (SARS, 2014), unemployment rates continue to escalate. Again, in 2020, the South African Government introduced an R350-per-month special COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress grant to unemployed above the age of 18 years because of the COVID-19 pandemic (SASSA, 2020). In response to

COVID-19, Sanlam also launched an urgent job-preservation initiative through the recovery of small enterprises to corporates of South African companies (Sanlam Investments Media Centre, 2020). In addition, in 2020, President C. Ramaphosa, on behalf of the government, introduced the Youth Enterprise Development Strategy as a possible solution to promote youth entrepreneurship, youth self-employment, and youth-owned and managed businesses. However, even so, unemployment remains persistent, threatening socio-economic challenges: poverty and inequality transition (Oluwajodu *et al.,*15). These socioeconomic challenges affect the country's long-term economic growth prospects (Gervais *et al.,* 2016). The founder of Alibaba, Jack Ma, contends that African countries should grow jobs by encouraging young people to be entrepreneurs and the government should give startup tax breaks (Shapshak, 2018). Amazon.com Inc. planned to hire 3000 people in South Africa in 2020, as these new positions would bring the total permanent workforce to 7000 for Amazon, South Africa, alone (SABC News, 2020). Moreover, Amazon is setting up its Africa headquarters in Cape Town, South Africa, and for this development, it is estimated that up to 19 000 jobs will be created (City of Cape Town, Media and News, 2021).

Notwithstanding these initiatives, many young South Africans have recently had greater access to higher education, resulting in an increased graduate labour force (Booyens, 2020). However, finding employment after graduation for many graduates remains challenging (Fox *et al.,* 2016), even though finding a first job is fundamental for people's lifetime work trajectory (Levinsohn & Pugatch, 2014).

Much of the research on the identified problem has focused on causes, perceptions of graduate unemployment, and employer perceptions of graduate youth unemployment (De Lannoy, Graham, Patel & Leibrandt*,* 2020). Few studies have focused on the supply side of labour – suppliers of labour (employers) in the labour market and their perspective (Nguyen, Nguyen, Nguyen & Tran, 2021). The private sector and government partnerships are crucial to create a platform where the government goals are communicated, understood, and executed on behalf of the state (Dladla, 2020). Looking at the youth unemployment problem from a wider perspective, the South African government has initiated some collaboration programmes to create youth employment:

- Phase II of the Basic Education Employment Initiative: published 26 September 2021 (South African Government, 2021);

- Job Summit: 4-5 October 2018 in Johannesburg at Gallagher Convention Centre (Presidential Jobs Summit Framework Agreement, 2018);

- Youth Employment Service (YES): established in 2018 (Presidential Jobs Summit Framework Agreement, 2018);

- Employment Tax Incentive (ETI): established on 1 January 2014 (SARS, 2014); and

- Expanded Public Works Programme (South Africa Yearbook, 2018).

South African government faces the challenge of achieving decent work and employment for all, as promised by the ANC government in 2010. This trajectory has been significantly shattered by the COVID-19 pandemic, even though it is still premature to depict its final extent and overall impact (Maphiri, Matasane & Mudimu, 2021). Amongst the challenges faced are political interference, corruption, and allegations of corruption in state-owned enterprises and international companies operating in South Africa that have led to financial losses and a steady fall in the effectiveness of governance and corruption control in South Africa (Cilliers & Aucoin, 2016b). However, the limitation is that the Government Employment Intervention Programmes cease when there is a government leadership change (Kwofie, Dwamena & Dadzie, 2020). Hence, this study explores employers' perspectives on government initiatives addressing graduate youth unemployment in South Africa.

1.2 Problem statement

About 600 000 university graduates in South Africa are unemployed, while the private sector struggles to fill an estimated 800 000 vacancies (Cilliers & Aucoin, 2016a). Many employers find it extremely challenging to find suitable candidates with the right qualifications due to a mismatch between graduates' acquired qualifications and the actual skills desired and required by employers (Tomlinson & Jackson, 2021). Therefore, while jobs are available, many of these graduates are not fit or considered for the available opportunities (Mncayi, 2016). About 56.4% of the youth aged 25-34 is more than double that of the 45-54 (17.2%) year olds in the second quarter of 2019 who are unemployed, confirming that the unemployment rate among the youth is high (Statistics South Africa, 2019b).

Finding employment after graduation for many graduates remains a challenge (Fox *et al.,* 2016). Some reasons for young graduates' unemployment are the lack of previous work experience, lack of combination of soft and hard skills (Faraazlina & Zunurain, 2017), and the high expectation of the company's market (Eichhorst & Rinne, 2018). It is widely believed that those with high education qualifications have an added benefit in the labour market because of better employment prospects (Andersson, 2021). However, such an advantage does not benefit all; studies contradict

this notion that the higher a person's education level, the higher the probability of finding employment (Landais, Michaillat & Saez, 2018).

The problem statement for this study is that although there are sufficient studies about the alignment between the employability of graduates and job requirements, there is a paucity of studies addressing employers' perspectives on collaborating with the government in addressing graduate youth unemployment.

Employers' perspectives are virtually unknown, which makes it difficult to address the problem. Against this background, this study explores employers' perspectives on collaborating with the government to address graduate youth unemployment in South Africa.

1.3 Research questions

The primary research question is as follows:

What are employers' perspectives on government initiatives addressing graduate youth unemployment in South Africa?

To attempt to achieve the above question, the following sub-questions are included:

- *What initiatives are available from the government to deal with youth graduate unemployment?*

- *How do employers align their employment strategies with government job-creation initiatives for unemployed graduates?*

1.4 Aim of study

This study explores employers' perspectives on collaborating with the government to address South African unemployment. Knowing employers' perspectives will aid the government in addressing graduate youth unemployment in South Africa. The specific objectives are aligned with the sub-research questions:

- Identify the initiatives available by the government to address graduate youth unemployment. The method to collect data for this objective is to do a desk search of government initiatives published on the Internet.

- Determine employers' responses to government initiatives to create more jobs and employ more youth graduates. Data collected for this objective will come from a survey with open-ended online questionnaires.

1.5   Research Methodology

In this section, the research methodology used for this study is described.

1.5.1   Research orientation

This study assumes a subjectivist stance to allow the participants to share their own experiences and views of aspects of the study to be interpreted by the researcher. Qualitative data will be collected and analysed. The strategy selected for this study is a survey of selected employers whose employment strategies are aligned with the government's initiatives to address unemployment. The research onion proposed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016) guides the research design for this study.

1.5.2   Population

The population should meet the sample's needs (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006). The target population in this study consists of employers in private sector organisations in South Africa that recruit and employ graduate youth on a permanent or temporal basis or for experiential training. The research will use the existing connections of organisations that offer experiential training and employment to CPUT students.

1.5.3   Sampling

In line with the qualitative research design, the researcher will use purposeful sampling to identify and select information-rich cases. This is a non-probability sampling method whereby members of the target population meet the principles for inclusion in the study based on ease of accessibility (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). The contacts of the organisations will be requested from coordinators that place students each year for experiential training; failing this, the snowballing sampling method will be used.

1.5.4   Data collection instruments

Data will be collected by reviewing the literature to determine the current status of the study topic and to identify the key concepts that will be used to guide the data collection instrument design. A desk search will be used to find data about government initiatives. The researcher will use a questionnaire to disseminate open-ended questions to participants, which will be employers, through the online Google Forms link, as this is one of the primary and efficient ways of collecting data (Saunders *et al.,* 2016). The literature recommends that a researcher collect data until the data is saturated and no new findings are found (Saunders *et al.,* 2016). The researcher will test the open-ended online questionnaire on Google forms before using and sending it to the

participants. The persons in employment in the participating organisations will be approached to participate in the study.

1.6 Ethics considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct the study was obtained from the Higher Degrees Committee (HDC) at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). No participants were contacted prior to the ethical clearance being granted. Potential participants were given a letter of request, a conceptual research document, and an acceptance letter (see Annexure A) containing detailed information about the research and its purpose. In return, potential participants completed the acceptance letter to participate (see Annexure B), although this was not compulsory as completing the questionnaire represented informed consent. Participant responses were treated with full confidentiality as participants cannot be identified – participant details and responses were assured of anonymity. Further, participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without providing reasons and without repercussions.

Access to Google Drive was protected by a password known only by the researcher. The downloaded data were stored securely on a password-protected laptop. The data were used for research purposes only, and no third parties had access.

1.7 Delineation and limitations

This research will only focus on employers' perspectives on government initiatives addressing the youth unemployment of graduates. It will only include the data collected from the specified sample of participants. The researcher will focus on private sector employer organisations in South Africa that recruit and offer employment to graduate youth on a permanent or temporal basis or for experiential training. Connections from existing organisations offering in-service training and employment to CPUT students will be approached. Therefore, any organisation that is not a private entity and does not offer temporary or permanent employment to graduates will be deemed irrelevant. The researcher will not try to generalise but conduct an exploratory study to generate ideas. Graduate unemployment is a national challenge, but the focus area is limited to employer perspectives due to time constraints. Future research should use a large sample and incorporate interviews to probe participants to provide reasons for the perspective.

1.8 Significance of the study

Examining the unemployment problem from a greater perspective numerous studies found that unemployment in South Africa is the most serious among the youth (Harrison, 2018). Despite employment legislation, government initiatives and policies in South Africa that address

inequalities and employment opportunities among the youth, young graduates still face joblessness. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic worsened the situation: the small number of employed young graduates lost their jobs through retrenchment and non-renewal of contracts, further increasing the unemployment rate. And this rate could be even higher in the future. Hence, this study aims to understand employers' perspectives on collaborating with the government in addressing graduate youth unemployment in South Africa. For the government the study will provide insight and answers that may assist the government in collaborating with employers to address graduate youth unemployment and enable sustainable job opportunities. Much of the research has focused on perceptions of graduate unemployment, employer perceptions of graduate unemployment, and reasons for the difficulty of addressing the high graduate youth unemployment. Only a few studies have focused on the suppliers of labour (employers) in the labour market and their perspective on collaborating with the government in addressing graduate youth unemployment in South Africa. This study explores employers' perspectives on collaborating with the government to fill gaps in the available research.

1.9   Summary

The research will consist of the following chapters.

- *Chapter 1:* This chapter will orientate the reader to the research with an introduction, background to the research problem, statement of the research problem, and overview of the research will be discussed.

- *Chapter 2:* This chapter will consist of a literature review wherein previously published literature will be visited to support the research study. This will include the use of textbooks and published articles.

- *Chapter 3:* This chapter will consist of the research methodology, discussing the research method, the research design, the research question, data gathering and data analysis.

- *Chapter 4:* This chapter describes the data analysis, discusses findings and presents conclusions.

- *Chapter 5:* This chapter discusses study limitations, validity, and reliability for future studies.

- *Chapter 6:* This chapter will conclude the study and propose further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter includes an in-depth analysis of literature related to employers' perspectives on government initiatives addressing graduate youth unemployment in South Africa. A literature review has been conducted within the conceptual framework underpinning the study. The literature review focuses on available government initiatives to deal with youth graduate unemployment and how employers align their employment strategies to government initiatives. Factors contributing to unemployment, barriers to employment initiatives, government initiatives and strategies to combat unemployment are considered to establish the current state of government initiatives for addressing youth unemployment. The perspectives of South African employers on government initiatives are explored with a special focus on graduate youth unemployment. The difficulty for many graduates in finding employment after graduation remains a crisis, and according to Sumberg *et al.* (2021), an unemployment crisis is central to policy and public debate.

2.2 Unemployment

2.2.1 Globally

Middle-income countries represent 75% of the population globally and 62% of the world's poor (World Bank, 2022). According to the World Bank, countries are classified as follows: low-income with less than $1,085 gross national income (GNI); lower middle-income with between $1,086 and $4,255 GNI; upper-middle-income between $4,256 and $13,205 GNI; and high-income with more than $13,205 GNI (World Bank, 2022). South Africa, part of the sub-Saharan region, is classified as an upper-middle-income country. Unemployment in South Africa was 33.6% in 2021 (Statistics South Africa, 2021). Regardless of the country's classification, there is much pressure to create graduate employment, and 600 million jobs are needed to address unemployment globally (World Bank, 2022). This results in South African universities being pressured to produce employable graduates in response to the current narrative that graduates fail to meet employer expectations (Mgaiwa, 2021). Unemployment globally over the past 20 years, with the number of young graduates who actively participate in the job market, is indicated by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (King-Dejardin, 2019: 5-6). There are approximately 1.3 billion young individuals, aged between 15 and 24, whose conversion into the employment market has long-term effects on their life expectancy and the socio-commercial advancement of their nations (John & John, 2021: 1-8). In most emerging economy countries, the youth population continues to

increase; consequently, more individuals are jobless and searching for jobs to become employed (Tan & Taeihagh, 2020: 899). Thus, the employment of youth or graduates globally is still not being addressed since unemployment is still an ongoing dilemma, especially in middle- and lower-income countries.

2.2.2 Unemployment in Africa

The literature shows a high unemployment rate in Africa, mostly in the youth aged between 18 and 35 years, including educated graduates. This has led to many suffering, despair, disillusionment, and subsequent involvement in anti-social behaviours, including crime (Njeru & Wanderi, 2021). When evaluating youth unemployment, the country must consider its economic condition and the contribution of sectors to the economy that the government is trying to match for employment creation to absorb youth graduates (Mekonnen, 2021). Natural resource-rich countries present an unemployment challenge due to poorly managed natural resources that could aid in boosting the economy (Filmer & Fox, 2014). Sumberg *et al.* (2021), however, suggest that young people's unemployment is not a specific problem but that the problem is with African countries' economies to create new jobs, the quality of jobs, governance of the labour market, and more and better jobs for all, including youth.

