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A Critical Review of Youth Employment Programmes in South Africa: Challenges and Solutions

Thulani Tshefuta

774879

Supervisor: Prof. Pundy Pillay

WITS School of Governance

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Contacts: 072 015 7957

ttshefuta@gmail.com / 774879@students.wits.ac.za

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ABSTRACT

Structural Youth unemployment is generally recognised as a formidable policy challenge of our time with dire political socio-economic implications for South Africa. In response to this mammoth challenge, the government of South Africa has been implementing a package of public employment programmes towards ameliorating youth unemployment. These have been supported by some private sector measures and civil society initiatives. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the different interventions implemented by government and other partners focusing on the successes, challenges and the potential solutions to the problem of youth unemployment.

The purpose of this research is to undertake a critical assessment and analysis of the existing package of youth targeted employment programmes in South Africa with the view to unpacking their successes and challenges, whilst recommending some possible solutions on youth employment. This is a matter that South Africa cannot afford to ignore as it is facing the danger of missing the opportunity of reaping the "demographic dividend" from the current youth bulge.

The theoretical framework of this study is anchored on the Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory as well as the Theory of Change (ToC). In this qualitative study, exploratory research design was used. This study utilised a semi-structured interview schedule data collection instrument. This research utilised thematic analysis to analyse the qualitative data that was collected.

The study found that despite a package of existing youth intervention programmes, we still have stubborn persistence of youth unemployment. The research further conducted a critical analysis of existing youth employment programmes focusing on their successes and challenges. Specific lessons were drawn from the implementation of these youth employment programmes. The study concludes by providing recommended solutions on strategies to promote and improve effective youth employment interventions.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Hughes and Smith (2021) argue that young people are experiencing a double shock emanating from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic since countries have been buffeted by tumultuous economic cycles, and increasingly strong technical winds of change. The Covid-19 pandemic did not only ruin young people's careers, but it is also interrupted their education and training, as well as putting huge roadblocks in the path of those wishing to join the job market or change jobs (Hughes & Smith, 2021). Hence, concerns about the future of the youth have grown in recent decades around the world, notably in Africa. Similarly, Fox and Gandhi (2021) state that increasing employment possibilities for youth has become even more important in developing programmes and policies in the twenty-first century.

It is not surprising that developing strategies to respond to the challenges of youth unemployment and under-employment are quickly becoming a top priority for practically every country in Africa (ILO, 2020). The challenge of youth employment is economy-wide and requires more job creating measures, with the focus on decent and more inclusive jobs for youth (The World Bank Group (WBG), 2018). Given the extremely high unemployment rate in South Africa, national employment programmes have become an important aspect of a broader set of policies aimed at boosting employment and reducing poverty. The goal is to reduce the rate of youth that are “Not in Employment, Education or Training” (NEET).

The Diagnostic Report of the National Development Plan (National Planning Commission, 2011) revealed two cardinal challenges that South Africa is confronted with: (1) the educational outcomes are too poor as there are no requisite returns on the investments in education; and (2) too few South Africans work, resulting in an unacceptably high unemployment rate in general, particularly amongst youth.

Young people today confront a challenging situation in their quest for employment. O’Higgins (2017) posits that the global recession has made its imprint, and youth unemployment rates have risen again after decreasing for several years. According to

Moshikaro (2020), South Africa features as one of the countries with the lowest rates of employment in the world since the late 1980s. The pandemic and country-wide lockdown exacerbated the high rate of unemployment by driving even more individuals out of the workforce (Moshikaro, 2020). Youth unemployment, therefore, poses a formidable policy challenge with dire implications for South Africa (NDP, 2011).

Consistent with Statistics South Africa's (2011) Census Report, Stats-SA's (2016) "Report on The Social Profile of Youth" confirms that South Africa has entered the demographic window of a youth bulge, as it is the case with the entire continent of Africa. Van der Ven and Smits (2011) explain this demographic window of opportunity as arising from the process of demographic transition where the younger generation is growing to be economically active in larger numbers than older people. The demographic window of the youth bulge is therefore the phenomenon whereby the biggest share of the economically active population is comprised of young people than any other age cohort of the population (Yifu Lin, 2012). This presents both opportunities and threats to our society.

The African Union (2006) is assertive in arguing that such opportunities will come to be realised only if we increase our investments in the development and empowerment of young people. Ngcaweni, Matemba, and Lentsoane (2014) advise that the threats that come with the youth bulge will manifest the frustrations of young people in all forms of socio-economic and geo-political instability based on violence, as we have begun to see in South Africa and other parts of the world.

Moshikaro (2020) explained that to close the disparities in South Africa's job market, the country's economy needed to be rebuilt from the ground up through effective employment programmes. Thus, the government of the Republic of South Africa has developed various interventions that are aimed at reducing the high levels of unemployment among the youth. Cassim and Oosthuizen (2014), for example, state that the South African government has adopted several measures intended to create jobs, lower unemployment, and alleviate the negative effects of high unemployment on individuals and their families. Kobedi, Swanepoel and Venter (2022) add that employment and labour absorption programmes, as well as education and training programmes, are among the support programmes; the private sector also joined in,

developing several initiatives aimed at reducing youth unemployment. It is assumed that increasing youth employment will not only make significant contributions to the economy but also contribute considerably to the country's development (Mbuya et al. 2022).

In contexts where there are poor educational outcomes, low to stagnant economic growth, and an unstable labour-market with high unemployment, Mayer (2011) is of the firm view that deployment programmes can serve as a substitute, a stepping-stone and stimulus towards meaningful employment. These deployment programmes cover a broad range of public employment programmes, like National Youth Service, that are implemented to contribute towards mitigating high unemployment together with other socio-economic imperatives. In order to confront this dire state of affairs, Foley (2003) believes that the Youth Employment Stimuli interventions such as service-for-employment interventions, hold the potential for labour market activation and job creation beyond just countering youth unemployment.

1.2 Problem Statement

Even though it is clear from the discussion above that the South African government has implemented some intensive programs and strategies to provide opportunities for young people to sustain themselves, levels of youth employment remain low, indicating that a number of factors are at play, which, according to experts, stem from issues related to government policies (Mbuya et al., 2022). However, the World Bank (2017) suggested that the government of South Africa continues to implement measures to lower unemployment and poverty, in order to boost the country's economy; nevertheless, despite these initiatives, South Africa still shows one of the highest unemployment rates and greatest income disparity in the world.

With almost 12 million youth directly affected by very low prospects of finding employment, South Africa will have an entire generation of youth that lacks the necessary work skills that are required by the economy and increasingly depend on government welfare measures for survival (Shankar, Cooper, & Koh, 2021).

Despite the introduction of various youth employment programmes, unemployment among young people continues to be a problem. Chauke, Malatji and Obadire (2021) posit that unemployment among young people is a nightmare for the South African government. Moreover, Oosterom (2018) argues that funding for youth employment interventions has risen dramatically in recent years. However, there is limited evidence to suggest that skills and knowledge improvement programmes result in long-term employment and higher wages.

It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the different interventions implemented by government focusing on the successes, challenges and the potential solutions to the problem.

Although youth unemployment is increasingly being recognised as an emerging socio-economic phenomenon with dire implications for the economy, Patel (2003) observes that, there is a very limited focus and effort on positioning the existing youth employment programmes to make a meaningful contribution towards sustainable youth employment in South Africa as they are implemented in “silos”.

There are various international studies that have interrogated the subject of youth unemployment. The majority of these studies tend to focus on the causes, rates, and implications of youth unemployment. However, there has not been a dedicated focus on providing a critical review and analysis of existing youth employment programmes. Therefore, such omissions present one with an opportunity to undertake research that will contribute to the unpacking and development of a body of knowledge in this field by exploring the successes and challenges of the existing youth employment programmes in South Africa.

Furthermore, this study fills a gap by seeking to evaluate and provide answers to the government's youth employment programmes that are developed to reduce the rate of youth unemployment in South Africa. Despite their importance, the contributions of youth employment programmes as a major key to economic growth in South Africa have thus far received little attention. Likewise, Graham, De Lannoy, Patel and Leibbrandt (2018) comment that despite various research studies and policy proposals

on youth unemployment since the 1990s, evidence and impact from practice continue to be fragmented.

The purpose of this study is to significantly contribute to the discourse by critically analysing the existing literature and instruments to add value in building the body of knowledge that can be the voice of reason on this subject. This is a matter that South Africa cannot afford to ignore as it is facing the danger of missing the opportunity of reaping the “demographic dividend” from the current youth bulge.

The findings and recommendations of this study will be shared with policy makers, youth formations, implementing agencies, programme managers, and other relevant stakeholders in order to influence and inform new policy thinking, programme design, and improved implementation modalities.

1.3 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to undertake a critical assessment and analysis of the existing package of youth targeted employment programmes in South Africa with the view to unpacking their successes and challenges, whilst recommending some possible solutions on youth employment. This study will do this by identifying the challenges of youth employment in South Africa and reviewing the programmes devised by the government to encourage youth placement and absorption in the labour market and the economy of the country. Furthermore, it identifies potential solutions to address these daunting challenges.

1.4 Research Question

The main research question of this study is the following: “What are the successes and challenges of the existing youth employment programmes in South Africa and how can they be improved?”

The secondary research questions are listed below:

1.4.1 What do the policymakers, implementers and programmes beneficiaries consider to be the successes and barriers or challenges of youth employment programmes?

1.4.2 How can these challenges be addressed (improved) for effective and efficient youth employment programmes?

1.5 Research Objectives

Consistent with the research purpose and research question, the objectives of this research are:

- To highlight the successes of youth employment programmes in South Africa;
- To unpack the challenges of the existing youth employment programmes; and
- To recommend interventions to improve youth employment measures.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into sections on youth unemployment and employment. It discusses the theoretical framework, the definition of key concepts, the global trends on youth (un)employment and the profile of youth, the landscape of national youth employment programmes, and the knowledge gap.

As Oosterom (2018) points out, about 43% of the youth labour force of the world is unemployed, under-employed or working but poor, indicating that a demographic dividend may not be forthcoming. The poor quality of the jobs that are occupied by young workers finds expression in the risky working conditions they find themselves in, including insufficient legal instruments, poor levels of social protection, limited opportunities for skills training and up-skilling, growth and career advancement (ILO, 2020). These are the reasons why the Agenda 2063 programme of the African Union and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations are intent on advancing the socio-economic rights and aspirations of young people across board (United Nations, 2017).

Meaningful youth engagement is essential for the successful implementation and sustainability of the transformation agenda (United Nations, 2017). This realisation has sparked initiatives aimed at putting a significant number of young people into formal jobs or helping them become active citizens in meaningful ways (Oosterom, 2018). The South African government has implemented some measures to encourage young people to work and create jobs in a variety of fields (Mthalane, 2020). Some of these programmes, such as the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC), Expanded Public Works Program (EPWP), the Community Works Program (CWP), the National Youth Service Programme (NYSP), Youth Wage Subsidy (YWS), Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, Youth Employment Services (YES), and the Presidential Youth Employment Stimulus are aimed primarily to alleviate youth unemployment challenges (Noruka, 2017).

Despite multiple youth employment programmes that are being implemented to stimulate the demand-side of the labour market, the issues confronting the youth in this country persist (Lehohla, 2018). Oosterom (2018) argues that despite the introduction of several youth targeted employment interventions, there is still no convincing evidence that such interventions are making a significant and sustainable impact on the supply-side of the labour market through skills training. Therefore, South Africa is still facing a severe socioeconomic dilemma as a result of increased youth unemployment, which inhibits youth engagement in the economy and their ability to work to maximise economic value and contribute to the improvement of society (Mabasa, 2017).

Adopting successful youth-focused employment programs is critical for integrating the youth into the labour market and allowing them to contribute significantly to their countries' economic development. As the United Nations (UN) emphasises, the world's youth population must be reinforced by national policies and innovative solutions to the problems they encounter as a crucial driver of change (Currie, 2020).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory as well as the Theory of Change (ToC).

2.2.1 Positive Youth Development (PYD) Theory

The Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory is considered “an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people’s strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strength” (The Group on Youth Programs, 2017:1).

Catalano et al. (2019) explain that PYD assists young people in acquiring the assets and skills to succeed, improves the environmental context to better support the growth

of young people, and empowers them to progress and develop the areas in which they live. It implies that if youth has the necessary skills, knowledge and assistance they need, they will eventually succeed, be financially independent and make a meaningful contribution to the country's economy (Alvarado, Skinner, Plaut, Moss, Kapungu & Reavley, 2017). Therefore, the PYD theory focuses on young people's strengths, potential, capacities, opportunities and ability to change their society rather than labelling them as a problem (Chauke, Malatji & Obadire, 2021).

Logwood and Thomas (2017) state that the key ideas and the characteristics of positive developmental contexts are all anchored in youth-led initiatives. By fully preparing and equipping young people to serve as the society's agents of change, it is critical for communities and government partners to understand their role through the theory (Logwood & Thomas, 2017). Chauke et al. (2021) go on to state that important players in youth development must help young people develop their capacities by supporting them and providing them with opportunities that would allow them to reach their full potential.

Collura (2016) argues that PYD's core principles are: (1) youth are active agents in the process of their own development (they are not passive beneficiaries, they are capable of promoting their healthy development; (2) it focuses on all youth (PYD intends to enhance the potential of all youth across board, not only limited to those who are considered to be vulnerable or at risk); (3) everyone is responsible for youth development (it takes a "village" to promote positive youth development); and (4) multiple settings influence youth development (young people's development is influenced by the family, school, and community at a micro level; and the broader cultural norms and values at a macro level). The PYD method addresses the person-context interface, implying that youth development can occur across time and situations and it is partly based on developmental systems or ecological systems theories (Lerner, Napolitano, Boyd, Mueller and Callina, 2013).

The PYD theory in this study aims at preparing young people for the challenges of adulthood by providing them with a sequence of developmental programmes and capabilities that empower them to develop social, emotional, ethical, physical, and cognitive skills (Lerner et al., 2013). Thus, it recognises young people as partners in

the social, economic and broader national development of the country. Youth are viewed as resources in this "asset-based" strategy, relying on their skills, talents, and energy for growth within their community. In line with the concept of Positive Youth Development Theory, in this study, young people are not viewed through the negative lens of their challenges, but through the positive lens of the potential they hold when they are supported. Hence, they are viewed as assets. In the same view, the direct application of this theory in this study is to view the youth through the positive potential they can leverage when engaged in youth employment programmes. It promotes youth acquisition of appropriate attitudes, practices, and skills. The PYD theory also educates the government, society at large and communities by reminding them of their roles in youth development, and places young people at the centre of the social and economic growth of every nation.

2.2.2 The Theory of Change

A Theory of Change (ToC) is a plan that explains what needs to change in the chain of activities in order to achieve the required results. This theory originates from the field of study that is based on theory-driven evaluations, which was notably getting more popular in the 1990s (Coryn, Noakes, Westine, & Schröter, 2011; Chen, 1990). However, Weiss (1995) popularised the theory through the work of the Aspen Institute and the Roundtable on Community Change. It is a model of evidence-based theory that provides a detailed description of a set of actions that need to be undertaken in order to give effect and realise the set goals or outcomes. It also helps with monitoring and evaluating progress towards achieving the set goal or outcome. Kezar and Holcombe (2019) further concur with this sentiment by stating that the theory of change is a basic method that gives a detailed description and demonstration of how and why the necessary impact or outcome is predicted to happen under certain conditions.

Reinholz and Andrews (2020) posit that the theory-driven evaluation is intended to go beyond the conventional input-output model of assessment by requiring programme developers to describe openly how they anticipated a program to work. Thus, they must expose their underlying assumptions that will enable assessors to have a greater understanding of what is being implemented and why, as well as to

establish explicit links between such an intervention and its consequences (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020).

The ToC related evaluation should not just be an issue of satisfying or impressing funding agencies when it comes to assessing the outcome of a project. It must be about helping to achieve high-quality programmes by comparing what it hoped to achieve and the results obtained. Programme or policy assessors accomplish this by first determining the desired long-term goals, and then working backwards to determine all of the circumstances that must be met for the goals to be achieved (Centre for Theory of Change Partner (CTCP), 2021). All of this is laid out in an Outcomes Framework that serves as the foundation for determining what type of activity or intervention will result in the preconditions for reaching the long-term goal (CTCP, 2021).

Furthermore, the Theory of Change informing this research has the potential of making a long lasting and sustainable impact of making smooth the transition of young people from school into the world of work in South Africa (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2018). Transitioning from school to work should be considered as part of the process to enable young people to transition from school to gainful employment. This process can be unpacked into two types. Firstly, it starts with preparing and empowering young people with the necessary knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes that are relevant to the emerging opportunities in the job market. These supply side measures are essential in helping these young people to access, retain and thrive in productive, gainful and sustainable employment, and further adapt to the changing nature of work and economy; Secondly, the actual transition process, in which youth can easily access productive and fair work opportunities that allow them to put their skills to good use (UNICEF, 2019).

Wilson-Clark (2019) notes that encouraging youth to acquire knowledge and develop skills and make the transition to work requires a combination of balance between the supply-and-demand-side interventions. The supply-side interventions ensure that young people have the necessary skills to secure a job or be self-employed, while demand-side interventions encourage the creation of more and better employment in the economy, such as interventions to enhance productivity,

competitiveness, and growth (Wilson-Clark, 2019). Upon the assessment of the successes and challenges of the youth employment programmes, the Theory of Change will be applied to inform the change of course in improving the results of the youth employment programmes. This will account for the direct context and application of this theory in this study.

2.3 Unpacking Key Concepts

This section provides the definitions of employment, youth, and unemployment, and describes the profile of youth in South Africa and globally.

2.3.1 The Youth

The notion of youth as a socially constructed concept is not prominent in policy discussions, which adopted age-based definitions as discussed in this report.

Although there have been numerous definitions of youth, this study adopts the conceptualisation of youth by Baah-Boateng (2014) who regards it as the demographic group that bears the biggest challenge of labour market access. Hence, in South Africa, it also adopts the age definition stipulated by the National Youth Commission Act (NYCA) (1996) as individuals aged from 14 to 35 years old. Although much has changed for young people since the country's democratic transition in 1994, the motive for the 35-year age limit has not changed because the country's historical inequalities have yet to be fully resolved. This demographic will answer key questions on the challenges and solutions related to Youth Employment Programmes in South Africa.

2.3.2 Employment and Unemployment

The ILO (2020) stated that there are two types of employment, namely, paid employment and self-employment. Mnculwane (2016) explains that the importance of decent work in providing a stable income and a path out of poverty cannot be overstated.

The issue of youth unemployment is sparking global attention and is seen as a possible source of societal unrest (Malatji, 2020). Cloete (2015) refers to unemployment as a state of being available for work but unable to find it.

This study employs the original definition of unemployment by the ILO (1982:10) as "all persons over a specific age (15 to 64 years old) who during the reference period were: a) without work - not in paid employment or self-employment during the reference period; b) currently available for work - available for paid employment or self-employment during the reference period; and c) seeking work - had taken specific steps in a specified reference period to seek paid employment or self-employment. This definition, although old, constitutes the basis of this study since it is complete. In South Africa, youth unemployment is significant among graduates and those with other advanced high levels of qualification (those aged 15 to 34) (Stats SA, 2019).

Tackling youth unemployment is a complex challenge that extends beyond labour market interventions and includes addressing macroeconomic management and performance; the infrastructure gap, low productivity; unclear regulations, including land ownership; and often political setting with leadership that prioritizes the issue (JICA, World Bank and African Development Bank, 2013).

2.4 Profile of South African Youth and South African Youth Employment Trends

Due to the demographic transition, South Africa has a higher proportion of youth, which should be considered a benefit to the country (Mashabela, 2018). These young people can only contribute to economic growth if they are actively invested in; otherwise, it will have a negative impact on the economy and the society at large. In South Africa, youth are classified as those between the ages of 14 and 35 (Lam, Leibbrandt & Mlatsheni, 2007; UNGA, 2005:23).

Workers categorised as young in South Africa are not a homogeneous group as Lam, et al. (2007:4) recognise that there are three separate generations or age cohorts within this broader definition of youth: 15-19, 20-24, and 25 to 35. Lehohla (2018) revealed that between 2009 and 2014, the young population in South Africa increased from 18, 5 million to 19, 6 million, accounting for about 37% of the total population.

Statistics South Africa (2019) showed that the youth constitutes over 37% of the country's population, while Mbuya et al. (2022:4) reported that young people aged 14 to 35 account for 41, 2% of the overall population of South Africa. In this light, young people can serve as the firm foundation for the human capital of the country. However, their potential and future are disrupted by high unemployment rate, discrimination, poor health, and poverty (NYDA, 2014). A comprehensive effort and multi-faceted programmes from the government, corporate sector, and civil society leadership is essential to enhance the economic growth and increase youth involvement in the economy through their absorption in the South African job market (Mabasa, 2017).
Given that the youth aged 15–34 years make up a bigger proportion of the working-age population than adults aged 35–64 years (StatsSA, 2015), and that 60% of the youth sector is unemployed, this poses a serious threat to the South African economy (Herrington & Kew, 2016). South Africa has been witnessing a youth bulge for over a decade, owing to the inability of the society to fully engage young people in productive activities once they reach working age, and they become a group of disgruntled individuals, a product of social and economic insecurity (Lehohla, 2018).

The aforementioned issues confronting South African youth could have long-term socioeconomic effects on young people, increasing the risks of falling into poverty, criminal activities, physical and mental health issues, and drug abuse (Barron, 2014). The prevailing youth condition may further have long-term negative effects on the country's general economic, social, and physiological well-being unless it is improved by effective policy implementation (Lehohla, 2018).

Economic activities were curtailed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a significant drop in productivity and family consumption patterns. In line with this, Moshikaro (2020) commented that the public employment declined significantly less than the corporate sector during the pandemic, in part because a large proportion of its personnel are key workers, and in part, because the state public service did not fire employees who were unable to work due to crisis restrictions. Based on the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), employment in the public sector fell by just 7% (or 168 000 jobs) in the second quarter, compared to a two million job loss or 15% in the private sector (Moshikaro, 2020).

Mthalane (2020) argues that to create and implement appropriate policies and programmes, it is necessary to first understand what makes people employable. Kluve, Puerto, Robalino, Romero, Rother, Stoterau, Weidenkaff and Witte (2016) responded and stated that education and (vocational) training, as well as entrepreneurship promotion, are common supply-side interventions that attempt to provide young people with the skills they need to enter the labour market and obtain work, or to start and expand their enterprises, which in turn create jobs for others. In the short term, this will necessitate extra government assistance, and in the long run, economic recovery and reconstruction initiatives must promote job creation (Moshikaro, 2020).

The trends of employment follow the levels of economic activity in the respective provinces, that is, the higher the level of economic activity, the higher is the level of employment and the converse is also applicable.

Just like the rest of the African continent, South Africa has a youthful population. More than a third of the South African population is made up of young people with the 15 to 34 years old age cohort accounting for 34.7% of the population (2020 Statistics South Africa Mid-term Population Survey). On the backdrop of this picture, it is important to note that any challenges that confront young people will always be of large proportions because of the number of people it affects in any society. The youth of South Africa are not in any way immune from the challenges that affect other youth. Different cohorts of young people seem to agree in unison that in the midst of the plethora of challenges they face, the problem of structural youth unemployment is the biggest challenge of their lifetime. The 2020-Q1 Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) describes the situation of youth unemployment as a ticking time-bomb of crisis proportions in the sense that the youth unemployment rate of 30.1% is unsustainable for the economy as this was the highest rate of joblessness since 2008.

Youth unemployment in South Africa is further exacerbated by the high numbers of youth who are Not in Employment, Education, and Training (also known as NEET) being about 3.5 million of those between the ages of 15 and 24. As previously stated, in all its variations, the rate of unemployment is typically higher amongst young

women, whilst rural youth continue to be at the margins of economic activity and development. Additionally, the youth with disabilities are faced with extra challenges marginalisation and social exclusion that are limiting their chances of acquiring education, skills, employment and business opportunities.

South Africa has a very high rate of youth unemployment compared to many other developing countries (Moses, Van der Berg & Rich, 2017). Based on the Youth Employment Accord, youth unemployment is a major national challenge and needs urgent and coordinated responses to address it (Economic Development Department, 2013). Moreover, Mabasa (2017) argues that the rate at which employment opportunities are created is relatively low compared to the population growth rate and businesses find it too difficult, expensive and risky to hire young people.

2.5 Global Trends in Youth Unemployment

The concept/construct of “youth” can best be understood as an age-based transition from the period of childhood dependence to the independence of adulthood. Other labour market focused institutions refer to youth as those who just graduated from the age of compulsory school education and entering the labour market or first job.

Unemployment is a global economic issue and a major roadblock to socioeconomic development (Kenny, 2019). The ILO (2020) reported that 160 million people in the world today are unemployed, and many more subsist on the margins of the economy or have jobs that do not provide them with adequate means to ensure their survival. Nearly 40% of those without work are young people, and levels of unemployment tend to be two to three times higher for this group than for the adult population (ILO, 2020). About 43% of the world's youth working population is either unemployed or underemployed and living in poverty (AfDB, 2017). The rate of youth participation for the 15 – 24 age cohort in the labour market is on a continual decline (ILO, 2020).

The labour force participation rate of young people (aged 15–24) has continued to decline (ILO, 2020). Between 1999 and 2019, despite the global youth population increasing from 1 billion to 1.3 billion, the total number of young people engaged in the labour force (those who are either employed or unemployed) decreased from 568

million to 497 million (ILO, 2020:13). The ILO (2017) reveals that over the last twenty years, the amount of youth who actively engage in the labour market and the global labour force participation rate (either by working or looking for work), declined from 55.0 % to 45.7 %. Unemployment is still high in many countries and is anticipated to remain the same for the next few decades (ILO, 2018).

Africa's population is exceptionally young, with more than half of the population under the age of 25. Between 2015 and 2035, it is expected that there will be half a million more 15-year-olds (World Bank, 2014). Likewise, Shankar et al. (2021) posit that Africa boasts the world's newest and fastest-growing youth population.

Each year, 12 million young individuals enter the labour market on the African continent, however, only 3 million new employment opportunities are produced (AfDB, 2017). While this trend reflects growing enrolment in secondary and tertiary education, resulting in a better-skilled workforce in many countries, it also highlights the substantial numbers of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), a large majority of whom are young women" (ILO, 2020:13).

Globally, about 60 million young people enter the bracket of working age annually (The World Bank Group (WBG), 2018). If properly developed and supported, these new labour market entrants carry the hope for future economically active citizens, but if the current rate of youth employment persists, only as few as 40% of young people have the prospects of getting employment (Goldin, Hobson, Glick, Lundberg & Puerto, 2015). Ayele et al. (2018) contend that Africa's youth employment problem is mostly a matter of young people's skills mismatch, rather than an issue of a total lack of job opportunities. Fox and Gandhi (2021) are of the opinion that youth are entering the labour market with more education, but fewer skills than their years of education would indicate; they are also missing some key skills owing to weaknesses in the education system.