Youth unemployment challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa include the inability to attain employment due to poor quality of education; lack of access to productive work; and a need for post-school skills in agriculture, household enterprises, and modern sector policies (Filmer & Fox, 2014). Another challenge is the non-recognition of agriculture and the informal sector, as neither is supported by government policy and interventions (Cieslik *et al.,* 2021). A skill shortage in graduates is identified as another key factor, especially the soft skills such as written and verbal communication, problem-solving skills, negotiation and conflict resolution (Nabulsi, McNally & Khoury, 2021). To solve young people's labour market problems, it is suggested that youth not rely only on education and training systems that are not working, but instead, youth may create missing jobs through entrepreneurship and self-employment (Cieslik *et al.,* 2021). The African employment agenda needs to increase productivity and earnings in the informal economy (Fox *et al.,* 2021). Another form of employment that can be used is social protection programmes that will enable all people of all ages to enter labour markets (Sumberg *et al.,* 2021).

For Africa to improve youth employment opportunities, it is imperative to understand the causes of unemployment and address the overall economic challenges by identifying policies that can increase employee productivity (Filmer & Fox*,* 2014). A country's political and social ills can be cured by employment (Sumberg *et al.,* 2021).

2.2.3 Unemployed graduates in South Africa

Unemployment, an economic challenge and a persistent situation in South Africa is typically described as an individual and institutional failure rather than the outcome of the lack of market opportunities in the labour market. The reason for this, as indicated, is that both individual students and their universities have no means to control or ability to interfere with job creation (Nel & Rogerson, 2016). The Statistics South Africa report (2019a) in the first quarter of 2019 indicates that the burden of unemployment is concentrated amongst the youth aged 15-34 years, as they account for 55.24% of the total number of unemployed persons, meaning that almost 5.5 or 6 in every ten young people do not have a job; and 56.4%, or almost two-thirds of unemployed South Africans, are falling into the youngest age bracket (Statistics South Africa, 2019a). Moreover, Statistics South Africa (2019a) reports an unemployment rate of 31% of graduates up to 24, representing the most vulnerable people in South Africa, as the unemployment rate among this age group is high. From 2014, in the first quarter of each year to 2020, an increase in the number of unemployed has been observed (see Figure 1). From 2014 to the first quarter of 2020, there has continued to be an increase in the number of unemployed persons.
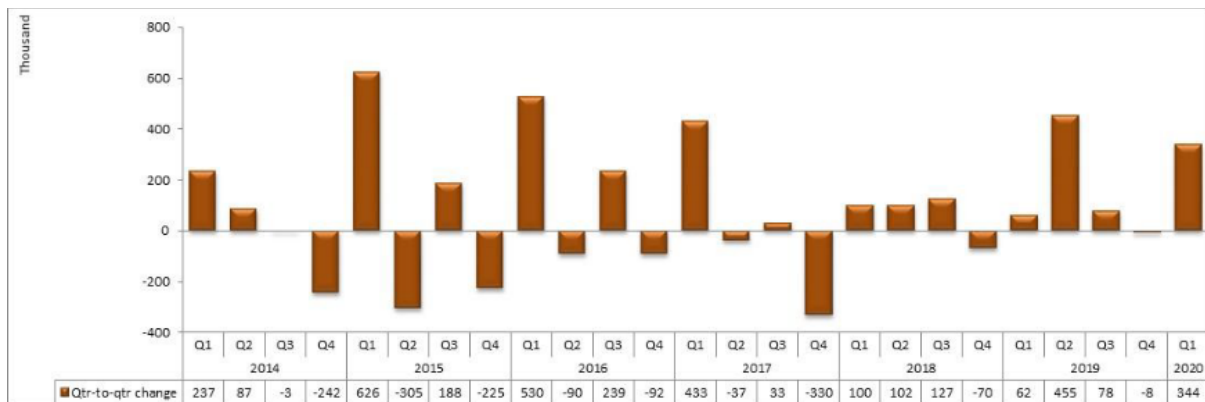
Figure 1: Quarter-to-quarter changes in unemployment, Q1: 2014–Q1:2020
(Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey [Stats SA Quarter 1, 2020])

Although South Africa's unemployment rate decreased by 0.8, a percentage point from 35.3 to 34.5 in the first quarter of 2022 compared to the fourth quarter of 2022, unemployment remains a concern (Statistics South Africa, 2022a). A small decrease of only 0.8 unemployed persons has been observed (as shown in Figure 2) from the first quarter in 2011 to the first quarter in 2022.
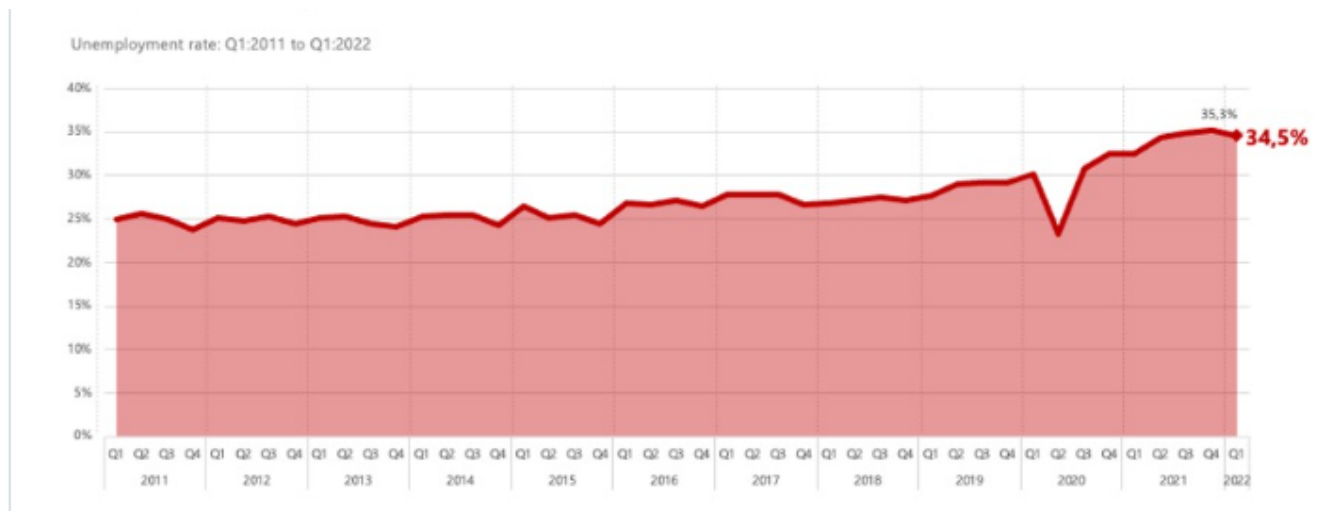
**Figure 2: Quarter-to-quarter changes in unemployment, Q1: 2011–Q1:2022
(Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey [Stats SA Quarter 1, 2022])**

This confirms that unemployment remains a problem that certainly needs to be addressed by introducing suitable interventions.

2.3 Factors Contributing to Unemployment

2.3.1 COVID-19 dynamics

With the COVID-19 pandemic that started in 2019 and continued until 2022, entry-level jobs that offer young people access to work experience have disappeared (Okay-Somerville & Carter, 2021). Across industries, the pandemic has increased the pressure on companies to reduce their cost by developing the ability to operate flexibly and reliance on temporary workers which is associated with quality deterioration (Wiengarten, Onofrei, Fynes & Humphreys, 2021). Low labour utilisation is another major obstacle to post-COVID-19 employment recovery (Loewald, Makrelov & Wörgötter, 2021). Long-term unemployment demands a ground-breaking and responsive policy from the government as it is a weighty problem (Gordon, 2021) that needs specific interventions and initiatives for job creation. The reason for this is that the impact of the pandemic on individuals, employers and governments could not have been anticipated, especially since people were undeniably unprepared for such an acute public event of which nothing similar was ever experienced.

2.3.2 Demand for hybrid skills

Hybrid skills combine soft and technical skills (Pacherie & Mylopoulos, 2021). It is important to build and acquire a hybrid skillset as these skills can enhance job security and versatility to

embrace new challenges and change as required today in most jobs (Moradi, 2017). Employers prefer to employ job seekers with a hybrid skillset that may include digital skills such as handling database programmes, generating reports, and spreadsheets, updating websites and using social media (Chakraborty, Chakraborty, Biswas, Banerjee & Bhattacharya, 2021).

2.3.3   The gap between further training and job roles

Further training refers to education and training after completing secondary school with the highest level matric, the same as Grade 12 on the National Qualification Framework (NQF) level 4. Levels 1-4 refer to basic education, and 5-12 to higher learning (SAQA, 2022). Higher learning is divided into two levels, namely, levels 5-7, offered by technical and vocational education and training colleges (TVET colleges), and levels 6-12, offered by higher education institutions (HEIs), also known as universities (DHET, 2022). In addition, further education and training may also be offered by community and education colleges, one in each of the nine provinces, to provide further learning to youths and adults who wish to pursue learning opportunities but that could also prepare them for TVET and HEI education (DHET, 2022). Skills development, an interface between the workplace and further learning institutions, is handled by the different Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA) to specifically identify and develop scarce and critical skills (DHET, 2022).

One positive attribute of the COVID-19 pandemic is the support and implementation of online learning (Krishnapatria, 2021). According to Okeke-Ezeanyanwu and Oguejiofor (2020), a collaboration between education and the business sector is recommended for a meaningful relationship between institutions and the world of work to effectively bridge the skill gap and mismatch between business programmes at universities and the employment market. Fika, Adeniran and Botha (2021:7) suggest that graduate employability can be accomplished by incorporating the learned skills through the study curriculum at the university with knowledge and skills gained through training opportunities in partnership with employers. An E-Recruitment portal is a solution to monitor and evaluate recruitment processes that can be used officially to collect data about recruitment (Essien, 2020:9). The collected data can then be analysed to provide information to share by connecting the government, recruiting organisations and prospective candidates pursuing employment. University-industry partnerships are important to link students' internship experiences with their learning objectives and outcomes required for employment (Mgaiwa, 2021).

For South Africa to be productive and competitive, its domestic technological innovation capacity needs to be strengthened (Cilliers & Aucoin, 2016). Students produced by universities are

generally perceived as not possessing the skills needed for employment in the corporate world, and employers are dissatisfied with their employability skills (Damoah, Peprah & Brefo, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic presented an extraordinary challenge for education, and students who represent the current generation born in an online era demand digital access and more flexible learning experiences, requiring entrepreneurial universities with an innovation orientation (Guerrero & Urbano, 2021). In addition, the use of new technologies and digitals (such as robotics) to replace work accomplished by labour has contributed to social problems; for instance, for a task that forty persons could do manually, a machine only needs five persons (Kenny, 2019). Automation may make more jobs redundant but, on the other hand, may create other jobs that require more specialised technology skills. The skills crisis in South Africa is a growing concern, aggravated by the lack of adequate structures to study and assess the gap between the skills obtained by young graduates and those required in the labour market (Della Tamin, Du Plooy, Von Solms & Meyer, 2018). Kamaruzaman, Hamid, Mutai and Rasul (2019) contend that the skills of South African graduates are no longer meeting the skills required by jobs; therefore, unemployment among graduates may still occur and even increase. They warn that this unemployment situation worsens daily as existing skills no longer align with technological developments. Better integration of qualifications with practical work experience is crucial for individuals, employers, education and training institutions, the government, and other role players to alleviate unemployment (Pogonyi, Graham & Carbo, 2019). The world as it was before the COVID-19 pandemic has changed forever: with Internet technology, applicable digital skills and social media, the means of communication require a change from every organisation to survive in this new world with an increased changing digital environment (Milenkova & Lendzhova, 2021).

2.3.4 Entrepreneurial partnerships

It has been proven that the content of sustainable internship programmes and experiential learning models effectively increases interns' ability to apply knowledge and skills (Miller, Miller & Spoelstra, 2021). University internship programmes and curricula impact work readiness in a specific career area or field before securing regular employment (Adeosun, Shittu & Owolabi, 2021). For students, an internship is an important opportunity to familiarise themselves with the world of work in their industry, synthesise their classroom knowledge with workplace experience and evaluate if the career path they have chosen suits their idea of what the job requires of them (Maaravi, Heller, Hochman & Kanat-Maymon, 2021). Employers consider internship outcomes important for future recruitment and productivity and to develop the competencies required by the job (Kroon & Franco, 2021).

There is a need to promote the spirit of entrepreneurship among the youth in South Africa. While some entrepreneurship programmes are designed to develop entrepreneurs, others aim to assist students in becoming entrepreneurial (Maaravi *et al.*, 2021). However, perceiving that the joblessness of youth can be curbed by becoming self-made entrepreneurs takes attention away from the structures behind persistent unemployment and poverty. It places responsibility on young people to create jobs and advance their lives in a socio-economic environment that inadequately supports entrepreneurship (Dawson, 2021). For this reason, the tertiary education system should consider providing holistic education to higher institution students that will realistically groom the youth to think 'outside the box' and strengthen their resilience. This is important in producing business-minded graduates who are economically driven and self-dependent (Mahola, Aderibigbe & Chimucheka, 2019).