Additionally, Cassim and Oosthuizen (2014) explain that unemployed youth are characterised by their lack of employability resulting from a range of socio-economic factors as they often have low levels of education, have dropped out of school and invariably do not have the literacy, numeracy and communication skills needed in the

labour market. Furthermore, they also have little work experience, which is a particularly undesirable characteristic for employers; they lack strong networks or social capital that allow them to source job opportunities, and tend not to have sufficient financial resources to enable mobility to areas where there is demand for labour (Cassim & Oosthuizen, 2014).

The percentage of youth who are "Not in Any Kind of Education, Employment, or Training" (NEET) around the world is a major source of concern and these young people are frequently perceived as alienated from the labour market and perhaps from society as a whole (De Lannoy & Mudiriza 2019). Although the global youth unemployment rate is 13.6%, there is considerable regional variation, from under 9% in Northern America and about 30% in Sub-Saharan Africa and Northern Africa. In the same way, Fox and Kaul (2017) argue that the challenges of youth unemployment vary according to the context and setting of individual countries and among different groups of countries per Region. In most sub-regions across board, the rate of unemployment affects more young women than other gender and age groups (ILO 2020:13).

By the year 2019, the Southern Africa region reported the highest rate of sub-regional unemployment of 26.5%, with South Africa single-handedly contributing a staggering 27.0% of that (ILO, 2020). Similarly, Noruka (2017) comments that unemployment among young people as a global issue is particularly acute in Southern African countries such as South Africa.

2.6 Landscape of National Programmes

In response to youth unemployment, the South African government has implemented several measures to address a variety of issues affecting the country's youth. Similarly, to alleviate unemployment and poverty, various public employment programmes such as the Expanded Public Works Program (EPWP) and the Community Work Program (CWP) were implemented (Kobedi et al., 2022).

The youth employment programmes developed by the South African government are nationwide initiatives that attempt to reintegrate a considerable number of jobless

people into employment. These programmes have a bias in favour of youth. This approach entails providing unemployed people with skills, short or long-term jobs, training and experience that will increase their ability to earn an income in the future and improve their prospects for employability (Thwala, 2017).

2.6.1 Public Employment Programmes

In terms of employment and labour-absorption programmes, Graham et al. (2019) point out that the Expanded Public Works Program (EPWP), the Community Works Program (CWP), the National Youth Service (NYS), and the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) represent by far the largest investment in services and programmes offered to youth. While the latter two are not officially public employment programmes, they do collaborate with EPWP in practice, and the two programmes are extremely similar (Graham et al., 2019). NYS and NARYSEC are service opportunities in which young people participate in community development for a year or four years respectively.

a) The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)

Mashabela (2018) states that the high percentage of unemployment and poverty in South Africa continues to be a challenging burden, affecting the lives of millions of individuals particularly those in disadvantaged and rural areas with no means of earning a living. To tackle these issues, the government has implemented the EPWP from the 1st of April 2004, which is a nationwide government-led project aimed at lowering unemployment by ensuring that the unskilled develop skills and thereby get entry into the employment market and earn an income (EPWP, 2010).

The EPWP has its roots in the Growth and Development Summit (GDS) in 2003, which embraced four themes, one of which was creating more employment, better jobs, and decent work for everybody (South African Cities Network (SACN), 2020). The goal of EPWP is to generate short-term jobs and to reduce poverty among vulnerable and poor individuals in the face of widespread unemployment (Mkhatshwa-Ngwenya, 2018). Additionally, Hlatshwayo (2017) comments that the EPWP aims at providing employment options, training, and openings for trainees in the job market. The programme was created to benefit impoverished people who are unemployed and unskilled or semi-skilled and they must live in the neighbourhood where the initiative

is being implemented and must be South African nationals (Khawula, 2019). Furthermore, Mashabela (2018) posits that it was designed to include 40% of women, 30% of youth and people with disabilities should account for 2% of the beneficiaries.

The EPWP was also developed to contribute to the growth of the country by providing employment opportunities and financial support to the poor and unemployed through the labour-intensive delivery of public and community assets and services (Ngqushwa Municipality, 2017).

b) The Community Works Programme (CWP)

According to van der Merwe and Langa (2019), CWP is a pilot programme as a response to the national government's acknowledgement of the distress of millions of unemployed individuals living in poverty in both urban and rural areas around the country. It was founded in 2007 by the Department of Public Works to support the EPWP (van der Merwe & Langa, 2019). Its objectives are to (a) create a safety net for workers since the CWP recognises that long-term job solutions, particularly in economically marginalised communities, will require time; (b) aid in the development of public assets and services in underserved areas; (c) improve community development strategies through work experience, boosting self-respect, and encouraging economic and social participation, the government hopes to improve the quality of life for those in economically marginalised communities (Government of South Africa, 2022).

CWP has five distinguishing characteristics that set it apart from other Public Employment Programs (PEPs) around the world: (1) it provides predictable and regular work to a minimum of 1,000 unemployed or underemployed people at a single location; (2) it has the mandate to use public employment as a catalyst for community development; (3) it performs work that contributes to a popularly defined public good; (4) labour intensity is set at a minimum of 65%; and (5) it is largely carried out by non-profit organisations (NPOs) (Andersson & Alexander, 2016). The CWP employs local unemployed people on a part-time basis.

c) The National Youth Service Programme (NYSP)

The National Youth Service Programme is a South African government project aiming at enhancing young people's employability by integrating them into volunteering

activities (NYDA, 2020). It is a transformative programme described as the participation of young people in activities that assist the community while also developing their skills via service and learning (Peters, 2017). It was developed to empower young people by instilling core values, guiding participants toward national service, advancing their career growth and providing exposure to many professional opportunities as well as aligning their skills to the educational standards (Lamidi, 2019).

According to Peters (2017), the NYSP in South Africa confronts some difficulties that require an immediate response. Chauke et al. (2021) add that poor coordination in the NYSP, is effectively a serious concern.

d) National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC)

The NARYSEC is a program aimed at rural adolescents, it was launched in September 2010 and consisted of two-year skills and development program, following which participants would work on community development projects and be compensated by the government (Cassim & Oosthuizen, 2014). It is a youth employment and vocational program that offers character development skills, soft and hard skills training, and dispatches young people to various rural areas to work on multiple rural infrastructure and development initiatives. The aim of this programme is (1) to recruit unemployed youth in rural areas; (2) to train the youth through further education and training programmes linked to the identified developmental community projects in rural areas; (3) to develop youth with multidisciplinary skills through civic education; (4) to increase the number of rural communities receiving support in their self-development through the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) (Department of Military Veterans, 2016).

NARYSEC is one of the most important programmes that support rural youth as it offers a variety of skills training programs to help young people prepare for the job market. It converts young people from job hunters to business owners, eliminating the vicious cycle of reliance on social assistance (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR), 2022). After completing the four-year NARYSEC programme, members are in a position to find work or contribute to their communities' economies by starting businesses (DRDLR, 2022).

2.6.2 Education and Training Interventions

The public employment programmes that are targeted at youth are further supported by various education and training interventions in order to facilitate further employability. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) is aiming on boosting professional, vocational, technical, and academic learning (PIVOTAL) opportunities through Artisan Development Opportunities (ADO), Learnerships and Internships developed between 2012 and 2015 (Graham et al., 2019).

a) Graduate Internship Placement Programme

With no relevant experience, most young graduates have only theoretical knowledge. Asmare and Mulatie (2014) point out that employers prefer to hire applicants who have considerable professional experience; hence the majority of unskilled graduates are jobless. As a result, the South African government, in collaboration with the corporate and civil society sectors, has implemented an internship (work experience program) aimed at providing graduates with meaningful professional work experience exposure.

Internships, apprenticeships, and learnerships are various terminology for acquiring work experience before starting a full-time job (SAGDA, 2013). Internships, as one of the solutions to reduce graduate unemployment, play a crucial role in assisting new graduates in their professional growth and in boosting confidence among them (Mseleku, 2019). Internships are designed to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills by letting the students transfer what they have learned at school to the professional environment and gain professional skills that will enable them to obtain full-time work later (SAGDA, 2013)

2.6.3 Private Sector Interventions Towards Alleviating Youth Unemployment

It is generally accepted that the private sector has the biggest responsibility for job creation, whilst the government provides a conducive environment for businesses to thrive and grow the economy. President Cyril Ramaphosa noted during the 10 February 2022 State of the Nation Address (SONA): “We all know that the government does not create jobs, businesses create jobs...” the state “must create an environment

in which the private sector can invest and unleash the dynamism of our economy". Although many private sector initiatives address youth employment challenges, the study will focus on the following:

a) The EOH Youth Job Creation Initiative (YJCI)

The EOH Youth Job Creation Initiative (YJCI) is the first example of many stakeholders working together. It provides training to disadvantaged youths who are then put in positions with collaborating corporate and public-sector enterprises. These companies offer apprentices supervised job experience, while the government gives incentives for recruiting such applicants (Shankar et al., 2021). The training consisted of 30% classroom or theoretical instruction and 70% organised work-based learning (EOH, 2015). The recipient is put in a position in the manufacturing, IT, finance, or engineering industries and is entrusted with completing the activities related to their role under the supervision of a mentor during the workplace learning program (EOH, 2015).

EOH has been able to work with its business partners (EOH Microsoft Solutions, Transnet Engineering, Anglo American, Oceana, Pick n Pay, Dischem, and Oracle) to broaden the demands served beyond the company's internal recruitment requirements (Shankar et al., 2021).

From a government standpoint, the EOH project is well aligned with the government's announced goal of supporting youth job development. The government has developed incentives in the form of tax benefits, also known as the Employment Tax Incentive Scheme or Youth Wage Subsidy, for businesses to provide job prospects to first-time job seekers.

b) Youth Employment Service (YES)

In August 2018, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) gazetted the Youth Employment Service (YES) inclusion in the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Codes of Good Practice (Serr, 2022). Gerber (2022) posits that the YES initiative was introduced to encourage young people's employment and job creation by the private sector in South Africa.

The programme aims to lower youth unemployment in both the public and private sectors and the objective is to increase the number of young people who can learn new skills and obtain valuable work experience, both of which will greatly increase their prospects of landing a long-term job (Sasol, 2022). It encourages corporates to contribute to empowerment in areas of national priority by addressing youth unemployment and upskilling the youth through job placement (Serr, 2022). The programme targeted to generate one million jobs and employment possibilities involving young black South Africans from urban, peri-urban, and rural areas (Serr Synergy, 2018). As Nobanda (2021), Executive at the Nedbank Group, stated, “While the youth unemployment stats in our country may be staggering, and there are many challenges, YES reminds us that these challenges are not insurmountable.”

c) Harambee

Altbeker (2015) describes a significant project called “Harambee” that was started by Yellowwoods Capital, a privately held investment firm with holdings in insurance, dining, and leisure; it also owns Nando's, a rapidly expanding international chain of fast-casual restaurants. African solutions to the worldwide problem of youth unemployment are being developed by the non-profit social organisation Harambee through the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator Programme. To attain its goal, it collaborates with a wide range of entities, including the government, the corporate sector, civil society, and more than 1.5 million young people, who are engaged in the production achievements that can be scaled up (Yes4youth, 2022).

These business-led programmes developed in collaboration with the government are offered to give young people the knowledge and capabilities they need, including the practical experience required by South Africa's public and corporate sectors (Altbeker, 2015).

2.7 Knowledge Gap

Various existing studies that are related or similar to this research have a different focus than the topic analysed here. For example, Nkuna (2018) discusses the NYS and youth employment through the limited lens of the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) only, whilst Peters (2017) only considers the coordination

challenges in the implementation of the NYSP with no dedicated linkages to youth employment. The existing studies have all taken place in different settings and contexts than the one proposed in this research. The literature that was considered in these studies tends to limit their youth employment focus to formal employment only without due consideration to other potential exit opportunities such as self-employment through entrepreneurship and social enterprises.

In validating the knowledge gap that has been scoped here, Keith (1994) believes that of all outcomes of the youth employment programmes, economic indicators and networks are the least represented aspects in literature. He further contends that a dedicated focus on pathways of economic indicators and networks could raise other questions for further inquiry and research. This has a direct fit with the thrust of this study.

As eloquently articulated by Eberly (1992), some of the contemporary debates in this field relate to the extent to which the youth deployment programmes can be considered as stand-alone youth employment programmes in their own right. In the South African context, Ngcaweni, Matemba, and Lentsoane (2014) take the debate further by raising questions of similarities and differences between the National Youth Service and other interventions like EPWP, Skills Programmes, Learnerships, Internships, and Apprenticeships. The labour movement has also been vocal on these debates raising questions about the extent to which the participants or beneficiaries of the public employment programmes can join trade unions as remunerated participants. Others even argue that these public employment programmes may border on exploitation of young people by employers who do not want to provide formal employment to workers to do the required jobs and pay them accordingly.

Furthermore, this study fills a gap by seeking to review, analyse and provide answers to the government's youth employment programmes developed to contribute to reducing the rate of unemployment amongst youth in South Africa. Despite their importance, the contribution of youth employment programmes to economic growth in South Africa have received little attention. Likewise, Graham et al (2018) comment that despite various research studies and policy proposals on youth unemployment since the 1990s, evidence and impact from practice continue to be fragmented. The

undertaking of this research study certainly makes an important contribution to the discourse by critically analysing the existing literature and instruments with the intent of adding value in building the body of knowledge that can be the voice of reason on this subject. This is a matter that South Africa cannot afford to ignore as it is facing the danger of missing the opportunity of reaping the demographic dividend from the current youth bulge.