According to Gamede and Uleanya (2018), entrepreneurship should be introduced as a core module and then form a partnership between the university and organisations within the community to promote work-integrated learning. They further suggest that while policies of the government and universities are adjusted and developed, efforts should be undertaken to implement policies to enhance entrepreneurship from the undergraduate level and all further levels. Ncanywa (2019) argues that South Africa needs graduates who possess entrepreneurship traits, and this could be achieved by providing entrepreneurial skills in the learning process. This is achievable by transforming South African universities into entrepreneurial universities; including entrepreneurship studies in the curriculum across faculties; changing both the content and process of learning offered by universities; and creating centres of entrepreneurship, innovation, and incubators within the universities. Oni and Mavuyangwa (2019) confirm that most South African universities, such as the University of Western Cape, University of Cape Town, and Wits, have included entrepreneurship as an important function area and have established centres of entrepreneurship and innovation to encourage students to start their new businesses in a safe and supportive environment and to create employment opportunities for other youths to reduce the youth unemployment in South Africa.

2.3.5   Inadequate attributes graduates

Graduates are unaware of the latest applicable skills and believe that the obtained qualification, education and skills alone are sufficient to enter the job market, but employers perceive graduates as lacking important skills for employment (Ncube, Mudau & Kgotlhane, 2018). Graduate skills are a mismatch of skills between what was acquired during their education and training and what is required for the job; skills for searching for suitable jobs; socio-demographic factors specific to

the environment where they grew up; lack of employability skills; and their choice of a qualification (Oluwajodu *et al.,* 2015). Youth are facing challenging work or labour environments by the need to maintain the fast-paced working environment shifting to digital technology and hybrid capabilities (Rahmat, Adnan & Mohtar, 2021). The labour force's digital capability and skill sets are at the core of successful adoption nowadays (Pompili *et al.,* 2022). According to Foo and Turner (2019), universities should equip students with the necessary skills to enhance work readiness, and it is each student's responsibility to research, prepare themselves, and actively improve their knowledge and upgrade their skills to meet the changing demands of the workplace.

Although Tight (2021) argues that 21st-century skills may not provide the complete list of the required skills today by employers, many universities have adopted these as part of their graduate attributes. These skills focus on communication, conceptual and social interaction skills, and more than digital skills. These skills also relate to learning, innovation, digital literacy, career, and life. Some examples of such skills are critical thinking and problem-solving; creativity and innovation; collaboration, teamwork, and leadership; cross-cultural understanding; communication including information and media literacy; computing and ICT literacy; and career and learning self-reliance (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

The skills needed today after the pandemic differs from those focused on by education and training institutions to align with employers' requirements.

2.3.6 Demand and supply of labour

Mncayi and Shuping (2021) allude to the factors affecting labour absorption in South Africa: the long-term co-relationship between labour absorption and the selected variables, such as labour policymakers and understanding the primary factors or constraints influencing unemployment. According to Bills, Di Stasio and Gërxhani (2017), employment relationships comprise demand and supply sides; employers who are active agents in hiring new employees need to manage the matching process that brings the parties together since hiring agencies facilitating employment also play a gatekeeper role in ensuring that closures and exclusions are not achieved at the cost of merit and inclusiveness. Jamaludin, Said, Ismail and Nor (2021), on the other hand, identify the factors, of which one is unemployment, from the demand side perspective of the market as job hunters who believe that there are no suitable jobs in their respective markets based on distorted information between the demand and supply side of the market. They, therefore, recommend activating policies granting employers incentives to increase the workforce of unemployed finding jobs.

Ateba, Prinsloo and Gawlik (2019:1334-1335) blame the unstable, unreliable and insufficient electricity supply resulting from the rise of input costs that affect business plans and business enterprise performance and the country's economic growth. Bhorat and Stanwix (2018:18) suggest that employment access is crucial in providing young people, even temporal employment, with job experience because those without employment history battle to enter the job market. However, the challenge for firms and employers is that the regulations governing hiring, dismissal, and wage have unrelated costs (Bhorat & Stanwix, 2018:18). For example, the increase in wages and employment in the public sector over time has created an environment where public sector employees receive significantly high wages compared to those in the private sector (Bhorat & Stanwix, 2018:). Hence, policymakers, when designing policies for increasing employment in any sector, must first consider the differences between the sectors to ensure realistic employment strategies (Asmal, Bhorat, Hill, Oosthuizen & Rooney, 2021:53).

2.3.7   Stakeholder collaborations with the government

According to Mahola, Aderibigbe and Chimucheka (2019), the government and all non-governmental stakeholders should create a more favourable, empowering, and supportive business-friendly environment for the youth, especially the university students who have invested in their future to be better prepared for employment. Furthermore, students with university qualifications should consider themselves agents of economic transformation and think of themselves as potential job givers, job creators, and employers, not merely job seekers. Lastly, all stakeholders – including non-governmental organisations, government, educators, parents and students – should combine efforts and collaborate to ensure that the economic potential of the youth population of South Africa gains actual entrepreneurial practices. Ncube et al., (2018) highlight the need for the South African government to collaborate with education and labour stakeholders to determine a lasting solution to the problem of unemployed university graduates, reviewing the curriculum of higher and tertiary education to render the teaching and learning more responsive to the real and current demands of the labour market.

2.4   Barriers to employment initiatives

According to Cilliers and Aucoin (2016), it is challenging for South Africans to envision an economic future without a state for education, electricity, housing, employment, poverty reduction and equality. With this approach on a large scale, government expenditure growing with social grant commitment placing a high burden on available funding can aggravate the country's financial instability now and in the future. The private sector is regarded as the implementer and

supporter of government policies, whereas it is the sole sector that creates jobs and wealth in South Africa (Cilliers & Aucoin, 2016:3).

Kwofie et al., (2020) conclude that graduate unemployment interventions have been unsustainable as there is no new job creation or if there is, it is not enough to respond to and rectify youth unemployment. This is because the Government Employment Intervention Programmes cease to exist when there is a change of leadership in government, and unemployment is not a political matter to canvas for votes but an economic solution for reducing poverty, a socioeconomic problem.

2.5 Government initiatives

Theoretically and empirically, in any economy, job creation is the viable way to tackle the crises of under- and unemployment (Okuwa, 2020).

2.5.1 At national level

The cost of the South African economy is affected by a large pool of unskilled and unemployed labour that stifles economic growth. To encourage firms to hire young workers, the government has introduced employment tax incentives (ETI), offering these incentives to labour-intense sectors based on its industrial policy action plan (Cilliers & Aucoin, 2016:4). According to Bhorat and Stanwix (2018:16) the ETI was implemented to absorb the excess labour supply, and the ETI policy appears to positively impact the employment of first-time labour entrants and employment of young. By all accounts, it is a successful micro intervention (Bhorat & Stanwix, 2018:18).

2.5.2 At provincial level

Dladla (2020) acknowledges a significant positive impact on job creation, skills development and new opportunities by the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) initiative in addressing youth unemployment (https://www.gov.za/about-government/government-programmes/expanded-public-works-programme). However, most public works programmes (PWP) fail to substantially contribute to reducing unemployment because of their short duration and small-scale implementation (Dladla, 2020).

2.5.3 Tools currently used in South Africa in addressing graduate youth unemployment.

The South African government, through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), is offering income relief to the unemployed, unskilled individuals, women, disabled persons, adult men and youth 16-35 years old to provide them with the necessary skill to gain work experience, to enhance chances of future employment and to receive a stipend (South Africa Yearbook,

2018). To help alleviate the country's high youth unemployment rates, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) abolished work experience for entry-level positions in the public sector from 1 April 2019 (SA News, 2018). The government has considered some measures, such as the employment tax incentive (ETI). South African Revenue Services (SARS) continue to offer tax incentives (ETI) to employers who employ young people below 30 years of age with a low wage (below R6,000 a month) to hire and train entry-level people and to encourage companies to offer internships or in-service training to un- or underemployed. The participants intend to become fully employable at the end of their term of service (Butgereit, 2018).

Table 1: South Africa's job creation initiatives (Source: South Africa Government, 2018; 2021)

Programme	Description
1. Job's summit: 4-5 October 2018 in Johannesburg at Gallagher Convention Centre	An agreement framework facilitated job creation of at least 275 000 jobs a year with an inclusive commitment of: • Growing the economy • Supporting small businesses and youth entrepreneurship development • Increasing access to colleges and technical training colleges in the communities • Executing of national minimum wage • Launching a national anti-corruption strategy and making sure the employment tax incentive runs accurately
2. Youth Employment Service (YES): established in 2018	To create work opportunities for youth through business-led collaboration with government and labour
3. Employment Tax Incentive (ETI): established on January 1, 2014	Targeting employers to offer employment to young job seekers
4. Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)	Projects hiring workers under ministerial conditions of learnership employment conditions on a temporary or ongoing for the EPWP with government, contractors or non-government organisations
5. Phase II of the Basic Education Employment Initiative: published 26 September 2021	Presidential Youth Employment Initiative (PYEI) targets youth between 18-35 with employment and training opportunities in the education sector.

2.6 Strategies to combat unemployment

Employment strategies to combat graduate unemployment have become a theme of the present day, undertaking efforts to make employment a reality rather than a mere dream. Youth unemployment initiatives have made good progress in channelling their efforts towards combating unemployment, such as the New Growth Path, the National Youth Development Agency, National Development Plan, National Skills Development Strategy III, and the National Youth Policy in South Africa (Dawson, 2021: 389-402). However, the impact of these initiatives is not yet visible in reducing unemployment. Below, Table 2.2 shows basic strategies that could be practised in combatting unemployment.

Table 2: Strategies to combat unemployment based on the reviewed literature

Strategy	Explanation
• Encouraging entrepreneurship	Learning institutions can integrate entrepreneurship into the core curriculum and work with companies to ensure they offer learners suitable training.
• Increasing job creation and labour demand	Companies can generate entry-level employment prospects, apply school-to-work traineeships and on-the-job training schemes, and encourage young industrialists by mentoring them (Pastore & Pompili, 2020: 145-184).
• Preparing graduates for the industry	Governments must develop national action strategies for youth occupation, such as business development programmes and infrastructure schemes that employ and educate young citizens in the industries where they will be hired (Fotopoulos & Storey, 2019: 189-209).
• Making job-hunt inexpensive	The costs incurred during job-seeking are high for graduates who do not have the means to access job search engines where vacancies are posted (Choi, Jeong & Kim, 2019: 129-138). To address this, companies should encourage complementary recruitment programmes such as sites that do not need data to access or even using platforms like WhatsApp.

2.7 Proposed conceptual framework

Based on the above literature, key concepts relevant to the study were identified and depicted in Figure 1 as the proposed conceptual framework for this study. Five key concepts were identified: employers, government entities, government initiatives, jobs and unemployed graduates.
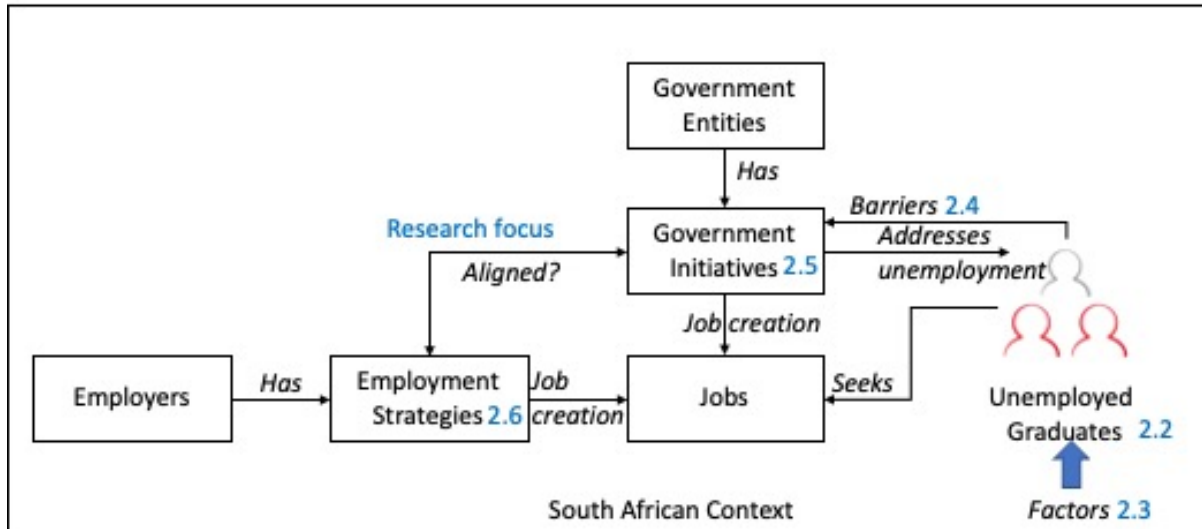
Figure 3: Proposed conceptual framework

Based on the reviewed literature, the proposed conceptual framework was guided by the research questions to address the identified research problem. The study focuses on the gap between employers' employment strategies with government initiatives and unemployed graduates. Also, literature was reviewed to explore the government initiatives, assessing the extent to which employers are aware of such initiatives and whether they incorporate and rely on any of the initiatives. As government initiatives are to stimulate job creation, employers may include these initiatives in their employment strategies to create jobs. Unemployed graduates experience several factors that prevent them from entering the job market; simultaneously, the government must deal with barriers that make it difficult to alleviate unemployment.

2.7.1 Employers

Employers are the main participants in the supply side of the labour market. They are custodians of employment strategies because of their power to determine whom to attract and what requirements they need for available jobs.

2.7.2 Government entities

This includes all state-owned enterprises and public institutions that are also suppliers of labour. They are custodians of employment initiatives to create job opportunities to address the unemployment of graduates. Simultaneously, the government must address barriers that make it difficult to decrease unemployment.

2.7.3 Government initiatives

These are drivers of government entities' employment strategies in creating job opportunities and addressing graduate youth unemployment. As government initiatives are to stimulate job creation, employers may include these initiatives in their employment strategies to create jobs.

2.7.4 Jobs

Both government entities and private employers create jobs.

2.7.5 Unemployed graduates

Unemployed graduates, the labour market's demand side, seek to secure employment. Unemployed graduates experience several factors that prevent them from entering the job market.

2.8 Chapter conclusion

In this section, the study revealed that the unemployment rate varies based on the need for labour and the accessibility of specific skills required in the employment market. The unemployment rate comprises workers and young graduates who presently do not work, even though they are willing to secure employment. The unemployment proportion is a lagging gauge, meaning it reacts to varying economic circumstances rather than manipulating or forecasting them. Combating unemployment has been discussed, but youth and young graduate unemployment persist globally.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters outlined the research problem with the research objectives to present reviewed literature relevant to the study. The views of numerous scholars were presented and discussed to assist with unlocking research gaps aligned with the research objectives. This section of the research focuses on the research methodology used. An appropriate research methodology is applied to investigate the employer perspective on government initiatives addressing graduate youth unemployment in South Africa. The study adopted an inductive research approach since the study was conducted by collecting data to gain the necessary insights. A non-probability sampling method was used, such as snowball sampling.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The word *paradigm,* emanating from the Greek expression that means a design, was initially used by Thomas Kuhn in 1962 to signify a theoretical context shared by scientists to provide them with a suitable model for probing problems and discovering solutions. It can also be explained as a combined collection of practical ideas, variables and difficulties attached to consistent procedural methods and apparatuses. For this research, the researcher will use the interpretive paradigm, inspired by the need to gain insight into employers' perspectives of government initiatives in addressing graduate youth unemployment. The research approach will be aligned with an interpretive phenomenological research study (Frechette, Bitzas, Aubry, Kilpatrick & Lavoie-Tremblay, 2020) where the phenomenon is the unemployment of graduates, and the study will consider the perspectives of employers on initiatives to address the problem.

3.3 Research approach

Following the paradigm, the researcher will follow a qualitative approach as participant responses are not limited to the formulated answers that could aid in the discovery of the underlying perspectives behind their responses, often used in combination with an exploratory approach (Saunders et al., 2016). The preference to use a qualitative approach is based on allowing participants freedom in their responses to express themselves rather than predetermining their responses openly (Saunders et al., 2016). Thus, the exploratory research design will consider qualitative data from the employers' narrative responses.

3.4   Research design

This present study is exploratory. An exploratory study is appropriate for a topic that may have received research attention but may consider insight into a specific situation to expand knowledge and insight into an issue or problem (Saunders & Lewis, 2017).

3.5   Research strategy

This study's strategy is to survey identified employees to collect qualitative data based on their perspectives. In this research, open-ended questionnaires were used instead of conducting interviews, as was curtailed by the pandemic and concomitant restrictions on the option of interviews. A Google form was designed for the questionnaire. Google Forms allowed participants to provide their perspectives via an online data collection instrument as part of an exploratory study (Saunders et al., 2016). This strategy was considered the best for eliciting information to understand better employers' perspectives on collaborating with the government to address graduate youth unemployment in South Africa.

3.5.1   Delimitation of the study

The study expresses employers' perspectives on collaborating with the government in addressing graduate youth unemployment in South Africa. Since this study sought to explore the significance of employers' collaboration with the government in addressing graduate youth unemployment in South Africa, the research is limited only to select South African employers in the private sector. Only employer perspectives were considered, not those of the unemployed graduates, educational or training facilities or the government.

3.5.2   Research methods

The research target population is the people to whom research results are meant to appeal (Saunders et al., 2016). The population should meet the sample's needs (Bless et al., 2006). This study's target population comprises employers in selected private sector organisations and companies in South Africa that recruit and employ graduate youth on a permanent or temporal basis or for experiential training. The existing connections of organisations offering experiential training and employment to CPUT students were used to approach the target group. The contacts of the organisations that place students annually for experiential training were requested from coordinators.

3.5.3   Population and sample

The research target population is the group of people t whom the research results are meant to appeal (Saunders *et al.,* 2016). In line with the qualitative research design, the researcher will use purposeful and convenience sampling to identify and select information-rich cases whereby members of the target population meet the principles for inclusion in the study based on easiness of accessibility (Etikan et al., 2016). Once participants agreed to participate in the study, additional potential participants were approached using snowballing sampling. As soon as data saturation was achieved, no more participants were included. Since the study attempted to obtain rich qualitative data, the number of participants could be 20 or less (Frechette *et al.,* 2020).

Sampling refers to selecting elements from the target population to be included in the study (Punch, 2013). The population should meet the sample's needs (Bless *et al.,* 2006).

3.5.4   Data coding and analysis

The researcher used thematic analysis in this study because it recorded, examined and pinpointed common themes in the collected data. Themes are patterns across data sets that are important to describe a phenomenon and specific to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, the analysis process below, suggested by Bengtsson (2016), was followed:

- *Decontextualisation* – acquainting with the data through reading, re-reading the text, and coding data that seem meaningful.

- *Recontextualisation* – ensuring that all research areas related to the research aim are identified.

- *Categorisation* – arranging categories of codes that are logically interrelated.

- *Compilation* – interpreting themes to answer the research question.

3.6   Ethical consideration

The researcher first obtained ethical clearance from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology's Research and Ethics Committee to proceed with the study. Participants were granted comprehensive information about the study and asked for their express permission before any questionnaire was sent (Dubnewick et al., 2020).

The researcher considered confidentiality and anonymity on information as participants' privacy should be upheld to safeguard confidentiality to ensure anonymity (Clark, 2020). To avoid

deception, respondents were assured that all the information provided was true and complete; therefore, participants were not misled.

Access to the Google Drive directory was protected by a password known only to the researcher. The downloaded data was stored securely on a password-protected laptop. The data was used for research purposes only, and no third parties had access to the data.

Participants were not contacted prior to the granting of ethical clearance. Only then were they given a brief explanation of the study and allowed to withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason, without repercussion.

CHAPTER 4:   FINDINGS

4.1   Introduction

As presented in the previous chapter, this study was conducted based on an online Google questionnaire deemed appropriate given the COVID-19 restrictions inhibiting the data collection process. In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented. The information in this chapter has been streamlined to respond to the research objectives indicated in Chapter 1. This chapter begins with the government job creation initiatives, the name of the initiative, and the department offering the initiative. It explores employers' perspectives on government initiatives addressing graduate youth unemployment in South Africa. The data gathered was analysed to seek the main patterns of responses and categorised into themes which formed the basis for data analysis. The analysis sought to explore the themes which formed the main research questions, as previously explained in this study.

4.2   Data collection

Data was collected from two sources with two methods. Firstly, data about government initiatives were collected using a desk search to identify relevant websites with information about government initiatives. The second source was employers, for whom a questionnaire was used instead of interviews to collect data from the participating employers. Each source will be discussed next.

The **main research question** for this study is as follows: *What are employers' perspectives on government initiatives in addressing graduate youth unemployment in South Africa?*

The **first sub-research question** focuses on government initiatives: *What initiatives are available from the government to deal with youth graduate unemployment in collaboration with employers?* The findings are presented in sub-section 4.2.

The **second sub-research question** focuses on employers' perspectives: *How do employers align their employment strategies with the government's job initiatives for unemployed graduates?*

This sub-research question aims to establish employers' perspectives on graduate youth unemployment.

The **survey questions** aligned to the second sub-research question and included in the questionnaire are as follows:

Questions 1-7 deal with the demographics of the participating employers. Questions 8-19 were formulated based on the identified key concepts from the literature review.

Table 3: Participating employer demographics

Question number	Question	Key concepts/themes
8	What is your organisation's talent acquisition strategy for employing new staff?	Talent acquisition strategy
9	What is your employment strategy to create job opportunities for young new graduates?	Employment strategy
10	Please briefly describe your employment strategy in general.	
11	If you do not employ new graduates, please explain why this decision was made.	
12	What support does your organisation offer young graduates to gain the competencies required by the job?	Support to graduates
13	Can you please provide details about your organisation's assistance to young graduates or any new appointments, such as internships or in-service training?	Assistance provided
14	Any collaborations your organisation had or has with the government regarding the employment of young graduates? If your answer is yes, please indicate what it is or was it. What was your experience? Would you consider the collaboration again? If no, proceed to the next question.	Reasons for not employing
15	What advice would you give the government that may be sustainable in attracting more employers to collaborate with the government to generate employment for young graduates?	Advice to government
16	What specific government employment policies or initiatives could the government use to assist or benefit organisations employing new graduates?	Advice to government
17	Please indicate whether you are aware of the following government initiatives, whether you are already collaborating, or whether you would be interested in collaborating in the future.	Government priorities and initiatives
18	Please describe any other initiatives that would entice you to consider collaborating with the government to address youth graduates' unemployment.	Advice to government

4.3 Government initiatives

Fifteen relevant government initiatives were collected and identified via the Internet from a desk search. As part of the data collection of government initiatives using desk searches from websites, the initiative names of the sites included in this study are provided in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Government initiatives

#	Initiative name	Government name	URL
1	Yes4Youth	South African Government	https://www.gov.za/issues/government-priority-creating-decent-jobs#update
2	Employment Tax Incentive (ETI)	South African Revenue Services	https://www.sars.gov.za/types-of-tax/pay-as-you-earn/employment-tax-incentive-eti/
3	Extended Public Works Programme	Public Works	https://www.gov.za/about-government/government-programmes/expanded-public-works-programme
4	The Job Fund	South African Government	http://www.jobsfund.org.za/
5	Jobs Summit 2018	South African Government	https://www.gov.za/JobsSummit2018
6	National Youth Service Learnership 2021	Transport & Public Works	https://www.westerncape.gov.za/tpw/national-youth-service-learnerships-2021
7	National Rural Youth Service Corps Programme	Rural Development and Land Reform	https://www.gov.za/about-government/government-programmes/national-rural-youth-service-corps-programme
8	Presidential Youth Employment Initiative	Department of Basic Education	https://www.gov.za/speeches/basic-education-welcomes-participants-second-phase-presidential-youth-employment-initiative
9	SA Youth Network Agency	South African Government	http://www.nyda.gov.za/Opportunities/SA-Youth-Network
10	Phase II of the Basic Education Employment Initiative	Department of Basic Education	https://www.gov.za/speeches/basic-education-phase-ii-basic-education-employment-initiative-2-oct-2021-0000
11	Public-Private Growth Initiative (PPGI)	South African Government	http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/press-statements/public-private-growth-initiative-believe-high-growth-south-africa-within-reach
12	Clothing and Textiles Master Plan and Poultry Master Plan initiative	South African Government	https://www.gov.za/issues/government-priority-creating-decent-jobs
13	Poultry sector	South African Government	https://fairplaymovement.org/poultry-master-plan-must-get-back-on-track/

14	Community Work Programme	South African Government	https://www.gov.za/speeches/community-work-programme-13-jul-2016-1450
15	Public Employment Initiatives	Metropolitan Cities	https://icma.org/sites/default/files/Presentations-191018/Presentations/icma%20conference%202019%20ppt%20-%20analysis%20of%20approaches%20to%20job%20creation%20dr%20hennie%20labuschagnev5.pdf

4.3.1 Government data collection

The government data was collected from South African Government websites by searching with keywords: "Job creation in South Africa" and "Government employment initiatives". The researcher used purposeful sampling to identify and select only initiatives that create job opportunities for young graduates without working experience.

4.3.2 Inaccessibility and irrelevant of the initiatives

Regarding the inclusion of identified websites, the following were not included. The problem encountered was when trying to access the Amavulandlela initiative website, it always gave an 'error', "https://www.sefa.org.za/services/product/12". Another problem was the irrelevant website of Amandla Development, "https://www.amandladevelopment.org/. The other initiative, Job Summit, was simply an open platform for discussing challenges faced by each social partner in creating jobs to raise employment by 11 million to 24 million by 2030, in line with the National Development Plan.

4.3.3 Government data analysis

The government initiatives that seemed meaningful and related to the research aim were identified, arranged and coded into the following categories: names of the initiatives, types of initiatives, information about the initiative, date of establishment, the target group of the initiative, and the impact of the initiative.