2.8 Conclusion

The South African government is putting programmes into place to reduce the scourge of youth unemployment by giving unemployed youth, training and job possibilities, supporting the programmes financially, and taking part in planning for skill acquisition at the municipal, departmental, provincial, and national levels. While the issue of youth unemployment in South Africa may appear daunting, this review has uncovered a substantial body of information concerning a broad set of programmes that might support young people and help create more job possibilities.

This chapter provided a review of the literature regarding the benefits, challenges or limitations of each programme and possible solutions. From the literature, it is now clear that the government might not be able to stop the ongoing exponential spike in the number of youth unemployment alone in light of the current economic pressures around the world, especially in South Africa. Therefore, it is wise and practical for private sector entities to enthusiastically support the government's attempts to develop employment opportunities for young people. Because of the high levels of unemployment, public employment programs such as EPWP, CWP, NYS, NARYSEC, and Labour Activation Programme remain critical income support programs (Background Paper, 2016).

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section is aimed at highlighting the choices that have been made about the research methodology that was followed in this study. Most importantly, this section will argue why the selected methodologies have been chosen as suitable ones for this study. This section further outlines a comprehensive plan of how one went about undertaking the research by discussing the research strategy, research design, procedure and methods as advised by (Wotela, 2017).

Hence, this chapter discusses the research strategy, research design, research methodology, the study area, the population and sample size determination, the data collection methods and analysis. It also addresses the issues of trustworthiness in qualitative studies and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

In this study, exploratory research design was used as Mohajan (2018) explains that qualitative studies are exploratory in nature as they attempt to clarify 'how' and 'why' a certain social phenomenon, or programme, operates in a certain given environment. They aim to help people in understanding the setting of the social environment in which they operate and why things tend to be the way they are (Mohajan, 2018). It has been employed in this research study to identify the prevalent challenges and possible solutions of youth employment programmes. This method is very useful in qualitative research (Rahi, 2017).

3.3 Research Philosophy

Every researcher should become acquainted with, comprehend, and create a position that will ultimately be reflected in the research methods (Rashid, Rashid, Warraich, Sabir & Waseem, 2019). Melnikovas (2018) argues that from a historical perspective, two basic or dominant viewpoints of scientific research philosophy exist

namely positivism and interpretivism; additionally, two more modern positions exist namely, pragmatism and critical realism.

In this study, knowledge was constructed using a constructivist philosophy to gather information on the successes, challenges and solutions related to youth employment programmes. As Melnikovas (2018) argues, this method is based on subjectivist ontological assumptions that appreciate the fact that reality is a social construct that undergoes constant changes, whilst knowledge and facts are considered to be relative and subjective. This theory has assisted the researcher in that instead of simply collecting information from participants, he/she will construct knowledge from participants' experiences and viewpoints.

3.4 Research Methods

In this study, knowledge of youth employment programmes was constructed from participants' perspectives and experiences. While subjectivity is viewed as a significant weakness by positivists, it is at the heart of qualitative research and the interpretivism/constructivism paradigms. The positivists consider subjectivity to be a major weakness, it is a central and integral part of the qualitative research, including the interpretivism/constructivism paradigms. When the qualitative research is done properly, it becomes consistent with reality, accurate, and advances research in answering the critical research questions about participants' experiences (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). Qualitative research in this study assisted to capture and analyse individuals' feelings, opinions, and experiences, as well as the significance of their behaviour. Qualitative research has the advantage of allowing researchers to collect and examine individualistic data at a profound level (Haradhan, 2018).

Qualitative research is a broad phrase that refers to a variety of data gathering and analysis methods used to provide cultural and contextual descriptions and interpretations of social phenomena (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). It is based on the interpretivist or constructivist perspectives and aims to get a deeper understanding of the study's participants rather than make predictions, as is the case with positivist research (Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020). Haradhan (2018) postulates that it is a methodical and subjective way to describe and interpret people's daily life

and events. The goal of qualitative research is to develop new theories and concepts by systematically describing and interpreting topics or events from the perspective of the participants. It is used to investigate people's actions, opinions, emotions, and experiences, as well as what is at the heart of their lives (Mohajan, 2018).

3.5 Research Strategies

A research strategy is a general approach that is employed to assist the researcher in selecting appropriate methods for primary data collection or sets of suitable procedures that are used to fulfil the objectives of the study by answering the set research questions (Rahi, 2017).

Melnikovas (2018) states that there are four alternative research strategies and each strategy follows a specific data gathering method and data analysis technique. These research strategies are Phenomenology, Ethnography, Narrative Inquiry, and Case Study.

In academic research, the Case Study approach is the most broadly adopted method for qualitative researchers (Rachid et al., 2019). It is a written depiction of a problem or circumstance that focuses on a small group of people or a specific topic (Rahi, 2017). Mohajan (2018) states that it is a detailed description and analysis of one or more situations, and it entails delving deeply into a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more people. Tomaszewski et al. (2020) refer to it as an investigation of the uniqueness, depth and complexity of a situation, with the goal of better understanding its actions and conditions. Yin (2017) identifies the major characteristics of case studies as: (1) they look into a particular aspect of a phenomenon in detail and within its actual setting, especially when the lines between phenomenon and context are blurred; (2) they incorporate numerous sources and types of information to cover the different facets of a research problem. They are widely applied in evaluations and external reviews (Tomaszewski et al., 2020).

Regarding case studies, Marshall, Cardon, Poddar and Fontenot (2013) argue that since the use of several alternative sources to substantiate the data is highly suggested, reliance on the interview as the single source of data collection is not

needed; thus, the number of interview participants might be smaller than Marshall's et al (2013) recommendation. Casteel and Bridier (2021) clarify that as a compromise between the need for significant interview data including the use of additional data sources to achieve saturation, it is recommended that 12-15 participants be included to provide multiple viewpoints on the case phenomena while employing extra data sources to back up the conclusions.

Since it provides a thorough description of all the interconnected elements, the case study strategy in this study was highly effective for researching youth employment interventions, focusing on successes, challenges and opportunities. Casteel and Bridier (2021) advocate choosing cases that reflect varied viewpoints on the issue, method, or incident, implying that numerous individuals must be included, and advocating that multiple cases be used to study the topic.

3.6 Target Population

A target population is a designated, conceptually bounded group of prospective respondents to whom the researcher may have exposure and who accurately reflect the characteristics of interest (Kölln, Ongena & Aarts, 2019). According to Casteel and Bridier (2021), it defines the scope of an investigation and offers the reader with environmental and context information. Such boundaries provide reasonable delimitations for the study, allowing researchers to focus properly and avoid presenting a one-size-fits-all set of findings (Bakibinga et al., 2019).

The target population of this research study included everyone who claims to be in the inception of the youth employment policies and the implementation of the programmes such as national government departments and agencies, provincial government departments, as well municipalities. The target population also comprised of some beneficiaries of the different youth employment programmes. Included in this population, will also be implementation partners from private sector and civil society organisations.

3.7 Sampling

Sampling can be understood to be a process through which researchers select a subsection of relevant participants for a specific study from the wider group of the population. It is a technique through which the researcher selects a sample of constituent or representative units from a large data set (population) to determine the people's attributes, opinions, and behaviours (Rahi, 2017). Casteel and Bridier (2021), state that probability and nonprobability sampling are the two most common methods used to obtain a sample from the sampling frame.

3.7.1 Probability Sampling

Rahi (2017) asserts that probability sampling is a method of sampling in which each unit has an equal chance of being chosen to be part of the sample, and it is most commonly applied in quantitative studies. Rahi (2017) further states that there are five types of probability sampling, namely, simple random sampling, systematic random sampling, stratified random sampling, cluster sampling, and multi-stage sampling.

3.7.2 Non-Probability Sampling

When the target population cannot be selected through random or probability sampling, non-probability sampling is used. Rahi (2017) refers to non-probability sampling as a method of sampling in which the chance or probability of each unit being chosen is unknown or unconfirmed. These sampling approaches have the advantage of allowing access to the necessary groups of people; but, the study's findings are not generalizable to the larger population (Bacher, Lemcke, Schmich & Quatember, 2019). Rahi (2017) further states that there are four types of non-probability sampling, namely, convenience sampling, snowball sampling, quota sampling, and purposive sampling.

3.7.2.1 Purposive Sampling

This study applied purposive sampling as a form of non-probability sampling. Purposive sampling, also known as judgment sampling, is a deliberate selection of

subjects based on specific attributes and traits (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Likewise, Rahi (2017) posits that it is a method of selecting many individuals who are aware of the problem based on the researcher's viewpoint. This technique is advantageous because it provides a researcher with a larger pool of non-probability sampling options from which to choose, even though it typically necessitates more skill and activity at the start of each stage (Baiju, 2022). It is most commonly used in qualitative studies and the common thread is that each member is chosen because he/she is known to have a specific attribute that the investigator is interested in (Bacher et al., 2019).

To select the study's participants, a purposive or judgmental sampling technique was used as a sub-category of a non-probability sampling method. Purposive sampling, also known as judgment sampling, is a deliberate selection of subjects based on specific attributes and traits (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The selected method was used to ensure that this study has adequate data to draw conclusions, the researcher chose to focus on the data's richness, which can provide in-depth insights into the phenomenon of interest, allowing the researcher to better understand the significance and context of the findings. Moreover, the purposive sampling technique was used. Johnson et al. (2020) justified that it is selected because it reflects the deliberate selection of study participants to optimise the data sources available to address the research problem. Persons with specific experience (critical case sampling) or knowledge, for example, may be most suited to address the research question (key informant sampling) (Johnson et al. 2020).

3.8 Sample Size

According to Mukherjee (2017), the sample size refers to the number of elements or units selected from the universe or population to form a sample.

Based on the case study rules of thumb of Casteel and Bridier (2021) that was discussed earlier in this chapter, this study initially targeted to use 15 participants as a sample size, but in the course of the study, 19 participants were actually interviewed. Participants from a variety of public youth employment programmes landscape who are relevant to the topic at hand were included to give researchers as much information as possible about the challenges and solutions related to the diverse programmes.

The sample of this study consisted of policymakers who work for The Presidency (01), the Department of Employment and Labour (01), Legislative sector (01), social partners (03) from business (BUSA), labour movement (COSATU), and civil society; the programmes implementers (05) such as the representatives of youth agencies or the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), NARYSEC, SETAs, ILO; Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator and YES (03) and the South African Youth Council (01) as well as the informal sector (01). The study also included some beneficiaries and graduates (03) of the youth employment programmes. Hence data was collected from 19 respondents.

3.9 Data Collection

According to Kabir (2018), data collection can be referred to as the process of obtaining and assessing relevant information on the variables of interest to a study in a logical way that enables the researcher to answer the set research questions and develop convincing and credible answers to the research questions.

While the approaches differ by discipline, the emphasis on ensuring accurate and honest data gathering stays the same and the goal is to capture excellent evidence that can then be translated into rich data analysis and used to develop convincing and credible answers to the research questions (Kabir, 2018). Barrett and Twycross (2018) state that qualitative research gathers data that is holistic, complex, and detailed to produce such insights, allowing patterns and conclusions to emerge via meticulous analysis. Observations, interviews, and focus groups are the most popular qualitative data collection methods (Busetto et al., 2020).

In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The rationale for choosing this method is that a well-designed semi-structured interview should guarantee that vital data is obtained while also allowing participants to inject their personalities and perspective into the conversation (Barrett & Twycross, 2018).

Suitable data collection instruments were developed and deployed for each of the identified categories. This study predominantly utilised a semi-structured interview

schedule data collection instrument. The rationale for choosing this method is that a semi-structured interview that is well-designed holds the promise of ensuring that the essential data is acquired while also giving space to the respondents to freely express their personalities and views into the discussion (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). The selection of the semi-structured interview schedule instrument liberated the researcher from the rigid form of a structured interview and the amorphous state of the unstructured interview. This enabled further probing from a list of basic questions that served as a guide for the line of inquiry (Wagner, Kawulich and Garner, 2012).

3.10 Data Analysis

While the methods for analysing data differ depending on the theoretical perspectives used in the study, all qualitative data analyses followed the same four processes (Arifin et al., 2019). Information gathering, processing data (data reduction), data visualisation, and results drawing conclusions/verification are among the steps. Arifin et al. (2019) posit that since the amount of qualitative information involved in these phases might be overwhelming, appropriate data management is required. This starts with the data preparation.

3.10.1 Data Preparation

After collecting data, the researcher began the process of analysing the information gathered. Likewise, Abdallah, Du and Webb (2017) posit that data must first be modified and arranged into a usable format before it can be evaluated; this is known as data preparation. In qualitative studies, researchers must be able to classify, organise, and find patterns and relationships from the data (Tomaszewski et al., 2020).

Abdallah et al. (2017) consider data preparation in qualitative studies as an iterative process of transforming unstructured and untidy raw data into a more organised and useful format that can be used for further analysis. Data profiling, cleansing, enrichment or integration, and transformation are only a few of the primary actions (or tasks) involved in the preparation process (Abdallah et al., 2017). Rachid et al. (2019) state that preparation is the initial step in the process that involves the researcher familiarising him/herself with the empirical data.

3.10.2 Types of Analyses

Different methods are available to researchers for analysing qualitative data. These include Content Analysis, Narrative Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Framework Analysis, and Thematic Analysis (Mohan, 2018).

This research utilised Thematic Analysis to analyse the qualitative data that was collected.