4.3.4 Types of collaboration within the initiatives

Of the 15 initiatives, three types of collaborations were identified: government and business collaboration, government and private sector collaboration, and government only. Although business and private sector initiatives with the government are interrelated, they were categorised separately. They can be classified as one category, which results in 60% (47% plus 13%) as the

combined government collaborating with business/private sectors versus 13%, initiatives led only by government entities, as shown in Figure 4 below.
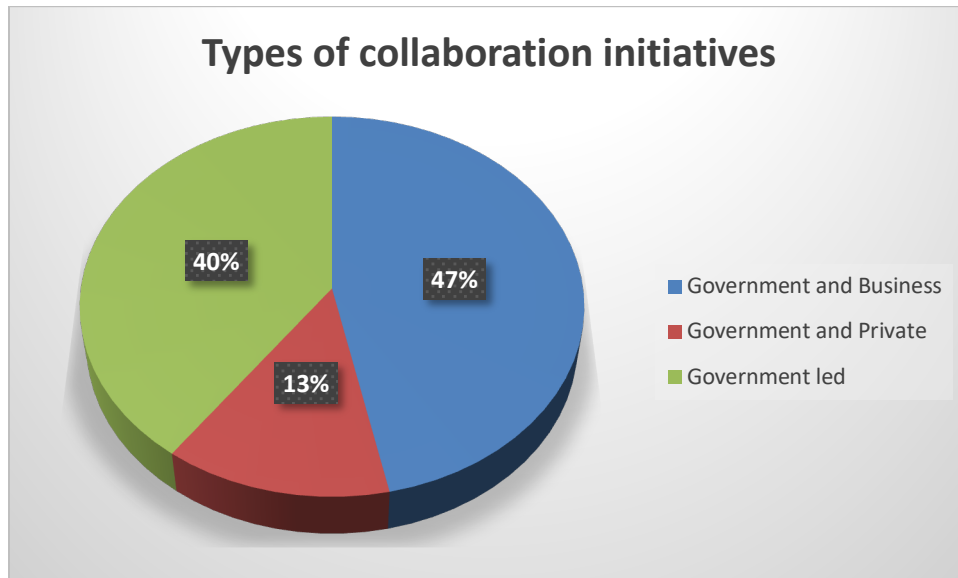
Figure 4: Collaboration types

Instead of taking the lead, the government only has 40% collaboration within its constituency rather than establishing more collaborations with the private sector. However, it seems that the government is involved in the identified initiatives.

4.3.5   Information about the initiatives

Just over half (53%) of the initiatives provide short-term and temporal employment through skills training and learnership, followed by 20% that provide a platform to discuss job creation, as indicated below:

A platform for open discussion on each social partner's job creation challenges. (Initiative 5)

Online work-seeker support resources include hustling, preparation for work, learnership, volunteering and further studies. (Initiative 9)

While 13% of the initiatives create sustainable jobs, as evident below:

Advancement of job creation, especially for the youth. (Initiative 5)

Another 13% provide incentives for youth job creation initiatives:

Incentive aimed at encouraging employers to employ young work seekers who are 18-29 years of age. (Initiative 2)
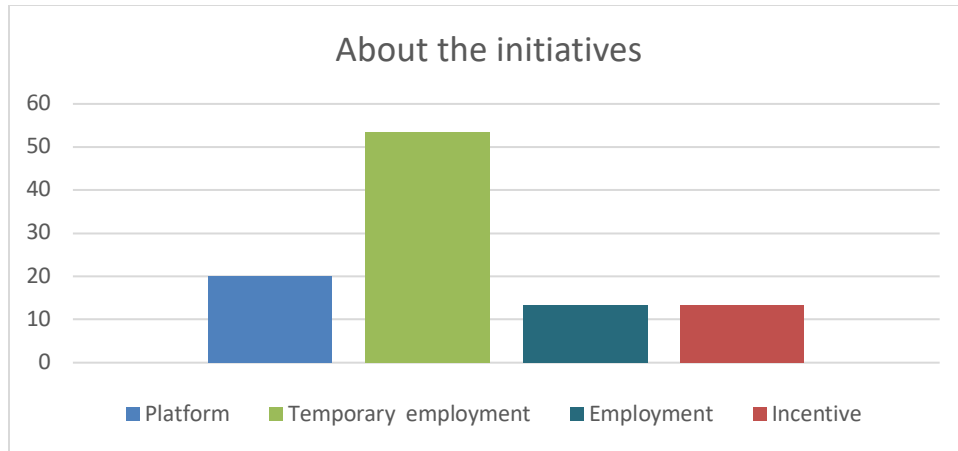
Figure 5: Initiative types

One finding is that most employment opportunities offered are still temporary, as illustrated by the following quotes:

Volunteering, learnerships, part-time and full-time jobs. (Initiative 1)

Seasonal or fixed-term work. (Initiative 2)

Temporary work, skills programmes and learnerships. (Initiative 3)

4.3.6   Establishment of the initiatives

The longest initiative in existence is the Extended Public Works Program with 19 years, established in 2003 (Initiative 3), followed by SA Youth Network Agency with 16 years, established in 2006 (Initiative 9) and 11 years, from June 2011 (Initiative 4), is the Job Fund. The initiative established in 2014 (Initiative 2) is the Employment Tax Incentive (ETI), which is "encouraging employers to hire young" (Initiative 2). The recent initiatives implemented in 2021 are the National Youth Service Learnership and the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative (PYEI) in Basic Education Employment (BEEI) Initiative.

Number of years in existence

Chart data (Number of years in existence):

- 2003: 19
- 2006: 16
- 2011: 11
- 2013: 9
- 2014: 8
- 2016: 6
- 2018: 4
- 2018: 4
- 2019: 3
- 2019: 3
- 2019: 3
- 2020: 1
- 2021: 1
- 2021: 1
- 2021: 1
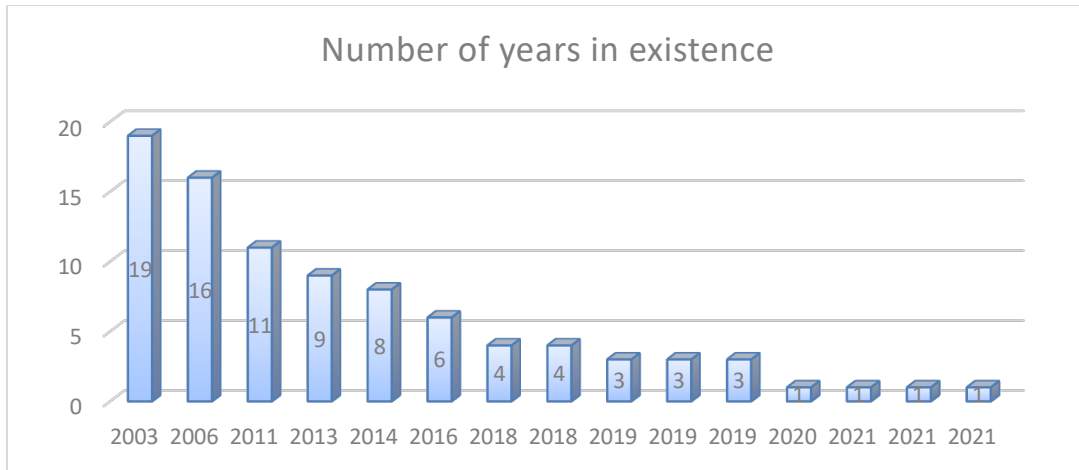
Figure 6: Duration of initiatives

As seen in Figure 6, it is evident that initiatives have existed for more than 15 years and have made an impact. But their downfall is that they offer short-term employment, as indicated by the quotes below:

Temporary work, skills programmes and learnerships. (Initiative 3)

Over 8 million work opportunities have been generated since its inception. (Initiative 3)

4.3.7 Target group

Of the five target groups identified, 60% are aimed at hiring unemployed youth, followed by 13%, which are targeting organisations to offer "work-related training" (Initiative 4) and unemployed to offer "seasonal and/or fixed-term work" (Initiative 3) irrespective of age. The 7% are targeting employers "to hire young people" (Initiative 2) and the "poultry sector" (Initiative 13) correspondingly.
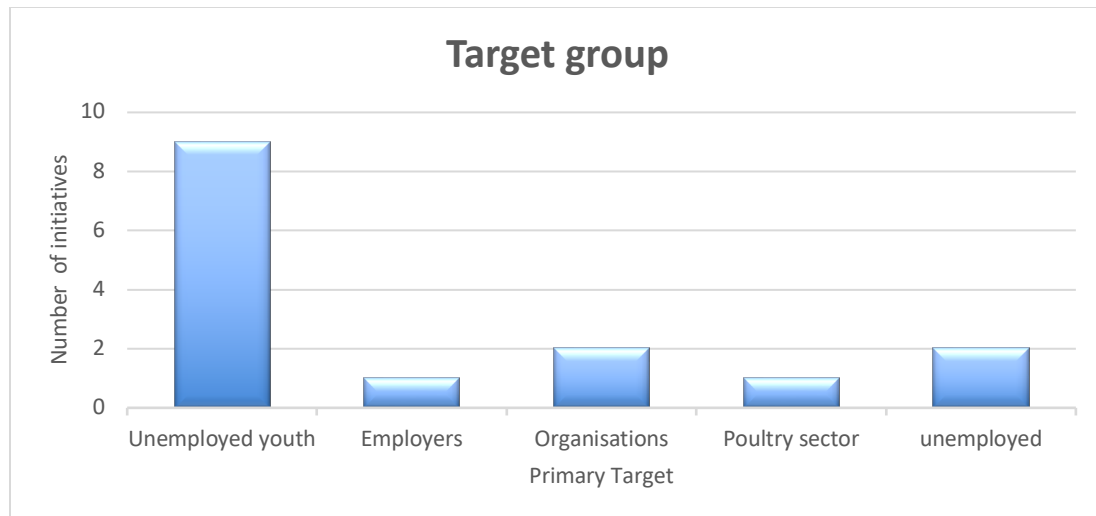
Figure 7: Targets for initiatives

Most government initiatives aim to create work opportunities for unemployed youth and youth in general. This is a noteworthy finding, illustrating that the government is attending to the unemployment of youth crisis, but employment is not sustainable because of its short-term nature.

4.3.8   Impact of initiatives

A significant 64% of the initiatives create work opportunities with the following impact:

- *66450 work experience created. (Initiative 1)*

- *Over 8 million work opportunities were generated. (Initiative 3)*

- *Three hundred twenty thousand young men and women secure job opportunities. (Initiative 8)*

- *There are 212 sites in 203 municipalities which put 1.7 billion into the pockets of more than 200 000 participants during 2015/2016. (Initiative 14)*

- *+/-192 000 Education Assistants and +/- 95 000 General School Assistants) employment and training opportunities in the education sector. (Initiative 10)*

A smaller percentage (16%) of the initiatives planned to raise employment:

- *The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in South Africa and the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) have launched a partnership agreement to intensify efforts to reduce youth unemployment. (Initiative 9)*

And even fewer (8%) promote skills development by offering training to "1 661 beneficiaries in Sector Skills Development Programmes" (Initiative 15).

A small percentage (4%) of the initiatives,

- *Reduce the employer cost of hiring" through PAYE cost reduction. (Initiative 2)*

And another 4% of the initiatives provide funding for job creation initiatives:

- *One hundred forty-six contracted projects & 8.49 billion in grant funding" by providing "contracts and funding on job creation initiatives. (Initiative 4)*

- *R70 billion product worth contribution industry to SA economy in 2016. (Initiative 12)*

- *R 317 million (roughly GBP 17.8 million) worth of layers and broilers were raised in 2017. (Initiative 13)*

The remaining (4%) initiatives did not record or indicate any impact.
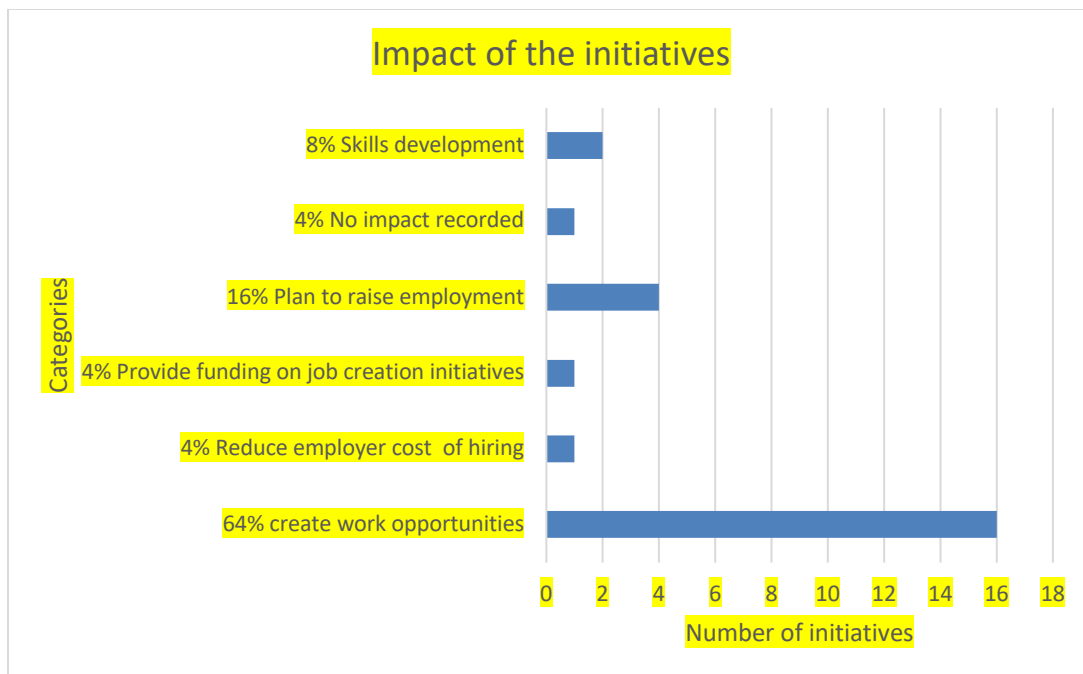
Figure 8: Impact of the Initiatives

Based on the government initiatives, the finding is that most government initiatives promote and create temporary work opportunities and offer work-related training. However, some only focus on creating temporary jobs without considering the challenges experienced in addressing unemployment in the long term with sustained career opportunities.

4.4   Employer perspective

Eighteen questions were formulated to discover employers' points of view on government initiatives in addressing graduate youth unemployment in South Africa, especially those in collaboration with the government.

The data collected with Google Forms generated 16 employer responses. It was difficult to elicit responses due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and lockdown restrictions. In instances where the researcher followed up, participants were often affected or infected by COVID-19. Secondly, due to the issuance of the POPI Act, participants were reluctant to provide information freely, resulting in the withdrawal of 56% of the participants, although it was clearly stated that all information received would be used for research purposes only. Nevertheless, another challenge was the slow response rate: the data collection process began on 26 March 2021 and continued until 27 February 2022.

4.4.1   Collaboration status

When asked the primary question – if there are any collaborations your organisation has or has had with the government regarding the employment of young graduates – of the 16 participants, seven answered yes, whereas nine admitted there are no collaborations, as indicated in Table 5.

Table 5: Existing collaborations

	14. Any collaboration/s your organisation had or has with the government regarding the employment of young graduates?
1	No
2	**Yes**
3	**Yes**
4	No
5	No
6	**Yes**
7	**Yes**
8	No
9	No
10	No
11	**Yes**
12	No
13	**Yes**
14	No
15	No
16	**Yes**

Although the proportion of employers who collaborate with the government (44%) is more or less the same as that of employers who do not collaborate (56%), there are slightly more employers with collaboration than without collaboration. This is not a significant indicator and may need further investigation.

4.4.2   Employer demographics

Table 6 shows that the participants represented national, provincial and local organisations from small, medium, and large organisations from various fields: staff complements range from 5 to 96000. In addition, the participants are decision-makers in their respective fields and organisations, as most are in top management positions (see Table 6).

Table 6: Participant demographics

Participant	Position	Nature of the business	Location of organisation	Staff complement
Participant 1	Training Officer	Association	Cape Town	12
Participant 2	HR Manager	Marine maintenance and support	Saldanha Bay	12
Participant 3	Partner Management Lead	Non-profit organisation (NGO)	Rosebank, Gauteng	50
Participant 4	Director	Property development	Cape Town	3
Participant 5	CEO	Financial services	Century City, Cape Town	Weekly appraisals with rewards
Participant 6	Director & HR Manager	Manufacturing	Port Elizabeth	285 FTE's and 64 YES 4 Youth Trainees
Participant 7	Group HR Projects Specialist	Retail	National	96000 in RSA
Participant 8	National Director	Non-profit organisation (NGO)	National	200+
Participant 9	Talent Acquisition Manager	Manufacturing	Johannesburg	500+
Participant 10	Managing Executive	Financial services	National	90000+
Participant 11	Medical Advisor	Medical aid administration	National	50000+

Participant 12	HR Executive	Financial services	Johannesburg	4000+
Participant 13	Partner	Audit, accountancy, advisory and tax services	Cape Town	100+
Participant 14	Owner	G.P. practise	Dunoon, Cape Town	5
Participant 15	General Practice	Medical aid administration	N/A	10
Participant 16	Senior Manager	Finance institute	Cape Town	20+

4.4.3 Employer data analysis

Although there is software for analysing qualitative data, such as Atlas-ti, the data collected with Google Forms were analysed by coding the data in an Excel Spreadsheet. Completed questionnaires were received via Google Forms, and the data were already organised in a clear and comprehensive format that was exported to an Excel workbook. The Excel workbook was then organised to facilitate effective analysis of the data received. Excel was used to sort and categorise the data into tables, charts and frequency using pivot tables to interpret the data better to identify trends or patterns within the data based on the information received. This process was repeated as questions 8 to 17 were open-ended, with responses requiring deeper analysis.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was used to analyse and interpret the data gathered. Thematic analysis was used to analyse and interpret the data gathered.   The themes were identified from the participants' answers as noted from the findings of the data collected and were then linked back to the literature. Finally, then the data were analysed according to the themes identified.

From the data collected from 16 employers, sizable amounts of textual information were analysed to establish trends or patterns of words utilised, their consistency, their relations, and the formations of communication using coding and quantitative counts of codes via an Excel workbook. The codes were grouped according to the question number, participant number, response, code (keywords from the response), category, sub-theme and theme. The categories of codes and themes logically interrelated were arranged and interpreted to answer the research question and conceptual framework. Then the codes, categories, sub-themes and themes were counted, and the outcome was 201 unique codes, 125 categories, 36 sub-themes, and seven themes using the pivot table (see Figure 9 and Table 7).

Below is an extract from the Excel spreadsheet to illustrate the format of the clean data set.

Figure 9: Extract of the coding sheet

were allocated to the response to best capture the essence of the response. Thereafter, the codes were grouped into 125 categories. The categories were further grouped into 36 sub-themes aligned to the seven themes aligned to the concepts indicated in the conceptual framework. The first column has the question number, and the second column has the participant number, with the actual response in the third column. Codes

Table 7: Themes, sub-themes and associated number of codes

Themes/Sub-themes	Count of Code
Advice to government	25
Awareness marketing	2
Employment conditions	1
Funding	1
Government focus	3
Government systems	1
Grants	1
Incentives	8
Job opportunities	1
Partnership	3
Skills alignment	1
Training and development	3
Assistance provided	22
Graduate support	2
Incentives	11

Training and development	6
Work experience	3
Employment strategy	62
Economy	1
Employ graduates	6
Employ professionals	1
Employment conditions	8
Graduate development	7
Graduate placement	3
Graduate support	1
Incentives	4
Integrate graduates	1
Job alignment	1
Job opportunities	2
Job requirement	2
Long term growth	1
Partnership	7
Promotion	3
Recruitment	1
Skills alignment	1
Succession	3
Training and development	5
Work experience	4
Existing collaborations	
(blank)	
Government policies and initiatives	19
Accountability	1
Economy	2
Employment conditions	3
Funding	1
Incentives	3
Job opportunities	1
More accountability	1
Partnership	3
Training and development	4
N/A	8
N/A	7
(blank)	1
None	7
N/A	1

None	6
Reasons for not employing graduates	15
Economy	4
Graduate attitudes	3
Incentives	1
Job opportunities	1
Job requirement	3
Organisation type	3
Support for graduates	23
Graduate programme	1
Graduate support	3
Incentives	1
Special skills	1
Training and development	14
Work experience	1
Work opportunity	1
Work preparedness	1
Talent acquisition strategy	19
Incentives	2
Internal promotion	2
Job application support	1
Job opportunities	1
Job requirement	4
Organisation type	1
Project-based	3
Promotion	2
Recruitment	2
Training and development	1
Grand Total	**200**

4.4.4   Strategy results

The advice would be given to the government that may be sustainable in attracting more employers to collaborate with the government and specific government employment policies or initiatives that could assist the government in creating employment for young graduates. Their responses were categorised into themes; the frequency of certain words was grouped. This helped to identify patterns in the data to gain an understanding of participants' feedback. Furthermore, themes are discussed to gain meaning with the research objectives established earlier for the study. The study results are presented in the form of seven themes – Government policies and initiatives; Advice to government; Employment strategy; Talent acquisition strategy;

Support for graduates; Assistance provided; and Reasons for not appointing graduates – which were part of the questionnaire. These themes are listed in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Themes

	Theme	No of codes
1	Government policies and initiatives	19
2	Advice to government	25
3	Employment strategy	62
4	Talent acquisition strategy	19
5	Support for graduates	23
6	Assistance provided	22
7	Reasons for not employing graduates	15
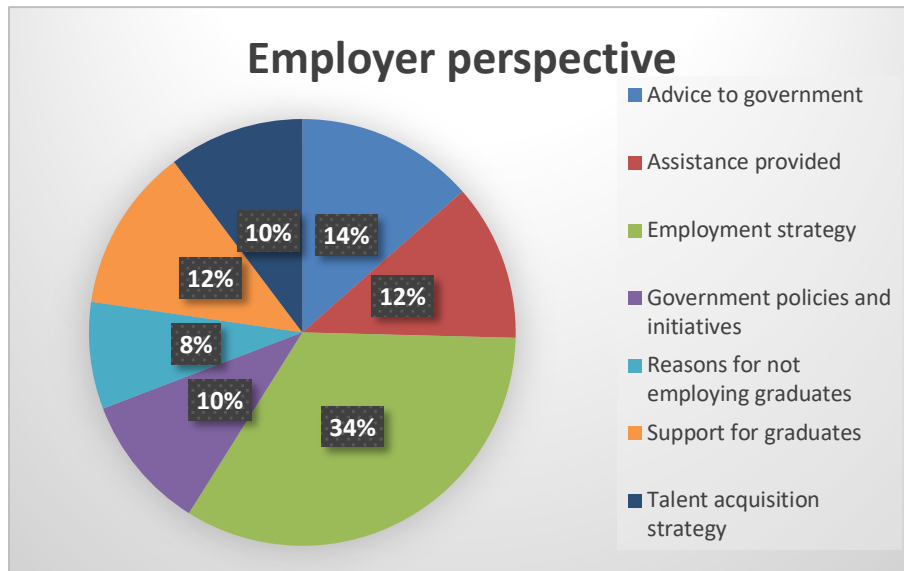
Figure 10: Employer perspective distribution

4.4.4.1 Employment strategy for job creation

Based on Figure 10 data, 34% of participants emphasised the importance of employment strategy that creates job opportunities for unemployed graduates, as illustrated by the following quote:

We work closely with the SETA and its service providers to ensure that we get Learners into the business. We interview them and place them based on their studies and interests. We are subject to the availability of posts and employ them upon the completion of their term. (Participant 12)

Participation in career expos; Partnering with higher learning institutions to offer internship programmes. (Participant 10)

We accept graduates into our organisation and expose them to their areas of expertise. A planned youth absorption process is part of the business's experience and succession strategies. (Participant 13)

Provides 12-month quality work experiences to unemployed youth. To reignite South Africa's economy … gives youth their first work opportunity. Youths emerge with a CV, reference letter and a completion certificate. We reward companies who invest in youth jobs with BBBEE levels up. (Participant 11)

Table 9: Employment strategy categories with the number of codes

Employment strategy	62
Economy	1
Employ graduates	6
Employ professionals	1
Employment conditions	8
Graduate development	7
Graduate placement	3
Graduate support	1
Incentives	4
Integrate graduates	1
Job alignment	1
Job opportunities	2
Job requirement	2
Long-term growth	1
Partnership	7
Promotion	3
Recruitment	1
Skills alignment	1
Succession	3
Training and development	5
Work experience	4

The categories most derived for employment strategy are Employment conditions (8), Graduate development (7), and Partnership (7). Next, the following categories are derived: Employ

graduates (6) and Training and development (5). The other categories have four or fewer occurrences.

The finding related to the employment strategy is that graduate development and partnerships are indicated to address youth unemployment.

4.4.4.2   Advice to the government

A minor percentage (14%) of the responses dealt with advice to the government. When employers are asked to advise the government, they think it may be sustainable to attract more employers to collaborate with the government; in answer to this question, "incentives" resonated strongly. This is evident in the quotes below and as indicated in Table 4.6.

> *Tax incentives, assistance with Stipend payments in the form of a grant, PPE discounts, and Discounts from Institutions with student fees. (Participant 1)*
>
> *Incentives so they can dedicate time, train and pay the young graduates. (Participant 16)*
>
> *Government incentives to companies that offer employment, percentage of incentive dependent on the quantity of employment the company can offer. (Participant 11)*

Table 10: Advice to the government

Themes	Count of Code
Advice to government	25
Awareness marketing	2
Employment conditions	1
Funding	1
Government focus	3
Government systems	1
Grants	1
Incentives	8
Job opportunities	1
Partnership	3
Skills alignment	1
Training and development	3

As part of advice to the government, incentives (8) were noted the most, followed by, to a lesser extent (3), government focus, partnership and training and development. Other categories only noted once were employment conditions, funding, government systems, grants, job opportunities, and skills alignment.

The finding related to advise to the government is that the government should offer more incentives to employers to employ graduates.

4.4.4.3 Support offered

The theme for support that employers give to graduates in the form of training and development is represented by 12%.

Table 11: Support offered to graduates

Support for graduates	23
Graduate Program	1
Graduate support	3
Incentives	1
Special skills	1
Training and development	14
work experience	1
Work opportunity	1
Work preparedness	1

Training and development is the sub-theme most mentioned (14), with all others occurring between 1 and 3 times.

> We allocate them to the relevant departments and provide mentors for proper management and oversight of their progress. In addition, they are afforded development through courses like other employees in the organization. (Participant 12)

The finding relating to the support offered is that the focus is on short-term employment as it concerns training and development.

4.4.4.4 Assistance offered to graduates

The assistance provided by employers to graduates represents 12% of the themes and is mostly in the form of incentives (11), while graduate support (2), training and development (6), and work experience (3) were also indicated.

Table 12: Assistance provided

Assistance provided	22
Graduate support	2
Incentives	11
Training and development	6
work experience	3

The organisation provides support for Learnerships and Internships. We collaborate with a service provider to take several young graduates or learners. Further, we provide them with trade tools and proper performance and development plans. They also get mentors allocated to them so that they are taught new skills and experience development. They are normally with the organisation for one year. (Participant 12)

The finding relating to the assistance provided is that the focus is short-term employment and incentives.

Talent acquisition strategy

The representation of the employers' talent acquisition strategy to employ new staff is 10%. Most participants' strategy depends on job requirements and is based on project needs, as indicated in Table 13.