According to Arifin et al. (2019), the rationale for using this method of analysis is that it is a kind of qualitative data analysis that is independent and trustworthy and may be used to assess a large number of qualitative datasets. It allows researchers to analyse the transcripts and organise the respondents' descriptions into manageable chunks of information. Arifin et al. (2019) conclude that the most essential feature of thematic analysis is that it allows researchers to examine the transcripts of respondents without losing sight of their environment and background.

The purpose of thematic analysis is to group the content of the research into emerging themes, or related patterns in data in a manner that will enable such themes to respond to the initially set research questions and objectives (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019). In terms of the Lochmiller and Lester's (2017) model that was used in this study, there were seven phases that were considered while doing a thematic analysis, namely: (1) Preparing and organising data for analysis; (2) transcribing data and becoming acquainted with data; (4) data memoing; (5) data coding; (6) transitioning from codes to categories, and from categories to themes; and (7) making transparent analytic process.

The practice of discovering patterns or themes in qualitative data is known as thematic analysis (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). For Kiger and Varpio (2020), it is a method for studying qualitative data that comprises examining a data set for regular patterns, understanding them, and reporting them. McAllum et al. (2019) consider it as a data reduction and analysis approach in which qualitative data is segmented, categorised, summarised, and reassembled in a way that captures the key concepts within the data set.

There are numerous approaches to thematic analysis. The most well-known and often employed qualitative analysis method is theme generation and coding (Rachid et al., 2019). Maguire and Delahunt (2017) elucidate that this is undoubtedly the most dominant method, at least in the social sciences, because it provides such a simple and practical framework for conducting thematic analysis.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

It is very critical for every research study to protect the human participants by adhering to high levels of ethical norms and standards (Arifin, 2018). In the undertaking of this study, proper steps were taken to ensure that participants were fully aware of their rights and role.

This study was considered to be a minimal risk category because it did not envisage dealing with vulnerable people. The researcher safeguarded the rights of participants through informed consent, full disclosure of the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, privacy-anonymity-confidentiality of participants, no risk of harm, and the researcher’s accountability. The research fully complied with all the approved provisions of the University Ethics Committee.

3.12 The Researcher’s Positionality

This section contains the researcher's thoughts on data gathering in general, as well as how it may have influenced this study. Since this study is based on a constructivist paradigm, the researcher's interaction with the participants may be subjectively impacted and may result in knowledge co-construction. This reflection is especially essential since it reveals what prior knowledge the investigator may have brought to the knowledge co-construction process (Mseleku, 2019). It is critical to note that the interest of the researcher in this study was generated by the fact that he previously served as the President of the South African Youth Council and undertook extensive work in the youth development milieu.

The issue of youth (un)employment features prominently in the agenda of NEDLAC where the researcher represents civil society. The researcher was also one of the lead negotiators of the 2018 Presidential Jobs Summit at NEDLAC. There is no possibility that the researcher's professional background, history, identity, and values will not influence this study's outcome and conclusions. It is important to note that the participants of this study have no structural interdependence with the researcher as they are completely independent and autonomous from any influence.

3.13 Limitations, Feasibility and Positionality

It is acknowledged that the research process was not a smooth sailing linear process from beginning to end. There were potential limitations that were anticipated. These included access to people who hold the data we needed, limited access to other sources of data, time constraints, budget limits to do field work, and constrained movement due to Covid-19 or monkey-pox restrictions if they resurfaced, natural disasters, and other unforeseen circumstances that may have arisen in the course of undertaking the study. In all material times, the researcher strived to stand outside his value-standpoint in all dealings of the study.

3.14 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research philosophy, research design, approach and strategy. It also detailed the process used to select the participants and described the data collection method and data analysis. In a summary, this study uses a constructivist research philosophy, an exploratory research design, a qualitative research approach and a case study as a research strategy. Interviews were used to collect data and data was analysed through thematic analysis.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents data from the semi-structured interviews that were conducted with the identified respondents. The interviews served as an important source of information in this study. In this chapter, the results are presented and analysed through thematic analysis within the context of the research objectives, interview questions and literature review. This chapter covers the demographic information section, the findings and thematic analysis section.

The researcher conducted online interviews with the MS-Team in three (03) weeks. The interviews were digitally transcribed and audio-recorded. Thematic analysis is thought to aid in understanding the challenges of youth employment and discuss the solutions based on participants' own experiences. The sample of this study consisted of policymakers who work for The Presidency (01), the Department of Employment and Labour (01), Legislative sector (01), social partners (03) from business (BUSA), labour movement (COSATU), and civil society; the programmes implementers (05) such as the representatives of youth agencies or the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), NARYSEC, SETAs, ILO; Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator and YES (03) and the South African Youth Council (01) as well as the informal sector (01). The study also included some beneficiaries and graduates (03) of the youth employment programmes. Hence data was collected from 19 respondents. The sample selected made it possible to comprehend the contextual conditions under which the participants perceived as challenges and solutions to youth unemployment in South Africa.

4.2. Demographic information of respondents

The demographic information and profile of the respondents is presented in this section according to their gender, age, work experience, level of education, and position level as described in Tables 4.1 to 4.5.

4.2.1 Gender

Table 4.1 shows the gender distribution of the respondents.

Table 4.1: Gender of respondents

Categories	Frequency	%
Male	11	57.9
Female	8	42.1
Other	0	0
Total	19	100%

Based on Table 4.1, the majority of the respondents were males with 57.9%. Female respondents constituted 42.1%.

4.2.2 Age

Table 4.2 shows the age group distribution of the respondents.

Table 4.2: Age group

Categories	Frequencies	%
Under 30 years	4	21
30-39 years	4	21
40-49 years	4	21
50-59 years	3	16
60 years and over	4	21
Total	19	100%

Table 4.2 shows that the majority of the respondents were evenly spread between the age groups of 30 to 49 and 60 and above at 21% whilst 16% of respondents were 50 to 59 years old.

4.2.3 Work Experience

Table 4.3 shows the work experience distribution of the respondents in terms of years.

Table 4.3: Work experience in the current position

Categories	**Frequencies**	**%**
Less than 5 years	4	21
6 -10 years	4	21
11 - 15 years	4	21
16 – 19 years	3	16
More than 20 years	4	21
Total	19	100%

Based on Table 4.3, the majority of respondents have 5 to 15 years, and more than 20 years of work experience at 84%. The 16% of respondents have 16 to 19 years of work experience. This implies that respondents who were included in this study were fairly experienced and familiar with the questions asked and the topics and sub-topics discussed.

4.2.4 Level of Education

Table 4.3 shows the distribution of the respondents in terms of their level of education

Table 4.4: Level of Education

Categories	**Frequencies**	**%**
None	0	0
Grade 12/NSC	3	16
Diploma	3	16
Bachelor’s degree	6	32

Postgraduate degree	6	32
Doctorate	1	4
Total	19	100%

Respondents with a bachelor's degree and postgraduate degree formed the majority of the study at 32% each (64% combined) as shown in Table 4.4; followed by respondents with a national senior certificate/grade 12 and diploma at 16% each (32% combined). Only 4% of respondents have a PhD. It is important to note that there were no respondents that did not have formal education or below grade 12. The results show that all the respondents surveyed hold qualifications.

4.2.5 Occupational Levels

Table 4.3 shows the distribution of the respondents in terms of their occupation.

Table 4.5: Sampling by Occupational Category

Categories	**Frequencies**	**%**
Operational	6	31.6
Management	7	36.8
Executive	6	31.6
Total	19	100%

Based on Table 4.5, the results showed that the majority of the respondents are at management level with 36.8%. This was followed by 31.6% were at an operational level, another 36.1% at executive level. This implies that more management took part in this study than executives and employees at the operational level.

4.3 Thematic Analysis Results

The thematic analysis led to themes being established after data collection. The themes were formulated and guided by the interview questions and interviewees' answers. Themes were organised into coherent summaries of the dissected data. The global themes were structured into three (3) main sections namely challenges, solutions and recommendations.

4.3.1 Challenges of Youth Employment Programmes

This section focuses on the analysis of the data obtained from the fieldwork on the challenges faced by the youth employment programmes, which were constructed and tabulated as thematic networks. The interview sub-questions were guided by the main research questions and predefined by the relevant literature review and the themes are presented and discussed in this section. The analysis was carried out separately for each research question. Several themes emerged from the data obtained from the interviews concerning the challenges faced by South African youth in terms of employment as discussed below.

4.3.1.1 Is unemployment in general and youth unemployment in particular, a problem in SA?

a) Rising Unemployment

Youth in South Africa continue to be disadvantaged in the labour market with an unemployment rate higher than the national average. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the first quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate was 63,9% for those aged 15-24 and 42,1% for those aged 25-34 years, while the current official national rate stands at 34,5% (Stats Sa, 2022). Moreover, Anand, Kothari and Kumar (2016) explained that the Gini coefficient of unemployment at about 65 is one of the highest in the world. The unemployment rate is 25 per cent (35 per cent including discouraged workers), with the youth (age 15-24) unemployment rate being even higher, despite one of the lowest participation rates in the world (Anand *et al*. 2016).

All respondents unanimously agreed that unemployment is the biggest challenge in South Africa and that it affects young people more than any other population group. The situation of youth unemployment has been viewed as a ticking time bomb, a crisis and a disaster. The South African Government (2022) also recognises that no society can expect to grow, develop and thrive when the vast majority of its youth is out of work.

b) Labour Market Inequality

Anand *et al*. (2016) explain that South Africa's economy faces important structural challenges - the two most important being the high levels of unemployment and inequality. South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world (Francis & Webster, 2019:789). Similarly, Stats SA (2020) reported that South Africa is known as one of the most unequal countries in the world, displaying a per-capita expenditure Gini coefficient of 0,67 in 2006, dropping to 0,65 in 2015.

Some of the respondents even believe that these inequalities also affect those who are employed between the formal and informal sectors, gender parity, and the urban-rural divide.

c) The Challenge of the Informal Sector

In South Africa, the informal economy constitutes an important component of the larger economy, offering people an alternative economic outlet in the face of job shortages in the formal sector (Blaauw 2017:340). The author added that a pronounced feature of South Africa's informal economy is that when compared with peer-group countries, its contribution to total employment is relatively small. The experiences of the Covid-19 lockdowns show that the informal sector holds a lot of potential for economic activity, income generation and job creation. Although the informal economy constitutes an important component of the larger South African economy, this sector is highly overlooked.

Consequently, Ewinyu *et al.* (2021:1) commented that the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed the world of work in South Africa and for those working in the informal economy, the five-week lockdown between March and April 2020 was a period of unprecedented insecurity and hunger, without work, income or benefits.

d) The Challenge of Persistent Youth Unemployment

South Africa has made significant strides in economic and social development since its first democratic elections in 1994. Growth averaging 3.3 per cent since 1994 and social assistance that now reaches more than half of all households have resulted in a 40 per cent increase in real per capita GDP and a 10 percentage point drop in the poverty rate. Regardless of all the efforts made, unemployment, in general, remains one of the biggest challenges facing South Africa in this century (Anand *et.al*. 2016).

A study by Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) in 2000, more than 23 years ago, indicates that the youth perceived unemployment as the biggest problem facing them (Cloete 2015:514).

Despite a package of policy instruments, strategies, charters, public employment interventions, bouts of economic growth, we still have stubborn persistence of youth unemployment with severe manifestations through youth who are Not in Education, Employment, Training (NEET). In the scale of inequality, these young people are swiftly moving from being vulnerable to being full blown marginalised.

4.3.1.2 The Barriers to Youth Employment and Reasons why Unemployment is a Persistent and Growing Problem

Graham and De Lannoy (2016) suggest that in South Africa, youth unemployment is a multifaceted problem driven by structural elements related to the economy, labour market and the education system, as well as community, household and individual

level issues. However, in this study, the findings reveal the following as the causes of youth unemployment in South Africa:

a) South Africa's History and apartheid legacies

Tregenna, Ewinyu, Oqubay and Valodia (2021) state that South Africa's triple challenges of unemployment, poverty, and inequality have their roots in the apartheid period when the economy was deliberately structured in a non-inclusive manner. Moreover, Bhorat (2018:4) explained that the democratic government inherited a labour market that had been subject to the long-run effects of both structural shifts and technological changes in the domestic economy. In line with this, Cloete (2015:514) explained that the majority of young people are concerned that the government is not doing enough to empower them and create jobs for them. Although they served as "foot soldiers" during the apartheid struggle, they have been forgotten now that freedom has been achieved (Cloete 2015:514). The labour market consequences of these changes have been to increase the demand for highly skilled workers, combined with large-scale attrition at the bottom end of the labour market (Bhorat 2018:4).

In order to illustrate this point even further, the 2016 Stats-SA Report on The Social Profile of Youth 2009 – 2014 asserts that structural factors that serve as the binding constraints to the development and empowerment of youth are fundamentally education, skills and race. These factors have a direct bearing on the income prospects of these young people and if not interrupted, they pose a risk of perpetuating intergenerational poverty. In 2014, Oxfam South African found that two men owned the same amount of wealth as the poorest 50% of the South African population.