Table 13: Talent acquisition strategy

Talent acquisition strategy	19
Incentives	2
Internal promotion	2
Job application support	1
Job opportunities	1
Job requirement	4
Organisation type	1
Project-based	3
Promotion	2
Recruitment	2
Training and development	1

Several sub-themes were derived, but none were significantly higher than the others.

Employ both internal and external candidates, experienced and inexperienced, including graduates. (Participant 10)

Employ those with experience in business development. (Participant 4)

There seems to be no specific strategy, as responses depend on employers' strategies.
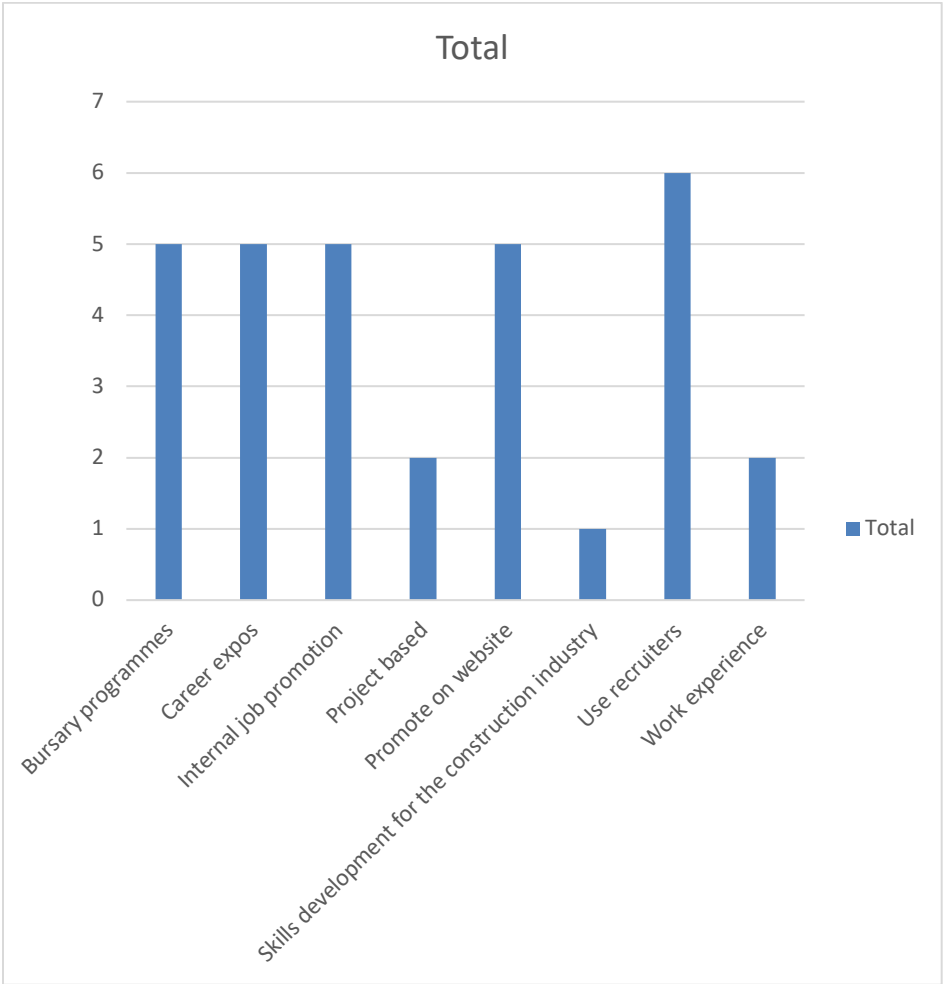
Figure 11: Talent acquisition strategies

The graph in Figure 11 indicates the different types of strategies employers use. The use of recruiters is the strategy most used, followed by bursary programmes, career expos, initial job promotion, and promotion on a website – each with a count of 5. Project-based and work experience was mentioned twice, and skills development for the construction industry just once.

The finding relating to the talent acquisition strategy is that the focus is internal and rigid as it is a job-dependent requirement and project need-based.

4.4.4.5   Government policies and initiatives

Another employer perspective was confirmed by 10% of the responses relating to policies and initiatives the government could use to assist or benefit organisations employing new graduates.

Table 14: Government Policies and Initiatives

Government policies and initiatives	19
Accountability	1
Economy	2
Employment conditions	3
Funding	1
Incentives	3
Job opportunities	1
More accountability	1
Partnership	3
Training and development	4

None of the sub-themes under this theme was significantly higher than the others. Specific recommendations were as follows.

Under policies:

Relaxing the BBBEE code due to a COVID-19 impact. (Participant 6)

Government to offer grants and tax discounts to placement companies. (Participant 1)

Change the age group of youth to 40 years. (Participant 2)

Government to strengthen accountability. (Participant 13)

On initiatives:

Youth Employment Service (YES). (Participant 4)

Youth Employment Service (YES). (Participant 8)

Government to continue with SETA. (Participant 12)

The findings relating to government policies and initiatives are as follows:

i)   Employers require the government to be held accountable for achieving its objectives to address unemployment.

ii)   Employers require the government to revise its incentive policy to offer more incentives to organisations hiring young graduates.

iii) Public-Private Partnerships should be promoted.

4.4.4.6 *Reasons for not employing graduates*

Employers gave reasons why they do not employ graduates. From the perspective of 8%, the major reason was related to economics, as quoted below and indicated in Table 15.

> *Budget constraints. (Participant 12)*

> *Lack of jobs. (Participant 14)*

Table 15: Reasons for not employing graduates

Reasons for not employing graduates	15
Economy	4
Graduate attitudes	3
Incentives	1
Job opportunities	1
Job requirement	3
Organisation type	3

> *When we do not employ them, it is usually because of budget constraints and a lack of organisational positions. The organisation is small, with a complement of 100 employees. The growth of the business has been a challenge in the past few years. (Participant 12)*

There are several reasons employers do not employ graduates: evidence from the data collected demonstrated that economic factors were the primary reasons for employers not employing graduates, ranging from the cost of hiring to the unavailability of jobs. Availability of work or jobs seemed to be an important factor in employment, with employer responses indicating that graduates could not be absorbed because of in availability of work or jobs. Most respondents indicated that their graduate employment strategy depends on the availability of work or jobs at their disposal.

- Economic factors impose a cost constraint on employers.

- Nature of the available jobs that require experience.

- Graduates' attitude and lack of knowledge: *We work on vessels and are responsible for all the lives on the vessel. Newly young graduates do not want to work the hours we work, and they do not have the knowledge to cope with the work.*

- A mismatch of skills acquired versus required.

The literature explains that the workplace demands hybrid skills and a combination of both soft and technical skills (Pacherie & Mylopoulos, 2021). Skills require notable experience from graduates. The current COVID-19 pandemic has complicated the question of experience: entry-level jobs that offer young people access to work experience have disappeared (Okay-Somerville & Carter, 2021). Seemingly, there is a gap between college training and job roles.

The findings relating to the reasons for not employing graduates are as follows:

- Economic factors influence job creation and employment of graduates.

- Inexperienced graduates are not ready for what the job requires of them.

4.5 Additional findings

When coding the data to derive the sub-themes linked to the themes aligned to the identified concepts, the following sub-themes appeared in more than one of the themes. This means the respondents mentioned aspects of the sub-themes regardless of the question. Figure 12 presents the themes and sub-themes.

These sub-themes are as follows:

- Training and development appear in all the themes except for the existing collaboration and reasons for not employing graduates. The number of codes associated with training and development is 16.5%, the highest of all sub-themes.

- Incentives are linked to all themes with 30 associated codes, 15% of all the codes, the second highest after Training and development.

- Partnership linked to Advice to the government, Employment strategy, and Government policies and initiatives represents 6.5% of all the codes.

Count of Code	Column Labels										
Row Labels	Advice to government	Assistance provided	Employment strategy	Existing collaborations	Government policies and initiatives	N/A	None	Reasons for not employing graduates	Support for graduates	Talent acquisition strategy	Grand Total	%
Accountability					1						1	0,5
Awareness marketing	2										2	1
Economy			1		2			4			7	3,5
Employ graduates			6								6	3
Employ professionals			1								1	0,5
Employment conditions	1		8		3						12	6
Funding	1				1						2	1
Government focus	3										3	1,5
Government systems	1										1	0,5
Graduate attitudes								3			3	1,5
Graduate development			7								7	3,5
Graduate placement			3								3	1,5
Graduate Program										1	1	0,5
Graduate support		2	1							3	6	3
Grants	1										1	0,5
Incentives	8	11	4		3			1	1	2	30	15
Integrate graduates			1								1	0,5
Internal promotion										2	2	1
Job alignment			1								1	0,5
Job application support										1	1	0,5
Job opportunities	1		2		1			1		1	6	3
Job requirement			2					3		4	9	4,5
Long term growth			1								1	0,5
More accountability					1						1	0,5
N/A						7	1				8	4
None							6				6	3
Organisation type								3		1	4	2
Partnership	3		7		3						13	6,5
Project-based										3	3	1,5
Promotion			3							2	5	2,5
Recruitment			1							2	3	1,5
Skills alignment	1		1								2	1
Special skills									1		1	0,5
Succession			3								3	1,5
Training and development	3	6	5		4				14	1	33	16,5
work experience		3	4						1		8	4
Work opportunity									1		1	0,5
Work preparedness									1		1	0,5
(blank)						1					1	0,5
Grand Total	25	22	62		19	8	7	15	19	23	200	100

Figure 12: Sub-themes mapped to themes

Job opportunities are linked to Advice to the government, Employment strategy, Government policies and initiatives, Reasons for not employing graduates and Talent acquisition strategy. However, it only represents 3% of all the codes.

The additional findings relate to the importance employers place on training development, incentives, partnerships and job opportunities as important aspects to consider.

4.6   Summary of findings

The study results are presented in the form of the various themes in the questionnaire. As considered in the sections above, these themes are discussed to ascertain insight and meaning to the research objectives established for the study.

4.7   Chapter conclusion

The chapter has presented relevant data that emerged from analysing the information provided by respondents in this study. The chapter made a thematic presentation of the various conceptual areas of interest to address the study objectives. Diagrams and illustrations relevant to depict the study findings were presented in the thematic presentation. The analysis conducted in this chapter revealed that employers follow different approaches in addressing the problem of graduate unemployment, approaches ranging from internal ones to those that are external to the organisation. It was also found that initiatives by the government to address graduate unemployment offer short-term employment through skills training and learnerships but are mostly temporal. Some initiatives provide a platform to discuss job creation and plans to raise employment partnership agreements; however, the impact cannot be measured nor accounted for at this point.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This is a follow-up to the themes raised in the previous chapter. This chapter discusses study findings to ascertain and contribute more meaning and deeper interpretation of the study findings. The chapter also summarises the study's key findings and discusses the themes considered earlier.

5.2 Summary of key findings

Table 16: Themes, findings, and evidence from the data

Themes	Findings	Evidence from the data
1. Government policies and initiatives	Employers require the government to be held accountable for achieving its objectives in addressing unemployment.	*There are enough policies and regulations but not enough accountability to ensure that it is seen to the end to achieve its objectives.*
	Employers require the government to revise its incentive policy to offer more incentives to organisations hiring young graduates.	*Grants and tax discounts to placement companies*
	Public-Private Partnerships should be promoted.	*Government need to reach out to employers who are not participating in the employment of young graduates and do roadshows. They need to target industries, especially the ones that have growth potential. Secondly, highlight the benefits associated with these programmes.*
2. Advice to government	The government should offer more incentives to employers to employ graduates.	*i) There needs to be a clear business case for the private sector - such as tax incentives/reliefs.* *ii) Government incentives to companies that offer employment* *iii) The percentage of incentive is dependent on the quantity of employment the company can offer*
3. Employment strategy	The employers' employment strategy does not consider government initiatives nor align their employment strategy with government initiatives.	*i) We are more in favour of developing and promoting from within* *ii) When a vacancy occurs, we advertise internally first. Then we look for qualifying external candidates.*

4. Talent acquisition strategy	The focus is internal and rigid as it is a job-dependent requirement and project need-based.	i) We develop and promote from inside ii) Employ those with experience in business development
5. Support for graduates	The focus is on short-term employment as it focuses more on training and development.	Graduates can apply to various member companies for intern and in-service training periods. These placements are dependent on positions available via placement partners.
6. Assistance provided	The focus is short-term employment and incentives	i) In-service training ii) Fully paid internships
7. Reasons for not employing graduates	Economic factors influence job creation and employment of graduates	i) When we do not employ them, it is usually because of budget constraints and lack of organisational positions. The organisation is small, with a complement of 100 employees. The growth of the business has been a challenge in the past few years.
	Inexperienced graduates are not ready for what the job requires of them	i) If a position requires work experience, we do not appoint new graduates. But we encourage our staff to ensure new graduates are placed in entry-level positions.
8. Government Initiatives	Most government initiatives promote and create temporary work opportunities and offer work-related training; however, some only focus on creating more temporary jobs without considering the challenges experienced in addressing unemployment in the long term with career opportunities.	i) Temporary work, skills programmes and learnerships ii) Work-related training iii) A platform for open discussion on the challenges faced by each social partner in the creation of jobs
9. Additional findings	The importance that employers place on training development, incentives, partnerships and job opportunities as important aspects to be considered	i) Collaboration is key to solving the youth unemployment crisis in our country. The partnerships we see between Government, NGOs, civil society and the private sector are crucial. ii) Government incentives to companies that offer employment iii) Prioritisation of youth employment

5.3   Thematic discussion

5.3.1   Employment strategy

Evidence from the study demonstrated that some of the specific strategies followed by the respondents included partnering with high educational institutions, learnerships, promotion of voluntary early retirement, graduate programmes, bursary programmes, and agency-based youth absorption programmes. These findings are consistent with Okeke-Ezeanyanwu and Oguejiofor (2020), who determined a skills mismatch in the labour market; hence, the need for collaboration between the education and business sector. Additionally, (Fika *et al.,*2021:7) contend that important programmes should link university education with business. The skills crisis in South Africa is a growing concern, aggravated by the lack of adequate structures to study and assess the gap between the skills obtained by young graduates and those required in the labour market (Della Tamin *et al.,* 2018). Kamaruzaman and others add that as the skills of South African graduates are no longer meeting the skills required by jobs, unemployment among graduates will continue. The situation worsens daily as existing skills no longer align with technological developments (Kamaruzaman *et al.,* 2019).