South Africa has historically battled high unemployment rates and unfortunately, these rates have deteriorated over the last decade. The Stats SA Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), provided unemployment data going back as far as 2008 and the trajectory of the labour market in South Africa is alarming as depicted in Figure 1:

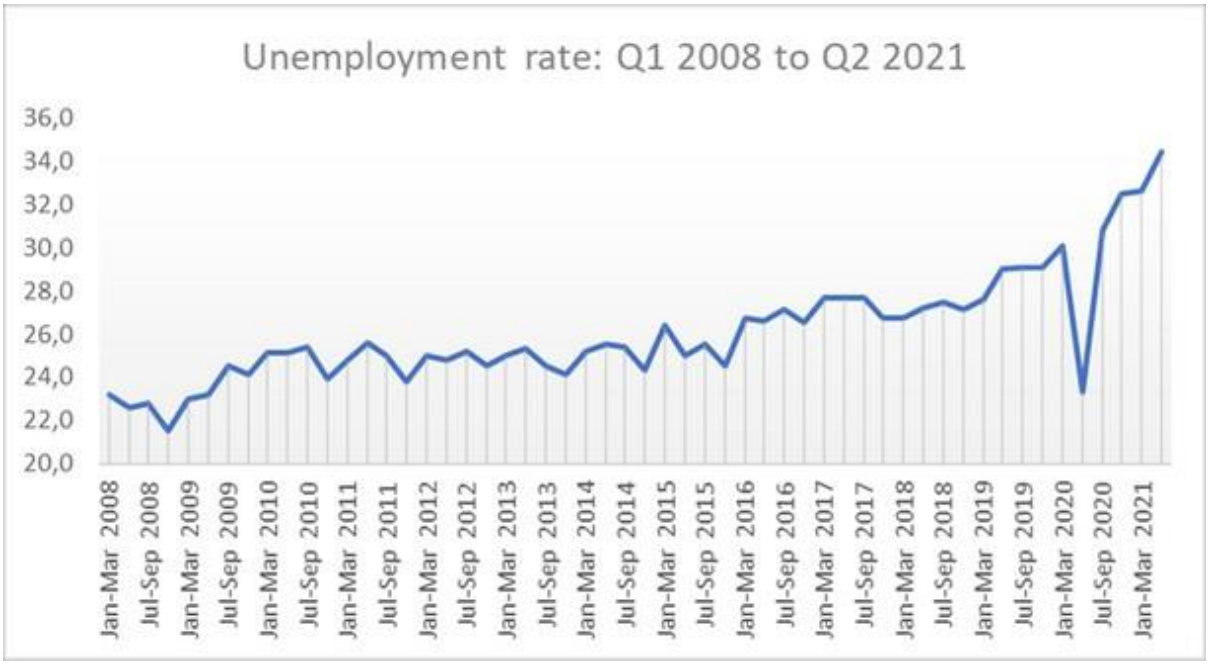


Figure 1: The unemployment rate in South Africa from 2008 to 2021

Source: (Morton & Blair, 2021)

The unemployment rate has increased from 21.5% in Q4 2008 to 34.4% in 2021. Focusing on the youngest two age categories (15 to 24 and 25 to 34) the unemployment rate (over the same period) increased from 44.9% to 64.4% and 24.9% to 42.9% respectively.

The responses confirm that the country's historical background is the main cause of youth unemployment in South Africa. The NYP (2020:4) reported that South Africa's concept of youth development is influenced by the historical conditions that have shaped the country and its democratic goals. It is based on the principles of social and economic justice, human rights, empowerment, participation, active citizenship, the promotion of public benefit, and distributive and liberal values. Bhorat (2018:4) also observed that the initial post-apartheid period saw significant employment growth. But since 2009 employment growth has slowed and both the unemployment level and rate have increased substantially (Bhorat 2018:4).

b) The Education System

The high levels of unemployment in South Africa are a key concern for young people after leaving school (Graham 2015). Each year, a new group of young people exit the South African schooling system and begin their journey towards the labour market (Siyakha Youth Assets, 2016:1). Some, especially those who come from middle-class and privileged backgrounds, make the transition from school to higher education – and on to employment – relatively seamlessly. Most, however, are caught in a struggle and they struggle to access post-secondary education, or training, or to get their first job. However, according to Graham (2015), the challenges in the schooling and post-secondary education systems have a direct contribution to high levels of youth unemployment. According to Cloete (2015:514), youth with lower education and skill levels are most affected by the unemployment situation in South Africa.

One of the respondents noted that some of the young people who do schooling from grade 0 to grade 12 if were to be assessed on the level of the certificate that they have, they don't have any other skills associated with that. Others raised grave concern with the fact that the majority of young people drop out of school in large numbers in grade 10 of schooling. Although these young people qualify for TVET Colleges, they tend to be completely lost to the education and training system.

The study of Yu and Adams (2021) confirms this study's findings as it revealed that two policy responses to unemployment have often been emphasised in South Africa namely upgrading skills and liberalising the labour market. Neither has been well advanced since the structural unemployment evidence is a multi-causal and complex phenomenon.

c) The South African Economic Structure

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the country's economic policy shifted to a high-productivity, knowledge based, technology-led growth path that was intended to stimulate investment in skills development and higher wages. This happened at the

same time as an increase in the largely unskilled labour force and a shift away from labour-intensive economic activities (Graham 2015:51). Graham (2015:51) added that the result has been a drop in the employment of unskilled labour and minimal growth in sectors that were intended to drive the growth path. This led to the phenomenon of what became known as jobless growth. Economic growth is a necessary requirement for job creation, but it does not automatically translate to job creation.

The respondents were of the view that the structure of the South African economy contributes to the challenge of unemployment.

Furthermore, Koseff (2018), group chief executive of Investec and co-convener of the Youth Employment Services (YES) contended that "We do have significant structural issues in our economy, of which education is one. However, it is very long term and we are not going to fix it overnight." Furthermore, Siyakha Youth Assets (2016) described some of the challenges facing the South African economy as stated in Table 4.7

Table 4.7: An overview of the challenges of the South African economy (Siyakha Youth Assets 2016)

There is low labour absorption despite GDP growth. This is mainly because of the country's high-technology economic growth path	We have a skills mismatch in the economy. There is high demand for skilled labour and an oversupply of workers with low levels of skills.	There are low rates of access to post-secondary education and training. Higher access would provide skills needed in the labour market
There are lags in labour absorption during economic upswings.	Youth are passed over for more experienced workers, in the context of low labour absorption.	Employers push up entry-level requirements because of a distrust of the education system.

The lags are particularly among small firms where youth are most likely to be employed.		

d) Policy Framework

The policy outlines interventions to enable the optimal development of young people, both as individuals and as members of South African society, enhancing their capabilities to transform the economy and the country (NYP 2020:2). It tends to avoid quick fixes that divert attention from the complex institutional and systematic issues that need to be addressed over time. Instead, it seeks to develop capabilities as part of a long-term solution, which will open opportunities for the youth to participate in and take advantage of what South Africa has to offer (NYP 2020:2).

Some of the respondents believed that the policies of macro-economic austerity withhold investments towards potential employment creation.

Despite the progress made, there is much more to be done. Graham (2015:54) asserted that the Youth Employment Accord identifies several strategies to enhance youth economic participation and these include: increasing youth employment targets; enhancing public employment schemes such as the National Youth Service, the Expanded Public Works Programme and the Community-Based Public Works Programme; supporting youth entrepreneurship and cooperative development; creating mechanisms for young people to be exposed to work; and enhancing skills development.

The policy response from various spheres of government and society as whole do not seem to appreciate the veracity of the challenge of youth unemployment. Some of the proposed policy interventions seem to be at cross purpose with the reality of youth unemployment, with low levels of political-will.

e) Failure to understand the new forms of work, the informal economy and the digital economy

It is acknowledged that although there's a lot of work to do in South Africa, there are no formal jobs to get this work done. Therefore, we need other unconventional methods of engaging young people to get that work done. The changing nature of work and the future of work brings about new forms of work, including in the fields of informal economy and digital economy.

The respondents suggested that some of these emerging new forms of work include drivers for delivery scooters, uber drivers, development and deployment of apps, and other digital platforms, waste pickers and recycling, multiple casual jobs, etc.

f) Financial Barriers

The government, private sector, policy-makers and implementers are seeking ways to enhance access and participation of youth in employment programmes. Despite recognisable efforts to promote and increase youth participation in various employment interventions, lack of finance remains a key barrier hindering access to many young people. Financial barriers persist and often draw a line between those who participate and those who do not have access. The practical costs of looking for employment pose a serious barrier to finding employment. These costs include items such as transport fees look for employment, money to access internet cafes for job search, costs of writing and printing CVs, costs of data.

The NYP (2020:16) reported that reducing South Africa's high levels of youth unemployment requires the economy to be on a labour-absorbing growth path. This depends on a successful reorientation of the economy to raise labour demand, with matching improvements on the supply side (NYP 2020:16).

4.3.1.3 Are there sufficient resources allocated to support youth employment initiatives?

The respondents were of the view that the amount of resources that are allocated to youth employment programmes are not equal to the scale of the challenge they are intended to address.

In an environment of limited resources, we need prudent management and optimisation of resources. This must come with high levels of accountability for the people and organisations that are entrusted with the responsibility of managing resources for youth employment, including better collaboration and coordination of efforts with other relevant institutions in order to maximise impact. Such collaborations would make a strong case for project syndication for increased results.

4.3.2 Solutions to Youth Unemployment in South Africa

The literature revealed that while the latest employment figures give some cause for optimism, some 370,000 jobs were created in the first quarter of 2022; we still have a huge mountain to climb in our quest to create more sustainable jobs, especially for young people (South African Government, 2022). The most recent initiative to be launched through the stimulus is the Social Employment Fund, which will pioneer a new and innovative approach to public employment. It will partner with non-governmental organisations across the country to deliver ‘work for the common good’. This work is in areas like community safety, food security, urban agriculture, early childhood development and the fight against gender-based violence. It will create 50,000 new work opportunities in the first phase before scaling up further in subsequent phases (South African Government, 2022).

4.3.2.1 Programmes/interventions that are in place to respond to youth unemployment

There are quite several programmes and interventions such as:

a) Civil Society Social Services

Civil society organisations exist within communities and are able to provide agile and responsive services whilst providing employment opportunities to the members of the same communities. Social services have contributed a growing number of jobs to the general employment statistics in South Africa.

b) The Public Employment Programmes and EPWP

Public Employment Programmes should continue to serve as the holding space in transition to address poverty and income generation, whilst transitioning into more sustainable employment. The public employment programmes should be labour intensive and responsive to the daily challenges of the communities as one form of service delivery. All public employment programmes should be supported with skills development training so that the beneficiaries can build the competencies to do the work better and acquire skills for future employment prospects. These programmes must be scaled up.

c) Presidential Youth Employment Intervention

The Presidential Youth Employment Intervention (PYEI) is a youth focused intervention that is part of the broader Presidential Employment Stimulus programme. The Presidential Youth Employment Intervention is a multi-sectoral national effort to respond to the chronic challenge of youth unemployment in South Africa, whilst providing essential services to various sectors of society.

The Presidential Youth Employment Intervention has identified several priority intervention areas to accelerate youth pathways into the economy. These include development of agile workforce, strengthening of the workplace experience, National Youth Service, support for youth self-employment and enterprise development in the township and rural economies, and the establishment of national pathway management network.

The respondents observed that the Teacher-Assistant programme of the PYEI was very successful with instant visible impact. Many stakeholders are calling for the scaling up and sustainable implementation of this initiative.

d) Optimise the Informal Economy

In light of the slow growth of formal employment opportunities, the informal economy holds the promise of providing alternative economic activities for employment and income generation. The sector of the informal economy has a lot of potential to promote self-initiative amongst the unemployed to do things for themselves than just passively waiting for government hand-outs. The enterprises of the informal sector have an important role to play in providing the essential goods and services to largely marginalised client base.

The existing informal enterprises must not be rushed into formalisation. Instead they should be supported to excel in their current operations. The support for informal enterprises may include relaxation of policies, regulations and by-laws, public space trading guidelines, tools of trade, and linkages of products and services to the formal markets.

e) Private Sector Measures

As key economic actors, the private sector has a role and national duty to contribute towards addressing unemployment in South Africa. In order to fulfil this role, the private sector must be provided with the necessary incentives and youth targeted support in order to expand the intake of young people.

Most sustainable new jobs are expected to be created in the private sector, especially by SMMEs. Such role of growth and employment must be supported by providing an enabling environment for business to thrive.

4.3.2.2 An evaluation of the successes of such programmes and interventions

The respondents were asked a specific question about what they considered to be the successes of the youth employment programmes that are implemented in South Africa. There are many positive consequences of the implementation of youth employment programmes. The following have been pointed out as successes of such programmes:

a) Education and Skills Development

The respondents noted that education and training interventions have significantly increased access to formal education and skills development opportunities. Many other young people would not have been able to access these opportunities if they were not part of targeted youth interventions. These programmes contribute towards building the knowledge and skills base of young people and improve their prospects for employability.

The challenge remains the facilitation of a smooth transition from school/training to work.

b) Employment Opportunities in Different Sectors

The respondents acknowledged the contribution of youth employment programmes towards improving the general employment statistics in preceding quarters. Youth employment interventions have been able to facilitate entry of young people into different sectors of the economy, especially labour intensive sectors that are poised as growth sectors. According to Stats-SA (2022), these include community and social services, trade and industry, finance, manufacturing, private households, transport, agriculture and mining. The situation of employment in general and youth employment is particular has started to show signs of consistent improvement, although not sufficient.

The interventions of the Economic Reconstruction and Recover Plan (ERRP) have also started to show positive results in linking economic growth to job creation.

c) The Presidential Employment Stimulus and the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention

The Presidential Employment Stimulus and the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention have redefined the role of The Presidency in direct programme implementation. The Presidency further established a Project Management Unit as a technical team that is responsible for coordinating the apex priorities of the President.