5.3.2   Advice to the government

Most respondents suggested that government offer incentives such as grants, tax exemptions, and investment boosts to employers who appoint the youth. Another piece of advice was for the government to strengthen partnerships between government, NGOs, civil society and the private sector, or even focus and invest specifically in engineering and plumbing fields. This advice resonates with Mahola *et al.,* (2019), who suggested creating a more favourable, empowering, and supportive business-friendly environment.

5.3.3   Support offered

The study demonstrates that respondents supported graduates through training and development through in-service training, internships and collaboration with other institutions. Some even indicated the need for 12 months of youth work experience to be added to the CV. These are the important strategies that are likewise supported in the literature. These findings mirror those of Mahola *et al.* (2019), who argue that the government and all stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations, should create a more favourable, empowering, and supportive business-friendly environment for the youth, especially university students. Such collaboration can take various forms: learnerships, internships and training.

5.3.4 Assistance offered to graduates

The study demonstrates that respondents only offer short-term employment, and the incentives are only for short-term opportunities. Those initiatives with stakeholder involvement should focus on long-term opportunities to address the unemployment problem. Specific examples mentioned were in-service training and fully paid internships.

5.3.5 Talent acquisition strategy

The responses regarding this theme showed that organisations rely on a wide array of strategies, including project-based recruitment, whereby job placements are made in response to the demands of certain projects. This demonstrates that graduates are likely to be employed as the need arises, and this need is to the demand for new skills. Respondents also rely significantly on the experience of the respondents in placements. Assessment tests, using professionals, and hiring agents were also important features of the recruitment and selection process. These assertions support the views of Fox *et al.* (2016) that finding employment remains a substantial challenge for many graduates due to the lack of previous work experience, lack of both soft and hard skills (Faraazlina & Zunurain, 2017), and high expectations of company markets (Eichhorst & Rinne, 2018). As such, it is imperative to have the support of employment agencies and the use of creative techniques to enable unemployed graduates to secure employment.

5.3.6 Government policies and initiatives

Despite current and available government interventions in place with employment initiatives and collaboration with businesses and the private sector, unemployment continues to escalate irrespectively. Although initiatives such as the Employment Tax Incentive (ETI) initiative target employers to hire young work seekers (SARS, 2014), employers think, amongst other things, that government policies on accountability, relaxing BBBEE, and more incentives of grants could help entire organisations to employ new graduates. Under this theme, it was found that the following government initiatives assist organisations employing new graduates:

- Youth Employment Service (YES);

- Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) through internships, training and development;

- Community Development Work programmes; and

- Strengthened Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)

5.3.7 Reasons for not employing graduates

Evidence from the data collected indicates that the main reason that employers do not employ graduates is because of graduates' attitudes: poor attitude about working conditions, being choosy and being unwilling to work long hours. This contradicts the finding that the lack of graduate skills, as indicated by Ncube *et al.* (2018), is the reason for not employing graduates. A lack of experience and knowledge is another reason, as most job requirements insist on work experience as an imperative for hiring consideration. Another reason provided by employers was the lack of jobs due to the high cost of hiring in conjunction with limited business growth. Although Rahmat *et al.* (2021) and Pompili *et al.* (2022) indicate that digital skills and hybrid capabilities are needed for employing graduates, the participants did not mention this.

5.3.8 Government initiatives

The identified government initiatives provide evidence that the government of South Africa is intentional about creating youth employment; the majority of the initiatives are deliberate in their intention to create youth employment. The short-term employment frequently on offer is not sustainable, so in future, the government should improve by offering more permanent appointments to youth rather than temporary employment.

5.4 Chapter conclusion

While there are sufficient policies and regulations, there is not enough accountability from the government to ensure responsibility to the end. Offering grants and incentives and strengthening public-private partnerships may motivate employers to participate in the creation of job opportunities for recently graduated youth.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

6.1 Introduction

This study explored employers' perspectives on collaborating with the government to address South African unemployment. The previous section reported findings from the data collected using thematic analysis, highlighting the study's major elements and key findings that emerged from the data analysis. Themes were identified, and responses collected were categorised and grouped accordingly to garner insight into efforts to investigate the research question at hand. This section will relate the findings to the literature discussed in this study and offer recommendations to the government to aid in understanding the employer perspective in collaboration with the South African government.

6.2 Overview of research conducted

This exploratory study used a survey strategy to collect qualitative data with an online open-ended questionnaire to obtain employers' perspectives on the government's initiatives to employ graduates. The collected data was analysed to derive the findings from answering the research question to address the research problem.

6.3 Research questions revisited

The findings obtained for this study are used to answer the following sub-research question.

Sub-research question 1: What initiatives are available from the government to deal with youth graduate unemployment? The answer to this question is the employment creation of several initiatives identified and available from the government, such as Yes4Youth and Employment Tax incentives. Despite the government initiatives, employers feel that,

- more incentives are needed;

- policies need to be changed to focus specifically on addressing youth unemployment;

- government should be accountable for the successful implementation of initiatives; and

- initiatives only support short-term entry-level jobs and fail to provide career development with more permanent jobs.

Sub-research question 2: How do employers align their employment strategies with the government's initiatives on job creation for unemployed graduates?

The answer to this question is that better alignment between government initiatives is needed, with greater support and engagement opportunities for participating employers and a better understanding of the challenges experienced due to the complexity of the environment that causes unemployment.

Based on the answers to the sub-research questions, the main research question is – What are employers' perspectives on government initiatives in addressing graduate youth unemployment in South Africa? – can be answered. Although there is evidence of government initiatives to support employers for job creation, this is inadequate to address unemployment on the significantly problematic scale of this country. This is likely because government initiatives focus on short-term solutions that are not sustainable. However, wider stakeholder involvement could benefit unemployed youth more.

6.4 Reflection on Research

The study was interesting as it yielded unexpected data on employers' perspectives on unemployment and collaboration with the government on the graduate unemployment crisis in the country. Government-available initiatives only focus on short-term employment opportunities that are not sustainable in the long run. Regarding employers aligning their employment strategies with government initiatives on job creation, it seems that the majority are already incorporating their employment strategies with the government by offering learnerships, career expos and internships to graduates to expose them to their areas of expertise. Employers advocate for more incentives for organisations employing young graduates to encourage them to continue with government collaborations. The study determined the need for more research involving employers and the government in promoting sustainable employment opportunities considering inexperienced youth, especially young graduates.

6.5 Contributions

Previously, unemployment was seen simply from the perspective of the economy, whereby a decline in the economic growth rate or decreased economic activities were seen as the critical reason for graduate unemployment. However, this study has found employment links between unemployment and skills, experience, workplace needs and employer needs.

6.6 Knowledge contribution

In South Africa, unemployment remains one of the most persistent and contentious economic complexities in the post-apartheid era. As such, there is a need for wide and comprehensive knowledge of the nature and form of this problem. This study contributes to knowledge of the unemployment problem as it focuses on prospective employers collaborating with the government in addressing graduate youth unemployment in South Africa. Unemployment is a national crisis across South African provinces, and this study presented important knowledge on this phenomenon.

6.6.1 Methodological contribution

The methodology adopted for the study was necessary to meet the circumstances associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and the required social distancing. Online Google questionnaires are not a popular

data-gathering method in research. However, this study adopted this method in a manner that allowed for the collection of meaningful data. In this way, the study presents the use of online Google questionnaires as an effective method for data collection.

6.6.2 Practical contribution

The study makes a practical contribution to what government can do or needs to provide employers to increase their chances for collaborating with employers. By providing employers' views, the study encourages the government to understand better the labour market and its key characteristics, which are important in addressing unemployment.

6.7 Further research

Further research is needed to establish employers' challenges in collaborating with the government to address unemployment. While this present study focused on the employer's views, it may also be important to consider the government's comprehensive views of employer perspectives to ascertain if they are viable suggestions for addressing the unemployment challenge in South Africa.

6.8 Chapter conclusion

This study investigated the challenges graduates, employers and the government face in addressing unemployment. An online Google questionnaire was issued to establish these challenges and possible solutions. It was found that employers face myriad challenges ranging from skills to financial constraints to government policy. The study established that graduate training, coaching and development could be important to improve their employability and to address the unemployment rate.

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APPENDIX A: Permission Letter

Dear Sir / Madam

I need organisations like your one to participate in my research study as you are dealing with youth unemployment crisis which it is relevant to my proposed study. I am certain that your input for my proposed study will be useful and valuable.

My study is about an employer perspective on government initiatives addressing youth unemployment of graduates. I am current enrolled for Master's in Business Administration and now doing a mini thesis.

Attached is a summary document of my proposed study and a template of the letter to confirm your participation that you need to complete and send it back to me. On receipt of the completed letter, I will send the questionnaires in a form of google form.

Your assistance is greatly appreciated since my proposal has been approved and am now busy with data collection.

For reference purposes, you are free to contact my supervisor, her contact details are:
Dr Retha de la Harpe
Adjunct Professor
Cell: 082 887 7369 & Tel. +27 (0) 21 460 9057
email: retha.delaharpe@gmail.com & delaharper@cput.ac.za

Regards,
Sinazo Ntleki
MTech Student
Cell: 072 551 8542
email: ntlekis@cput.ac.za and misohle67@gmail.com

APPENDIX B: Acceptance letter (anonymised)

**MASTER BUILDERS AND ALLIED
TRADES' ASSOCIATION
WESTERN CAPE**

BELMONT SQUARE	**P O BOX 382**
BELMONT ROAD	**RONDEBOSCH, 7701**
RONDEBOSCH, 7700	**TEL: (021) 685-2625**
E-MAIL: info@mbawc.org.za	**WEBSITE: www.mbawc.org.za**

Date: 1 July 2021

To whom it may concern

I, Desirè Paterson, in my capacity as Office Manager at MBA Western Cape give consent in principle to allow Sinazo Ntleki (215302982) to collect data in this company as part of her Master of Technology research. She is a registered MTech: Business Administration student at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) and her supervisor is Prof Retha de la Harpe. The topic of her study is: Employers' perspective considering collaborating with government in addressing graduate youth unemployment in South Africa. The aim of the study is to explore employers' perspective considering collaborating with government in addressing unemployment in South Africa. The student has explained to me the nature of her research and the nature of the data to be collected.

This consent in no way commits any individual staff member to participate in the research, and it is expected that the student will get explicit consent from any participants. I reserve the right to withdraw this permission at some future time.

In addition, the company's name may or may not be used as indicated below. (Tick as appropriate).

	Thesis	Conference paper	Journal article	Research poster
Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
No				

Your participation is highly appreciated because your perspectives will assist the student in gaining the necessary insights. Please contact us if more information is required.

Desire Paterson
1 July 2021

_____

ALLEN BODILL *(Pr.CM; Pr.CPM)* EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
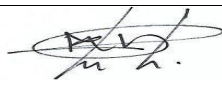
APPENDIX C: Ethics certificate for the study

Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Office of the Chairperson Research Ethics Committee	FACULTY: BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

The Faculty's Research Ethics Committee (FREC) on **20 October 2020** ethics **APPROVAL** was granted to **Sinazo Ntleki (215302982)** for a research activity for **M Tech: Busines Administration** at Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Title of dissertation / thesis / project:	**Employer perspective on Government initiative addressing youth unemployment of graduates** Lead Supervisor (s): Prof. R de La Harpe

Decision: APPROVED

	9 July 2021
Signed: Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee	**Date**

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the CPUT Policy on Research Ethics.

2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study requires that the researcher stops the study and immediately informs the chairperson of the relevant Faculty Ethics Committee.

3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, notably compliance with the Bill of Rights as provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (the Constitution) and where applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003 and/or other legislations that is relevant.

6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.

7. No field work activities may continue after two (2) years for Masters and Doctorate research project from the date of issue of the Ethics Certificate. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report (REC 6) will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Clearance Certificate No | 2021_FBMSREC 044

APPENDIX D: Certificate of Authentication

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Certificate of Authenticity

CERTIFICATE: COA241022RDLH

11 November 2022

To Whom It May Concern

This is to certify that "**EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE ON GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE ADDRESSING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT OF GRADUATES**" by Sinazo Likywa Ntleki, for the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), under the supervision of Dr Retha de la Harpe, has been professionally edited by Dr. Laura Budler Kleinhans of ChickPea Proofreading and Editing Services for Students and Professionals.

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APPENDIX E: Similarity Report

Cape Town employer perspectives on government initiatives addressing graduate youth unemployment