The elevation of some of the youth employment interventions into the highest office in the land shows seriousness in addressing the plight of youth unemployment. The Presidential Youth Employment Intervention has been viewed as one of the most successful interventions.

d) Youth Entrepreneurship

Youth employment programmes have managed to encourage young people explore self-employment and youth entrepreneurship as a possible exit channel from youth employment programmes. More and more young people have taken the initiative of starting their own businesses in the form of SMMEs and Cooperatives. These young entrepreneurs do not only create jobs for themselves, but for other unemployed young people as well. They are job creators instead of being job seekers.

It is practically impossible that the existing interventions can absorb all 9 million unemployed young people. But it is possible to create the conducive business environment and climate for various enterprises to create other related downstream and side-stream job opportunities.

e) The ability to reach many young people through digital platforms

It was positively noted that the youth employment programmes have been able to shift away from traditional paper based and manual application processes towards online and digital platforms. The SAYouth.mobi is growing to be a very resourceful tool in linking young people to opportunities. The fact that it is data-free makes it even more accessible and user friendly for unemployed youth. This shift has significantly increased to uptake of young people into these programmes. The use of digital platforms has improved the ability of government programmes to reach many young people in their own spaces.

f) Promoting Partnerships

The central coordination of the youth employment programmes has been able to mobilise various organisations to collaborate their efforts in addressing youth unemployment. The following role players can be counted amongst the crucial stakeholders: The Presidency, The Department of Employment and Labour, The National Youth Development Agency, Youth Organisations under the South African Youth Council, Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, Youth Employment Services, GTAC, and The Jobs Fund. These local partners need to have more engagements with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and other international bodies in order to integrate youth employment into the agenda of the decent work country programme.

The partnerships between different organisations mean that young people do not necessarily need to go to many places to try to find opportunities. These partnerships will improve collaboration of efforts and resources, integration, coordination, and improved reach, scale, and impact.

g) The sensitisation of authorities and the general public about the importance of the informal economy and new forms of work

The exposure and practical experiences of government officials to the informal economy interventions raised their levels of awareness about the sector and the important role it is playing in facilitating alternative forms of economic activity. The general public has also been sensitised to new forms of work that are entailed in the sector of informal economy. Both the authorities and the general public can only take it from here into new heights in terms of leveraging and optimising the opportunities of the informal economy and new forms of work. Young people can leverage the new forms of work to express their talents and youthful exuberance.

h) Improvement of income and better working conditions

The youth employment programmes play an important role of providing their beneficiaries with some form of income. This helps the participating young people to take care of their subsistence needs, their most basic food needs, toiletries, and transportation. The youth employment programmes also give the youth exposure to the real world of work and thereby acclimatise to work-place conditions, whilst building the necessary professional networks.

4.3.3 Recommendations to Improve the Youth Employment Programmes

4.3.3.1 Strategies to improve the existing programmes or even new interventions

The following have been cited as strategies to improve the existing programmes or even new interventions:

a) The government must play its role and diagnose the real problem and build partnerships to address it

The government and other social partners must begin to appreciate the veracity of the challenge of youth unemployment. Youth unemployment needs the whole of society

approach if it is to be addressed thoroughly in a sustainable way through a long-term social compact between the social partners and the youth.

The policies that are in place need to be developed to align to the needs of young people. They must be evidence based. Such policies must be guided by the direction of the economy. The policies and strategies should help us to build a highly competitive cadre of young people who can compete not only in South Africa but also globally. South Africa needs a dedicated Youth Employment Policy to be supported with clear strategies, implementation plans, and budget.

The existing programmes must be supported with very clear enabling policies and strategies. The current programmes also need to be supported with increased financial resources so that they can be scaled up to reach more communities and beneficiaries.

b) Improvement of the Education System

The government has done a lot to improve access to education. The education system is currently facing the challenge of improving the quality of the education outcomes. The education system must be improved to empower young people with the knowledge and skills that are required by the labour market and the economy. The establishment of technical schools and TVET colleges can play a central role in this regard.

We need to increase our investments on education, research and development in order to improve our educational outcomes, leading to competitiveness.

The Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) must also be positioned to champion sectoral interventions to improve education and skills development in their respective sectors of responsibility, including establishing sectoral centres of specialization and excellence. Technical skills must be coupled with entrepreneurship

education so that young people can use their skills for self-employment and income generation. In addition to technical skills, young people must be empowered with life skills for productive citizenship in order to empower them to survive their different environments.

c) Strengthen the Coordination of Efforts

It was suggested that the first thing that we need to do is to strengthen the coordination so that there is a multi-party approach or arrangement of frameworks that deal holistically with young people.

The Presidency must continue to be the centre of coordination for all youth employment endeavours in government and in collaboration with other partners. It is only the authority of The Presidency that can bring about vertical integration and horizontal coherence in government and society as a whole. This should be guided by a clear coordination framework, including social facilitation.

d) Create an Enabling Environment to Attract Investments

The government must be challenged to create an enabling environment and policy certainty to attract foreign investments into the South African economy. The domestic private sector must also be encouraged to abandon their perceived investment strike in the local markets.

These investments are desperately needed in order to grow the economy and create employment.

e) Regulation of the Informal Sector and the Recognition of the New Forms of Work

The courier services, delivery scooters, uber/bolt, have attracted large numbers of young people in their employment. The prevalence of Covid-19 enormously increased the demand for these services. Their operations still remain largely unregulated. They

need to be regulated in order to formalise and recognise their contribution to the economy and the labour market.

These types of businesses have increased about 20% in countries like Brazil and also here in South Africa, further propelled by technological advances. Their market seems to be here to stay and irreversible. We need to promote the recognition of such trends, incorporating them into policies and then budgeting for them.

These types of work tend to favour young men more than young women. We therefore need to implement dedicated measures to attract and support young women to enter these sectors. Such measures may include digital training for young women and supporting them to get drivers' licenses in order to boost their competitiveness.

f) Remove the Binding Constraints

The prospects for investments, economic growth, and job creation in South Africa are trapped into structural binding constraints that include poor infrastructure, loadshedding, water scarcity, skills shortage, and limited broadband data. If these constraints can be addressed, they can serve as critical enabling factors to unleash the potential of the South African economy and labour market.

4.3.3.2 Other opportunities for meaningful engagement that young people can explore besides finding formal employment

This section covers other potential opportunities of youth engagement beyond direct employment. The following other opportunities were identified:

a) Youth Entrepreneurship

It is important for the youth to acknowledge that there are no formal job opportunities that can absorb all the millions of unemployed young people. More and more young people must be encouraged to use their skills to pursue self-employment through

youth entrepreneurship with SMMEs, Cooperatives, Informal enterprises, and even social enterprises.

South Africa should prioritise the development of a Youth Enterprise Development Model and Strategy. This should be aimed at unleashing the enterprising spirit and potential of young people from ideation to commercialisation. That enterprise development model must deal with the social profiling of youth interventions that can be supported to scale up to absorb more young people. The strategy can be anchored on entrepreneurship education, business development support services, enterprise finance/funding, market linkages, mentorship and support, and expansion.

Business operations that are emerging in townships and rural areas provide further opportunities for young people as employees, owners, and service providers.

b) Work Experience Exposure

In preparation for the world of work, young people must be exposed to a broad spectrum of work roles and work places from a young age (whilst at school) in order to acquire work experience exposure. Such interventions should include career guidance, career shadowing, mentorship, and coaching. Programmes like “Take a Girl Child to Work” must be expanded for more job exposure through on the job immersions.

c) Work Integrated Learning, Learnerships and Internships

Evidence suggests that there is a direct positive correlation between skills and employment. People with higher levels of education and skills have more prospects of employment. Students in TVET Colleges, Universities of Technology and Universities must be provided with financial support to undertake Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in order to do in-service training for practical work so that they can complete their qualifications and graduate. Young people who have not completed their schooling should be linked to learnerships so that they acquire NQF aligned accredited training,

whilst also being exposed to practical work in order to improve their prospects of future employability. The phenomenon of unemployed graduates poses a risk of challenging the value of education. All graduates must be guaranteed a placement of 12 to 24 months Internship placement in the field of work that is relevant to their field of study. Through these internships, the beneficiary graduates can be placed in various centres of service delivery to serve their communities.

d) The National Youth Service Programme

The National Youth Service (NYS) Programme is a youth development intervention that is aimed at mobilising young people to provide services that respond to the challenges of their communities, whilst acquiring skills and capacities that will empower them to access various streams of exit opportunities into gainful employment. The NYS can be designed to include various forms of voluntary and structured community service. The massification of the implementation of the NYS can leverage on the resourcefulness of young people for the benefit of their communities and society as a whole.

e) Sport, Arts, Culture, and Recreation

Many young people in South Africa are found idling due to lack of opportunities. This leads to them venturing into risky behaviours with crime, unprotected sex, alcohol, and drugs. Government must work with community youth organisations to promote social cohesion and nation building through mass participation in schools, youth clubs and community sports, arts, culture, and recreational activities. These interventions should be positioned to serve as diversion programmes that should compete for the attention of young people away from undesirable behaviours. Such interventions must be intentional about providing character building in order to produce a cadre of patriotic young people. One area of immediate opportunities in this field is the mobilisation and capacity building of out of school youth to be placed as school-based sports coaches and community based youth clubs.

4.3.3.3 The role of young people themselves in their development and employment

a) Young people should continue to fight against academic exclusion, financial exclusion, and accountability through student organisations across tertiary institutions

The beginning of every academic year in South Africa is marked with student protests. In appreciating the role of education in empowering young people to be economically active citizens, students and student formations should continue to campaign for free quality education, and fight against academic exclusions, financial exclusions, and poor student support services. This should be at the centre of their generational mission as a means to economic freedom.

b) Young people should protect themselves against drugs and alcohol abuse

One of the biggest challenges facing the youth of today is the excessive consumption of alcohol and drug abuse. This poses a risk of flushing so many promising young talents down the drain. Young people must be empowered with life skills and character building to protect themselves against alcohol and drug abuse.

c) Young people should be vibrant but they must have a filter

Young people must take interest in their own development. They should not just be passive beneficiaries of government programmes, instead, they should be active agents of development. The vibrancy of youth energies must be guided and harnessed into productive and gainful activities. The expression of the youthful exuberance should be exercised with caution.

d) Young people should take initiative but they should be guided and supported throughout

All initiatives that are aimed at youth development, empowerment, and employment should respond to the actual needs of young people and not the perceived challenges of young people. Solutions to the challenges of young people must be co-created with the direct involvement of young people themselves. Young people must exercise agency and take initiative in addressing their challenges. Social partners and the whole od society must support self-initiative of young people and guide them to success.

e) Young people should be open to new things

Young people should be open minded to learn new things and explore new ways of doing things and seize the opportunities of democracy. This can be easily facilitated through peer learning and exploration.

f) Consolidate the Youth Voice

The prerequisite for the plight of young people to be taken serious is that they must be organised in order to consolidate their voice towards championing their generational mission.

4.3.3.4 Lessons learned from the Implementation of Youth Employment Programmes

a) The Improve the Programme Design

The respondents believe that we have to improve some elements that relate to the technical programme design of these youth employment interventions in order to improve results.

The technical programme design of these interventions must be intentionally structured to improve access, reach, scale, and impact.

b) There is a need for a well-coordinated inter-governmental approach

Programmes that hold high prospects of success are those that are implemented through the collaboration of efforts by different spheres of government and the different relevant departments and partners.

c) Spending money to solve a problem is not the answer

The implementation of many projects have proven that throwing money into non-financial problems in projects does not solve the problem. Instead it diminishes the value for money. Similar projects can have varying cost drivers.

d) The Adoption of a Results-Driven Approach

The respondents believe that the youth employment programmes must not just be "keep busy" type of initiatives. They must be results driven. The articulation of these programmes must not promote quantity over quality. The programmes must not only emphasise the amount of money spent and number of beneficiaries to be engaged. They must equally emphasise the extent and quality of the work that will be delivered through the programmes. So, the programmes must not just emphasise inputs and outputs, but must rise to the level of articulating the intended outcomes and results of such programmes.

e) The duplication of efforts and support needs to be addressed

The silo mentality of planning and implementation of programmes will lead to duplication of efforts by various role players, where they could have combined efforts and resources for increased impact through economies of scale.

f) Monitoring and Evaluation

The majority of the youth employment programmes do not have a dedicated monitoring and evaluation framework as part of the plan of the programmes. Instead, it becomes an after-thought. M&E can serve a very useful management tool that can

help with the disciplined planning, implementation and improvement of results. All youth employment programmes must mainstream and institutionalise the technical discipline of monitoring and evaluation in the programme design, planning, implementation, and oversight.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the data obtained from a sample of 19 respondents. The data were collected from respondents through semi-structured interviews. The researcher took notes as needed and recorded the respondents' comments on audio throughout the interview procedure. Raw data were gathered using non-numerical information and they were transcribed, and cleaned, which were then analysed and refined into categories and themes. The sub-themes that were connected to the research questions and interview questions that served as the study's guiding principles were further developed. Thematic analysis was used as part of a qualitative technique to analyse the data based on how relevant and meaningful the obtained data were.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The study's objective was to look into South Africa's youth employment programmes' challenges and solutions. In this chapter, the summaries of the findings will be presented as well as the overall conclusions and recommendations. The chapter further presents recommendations for enhancing youth employment initiatives. Further research areas will also be highlighted.

5.2 Challenges of Youth Unemployment

Despite all efforts on youth employment, the rate of youth unemployment continues to escalate in South Africa because our educational outcomes are poor with high percentage of school drop outs, especially from Grade 10. We do not have fundamental models of economic growth that support job creation, the lack of infrastructure and a supportive system, the lack of proper planning, insufficient investments on youth development, and a lack of youth entrepreneurial initiatives.

The majority of the respondents agreed that the available resources were not sufficient to address the levels of youth unemployment in South Africa. Some even suggested that the available limited resources were not optimally coordinated, deployed and managed. This is exacerbated by lack of collaboration amongst relevant stakeholders.

5.3 Solutions to Youth Unemployment in South Africa

There are several programmes and interventions such as the National Youth Service, the public employment programs and EPWP, the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention, the public space trading guidelines, and the waste picking integration guidelines. The proposed solutions to address and improve youth unemployment entail civil society social services, Presidential Employment Stimulus and Presidential Youth Employment Intervention, and the private sector measures.

According to the respondents, the following programmes/interventions are in place to respond to youth unemployment through the informal sector: Synthesized programme of business in a box or spaza shop which is encouraging street vendors, waste pickers, and Uber drivers to organise themselves, building up street vendors, waste pickers, and Uber drivers' confidence, enterprise development projects, community guidance, sewing and clothing manufacturing business, the development of site business plans, poultry projects, and training in various skills sets.

The following have been pointed out as successes of such programmes: skills development, employment opportunities in different sectors, redefinition of the Presidential role, the birth of several entrepreneurs, the ability to reach many young people through digital platforms, a partnership between different organisations, a favourable business environment and climate, the sensitisation of the general public about the importance of the informal economy and new forms of work and improvement of better working conditions and income for youth.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Recommendations for Policy-Makers and Implementers

The following have been cited as strategies to improve the existing programmes or even new interventions:

a) **The government must play its role and diagnose the real problem and build partnerships to address it**

The government and other social partners must begin to appreciate the veracity of the challenge of youth unemployment. Youth unemployment needs the whole of society approach if it is to be addressed thoroughly in a sustainable way through a long-term social compact between the social partners and the youth.

The local government after apartheid South Africa is required to actively participate in economic development. In other words, government must be a key player in developing the human capital required to manage a modern economy. This implies

that educational institutions must operate effectively. Marwala (2022) points out that disincentivising corruption is the only way the government can accomplish this. The South African nation will be doomed to an existence of irrelevance and extreme poverty if corruption is not eradicated. Therefore, it is recommended that government plays its role by addressing youth unemployment issues and eradicating corruption.

The existing programmes must be supported with very clear enabling policies and strategies. The current programmes also need to be supported with increased financial resources so that they can be scaled up to reach more communities and beneficiaries.

b) Improve the Education System

According to a new report released by Amnesty International (2020), the South African education system, which is characterized by deteriorating infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and relatively poor educational outcomes, is failing too many of its children and perpetuating inequality, with the poor being hardest hit. One of the most important elements required to solve South Africa's widespread legacy of poverty, inequality, and youth unemployment is improved education, according to most respondents and experts.

To establish appropriate learning settings, the government should improve the curricula, repair infrastructure, improve technology in schools, eliminate mud schools, maintain basic infrastructure, and construct libraries. To combat unemployment, the government must invest in skill development. The founder of Future Nations Schools and former chief executive of First Rand Group, Mr Sizwe Nxasana, called for new players who could show what “Africanised” education is and what it could look like in the 21st century. He called the current education offering “very traditional and steeped in its ways” (News24, 2018).

The government has done a lot to improve access to education. The education system is currently facing the challenge of improving the quality of the education outcomes.

The education system must be improved to empower young people with the knowledge and skills that are required by the labour market and the economy. The establishment of technical schools and TVET Colleges can play a central role in this regard.

c) Strengthen the Coordination of Efforts

Youth employment should not be a government concern, but rather one shared by all stakeholders, including universities and the private sector. Youth employment programmes should prioritise the collaboration between these parties. The literature reveals that there is a disparity in approaches to encouraging youth employment. As a result, a synergy of a coordinated approach is advocated. In terms of implementing the various programs, the government should build a cooperation plan with all levels of government, from the national to the provincial municipality level. Cooperation between various departments can maximise synergies in the development and application of financing policies in youth employment programmes and at various levels, can reduce risk, prevent the emergence of new risk, and address trade-offs or inconsistencies in policies.

The best way to do this is through government clusters. Government clusters are groupings of government departments with cross-cutting programmes around identified themes. Clusters foster an integrated approach to governance that is aimed at improving government planning, decision making and service delivery. The objective is to ensure proper coordination of all government programmes at national, provincial and local spheres (South African Government, 2023). Additionally, to make the economy competitive, the government must create strategies and work with the private sector and civil society.

The Presidency must continue to be the centre of coordination for all youth employment endeavours in government and in collaboration with other partners. It is only the authority of The Presidency that can bring about vertical integration and horizontal coherence in government and society as a whole.

d) Create an Enabling Environment to Attract Investments

Several tactics are suggested by the Youth Employment Accord to increase youth economic engagement. These include increased youth employment goals, improved public employment programmes like the National Youth Service, Expanded Public Works Programme, and Community-Based Public Works Programme, support for youth cooperative development, mechanisms for exposing youth to the workforce, and improved skills development. South African leaders and policy-makers need to take swift and result-driven steps to review current rules and regulations and begin driving robust policy reforms to promote youth employment.

The government must be challenged to create an enabling environment and policy certainty to attract foreign investments into the South African economy. The domestic private sector must also be encouraged to abandon their perceived investment strike in the local markets.

e) Regulation of the informal sector and the recognition of the new forms of work

The issue of youth unemployment requires a variety of diagnoses from various stakeholders, and the growth of the informal economy in a community depends on it. Youth employment will be reduced with the participation of young people in the informal economy and other new emerging forms of work. Authorities should concentrate on fostering and helping up-and-coming small enterprises. Given the importance of the informal sector, local governments must step in to enhance the connection between the formal and informal sectors of the economy and to solve issues related to the latter. To preserve the standard of the informal business environment, policymakers must have well-structured initiatives to encourage growth in businesses. We need to promote the recognition of such trends, incorporating them into policies and then budgeting for them.

f) Remove the Binding Constraints

If load shedding persists, South Africa's economy is likely to deteriorate and unemployment rate is set to rise sharply. Therefore, since change is required, this problem must be resolved. The implementation of renewable energy initiatives should also be exploited for the potential employment opportunities they hold.

The prospects for investments, economic growth, and job creation in South Africa are trapped into structural binding constraints that include poor infrastructure, loadshedding, water scarcity, skills shortage, and limited broadband data. If these constraints can be addressed, they can serve as critical enabling factors to unleash the potential of the South African economy and labour market.

5.4.2 The recommendations of other opportunities for meaningful engagement that young people can explore besides finding formal employment

The following other opportunities were identified:

a) The National Youth Development Agency (NYDA)

Some of the key performance areas of NYDA are economic participation to enhance the participation of young people in the economy through targeted and integrated programmes and education and skills development to promote, facilitate and provide training and development opportunities to young people to enhance their socio-economic well-being. Young people must take advantage of the different programmes implemented by this organisation as they provide young people with opportunities to access financial support to establish businesses and the necessary skills to get employed.

b) South African Youth Council (SAYC)

The South African Youth Council umbrella body of civil society youth formations and aims to contribute to making the lives of young people in South Africa better. Its role

is to identify priorities, craft policies that support these priorities, and contribute to the implementation of these policies through policy advocacy and self-initiative.

c) Youth Entrepreneurship

With the skills gap widening and the majority of South Africans not having access to higher education, young people must find innovative methods to avoid unemployment, one of which is entrepreneurship. It is important for the youth to acknowledge that there are no formal job opportunities that can absorb all the millions of unemployed young people. More and more young people must be encouraged to use their skills to pursue self-employment through youth entrepreneurship with SMMEs, Cooperatives, Informal enterprises, and even social enterprises.

d) Work Experience Exposure

In preparation for the world of work, young people must be exposed to a broad spectrum of work roles and work places from a young age (whilst at school) in order to acquire work experience exposure. Such interventions should include career guidance, career shadowing, mentorship, and coaching. Programmes like “Take a Girl Child to Work” must be expanded for more job exposure through on the job immersions.

e) Work Integrated Learning, Learnerships, and Internships

Students from TVET Colleges, Universities of Technology, and Universities should be supported with Work Integrated Learning opportunities for the workplace based practicals so that they can complete their qualifications and graduate. Out of school youth should be placed into learnerships. Internships are seen as a crucial component of the transition from education to the workplace because they provide immersive, fundamental, and practical skills that are needed to land a job after graduation.

f) The National Youth Service Programme

The National Youth Service (NYS) Programme is a youth development intervention that is aimed at mobilising young people to provide services that respond to the challenges of their communities, whilst acquiring skills and capacities that will empower them to access various streams of exit opportunities into gainful employment. The NYS can be designed to include various forms of voluntary and structured community service.

g) Sport, Arts, Culture, and Recreation

Many young people in South Africa are found idling due to lack of opportunities. This leads to them venturing into risky behaviours with crime, unprotected sex, alcohol, and drugs. Government must work with community youth organisations to promote social cohesion and nation building through mass participation in school and community sports, arts, culture, and recreational activities. These interventions should be positioned to serve as diversion programmes that should compete for the attention of young people away from undesirable behaviours.

h) The digital economy and platform economy

Young people face a myriad of obstacles in finding work, leaving more than 71 million unemployed globally. The digital economy and platform economy may give young people an effective way to get busy and earn a living. For young employees, informal employment presents opportunities for skill development that may ease the transition to formal employment in the future.

5.4.3 Recommendations for Young People

This explores the agency and role of young people themselves in their development, empowerment, and employment.

a) Young people must continue to fight against academic exclusion, financial exclusion, and accountability through student organisations across tertiary institutions

Since the literature shows that young people who are treated unfairly or discriminated against are more likely to have negative attitudes to school and lower levels of motivation and confidence, they must be at the forefront of the fight against academic exclusion, financial exclusion and accountability.

b) Young people must protect themselves against drugs and alcohol abuse

When a young person is struggling to find employment, despite applying for a job, mentally, such a person can end up being depressed, have difficulty sleeping, lose focus in life, and contemplate suicide, believing that it is the only solution. Others are turning to substances such as alcohol and drugs as a solution to forget about the challenges they face. Instead of engaging in substance abuse to escape their troubles, young people can protect their mental wellness by focusing more on positive and productive things such as starting a business, no matter how small. Young people must be empowered with life skills and character building to protect themselves against alcohol and drug abuse.

c) Young people should take initiative but they must be supported and guided throughout

Young people are encouraged to identify and seize opportunities, turn ideas into actions and plan and manage processes to achieve the objectives they have set. The government needs to promote, help and advance young people in their entrepreneurial endeavours. Government, institutions and organisations should all encourage a broad understanding of entrepreneurship competence that reflects any contexts in education and training, employment and the individual's life in general.

All initiatives that are aimed at youth development, empowerment, and employment should respond to the actual needs of young people and not the perceived challenges

of young people. Solutions to the challenges of young people must be co-created with the direct involvement of young people themselves. Young people must exercise agency and take initiative in addressing their challenges. Social partners and the whole od society must support self-initiative of young people and guide them to success.

d) Young people should be open to new things

Most young people around the world do not have the chance to get formal jobs. The capacity of formal employment systems is often limited due to the high rate of unemployment around the world. Consequently, large numbers of youth are learning and working in the informal economy. Informal apprenticeship systems that transmit the skills of a trade to a young person in a micro or small enterprise have operated for generations in many countries. They are considered by far the most important source of skills training in Africa (ILO, 2023). Young people should be open minded to learn new things and explore new ways of doing things and seize the opportunities of democracy. This can be easily facilitated through peer learning and exploration.

e) Young people should be vibrant but they must have a filter

Young people must take interest in their own development. They should not just be passive beneficiaries of government programmes, instead, they should be active agents of development. The vibrancy of youth energies must be guided and harnessed into productive and gainful activities.

f) Consolidate the Youth Voice

The prerequisite for the plight of young people to be taken serious is that they must be organised in order to consolidate their voice towards championing their generational mission.

5.4.4 Lessons Learnt from the Implementation of the Youth Employment Programmes

The study further highlighted lessons that have been learned from the implementation of youth employment programmes. These include:

a) Improving the programme design
b) A need for a well-coordinated inter-governmental approach
c) Spending money to solve a non-financial problem is not the answer
d) The adoption of the results-driven approach
e) The duplication of efforts, and
f) Monitoring and Evaluation

5.4.5 Recommendations for Further Studies

The interviews took longer than initially scheduled due to last minute logistical changes. Large quantities of data were collected from the interviews and that led to the analysis and interpretation of the data to be a laborious task. Some of the respondents seemed to hold back in answering some questions even though it was clearly stated that their personal information (names, positions, profile) will not be mentioned and the answers will not be directly linked to them. Thus, the subjective nature of this procedure might have allowed biases. It is therefore recommended that future studies should confirm the findings of this study by using different methods of data collection, preferably through a structured questionnaire for high representivity and objectivity.

Since the sample is tiny in size (nineteen), it cannot accurately represent the total population. Thus, future studies may enlarge the sample size and researchers may conduct quantitative analysis to compare the results obtained in this study.

Additionally, perspectives and experiences may vary from one person to another. Therefore, future research may employ a mixed-methods approach to reinforce and expand the findings of this study and thereby add to the body of literature.

5.5 Conclusion

The conclusions from the review of the literature on global youth unemployment issues and statistics, South African youth unemployment issues and statistics, departments with a mandate to support youth in South Africa, and the national programmes landscape/framework were summarized in this chapter. Furthermore, the chapter gave a general summary of the empirical objectives of the study such as the challenges to youth employment in South Africa, the solutions to youth unemployment along with recommendations for overcoming those challenges in the future. The recommendations for future studies were also covered in this chapter.

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