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**Ryk, Johan**

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Ryk, Johan. (2020). Exploring transitions from youth skills development programmes into economic activity in the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Programme. University of the Witwatersrand, https://hdl.handle.net/10539/30048

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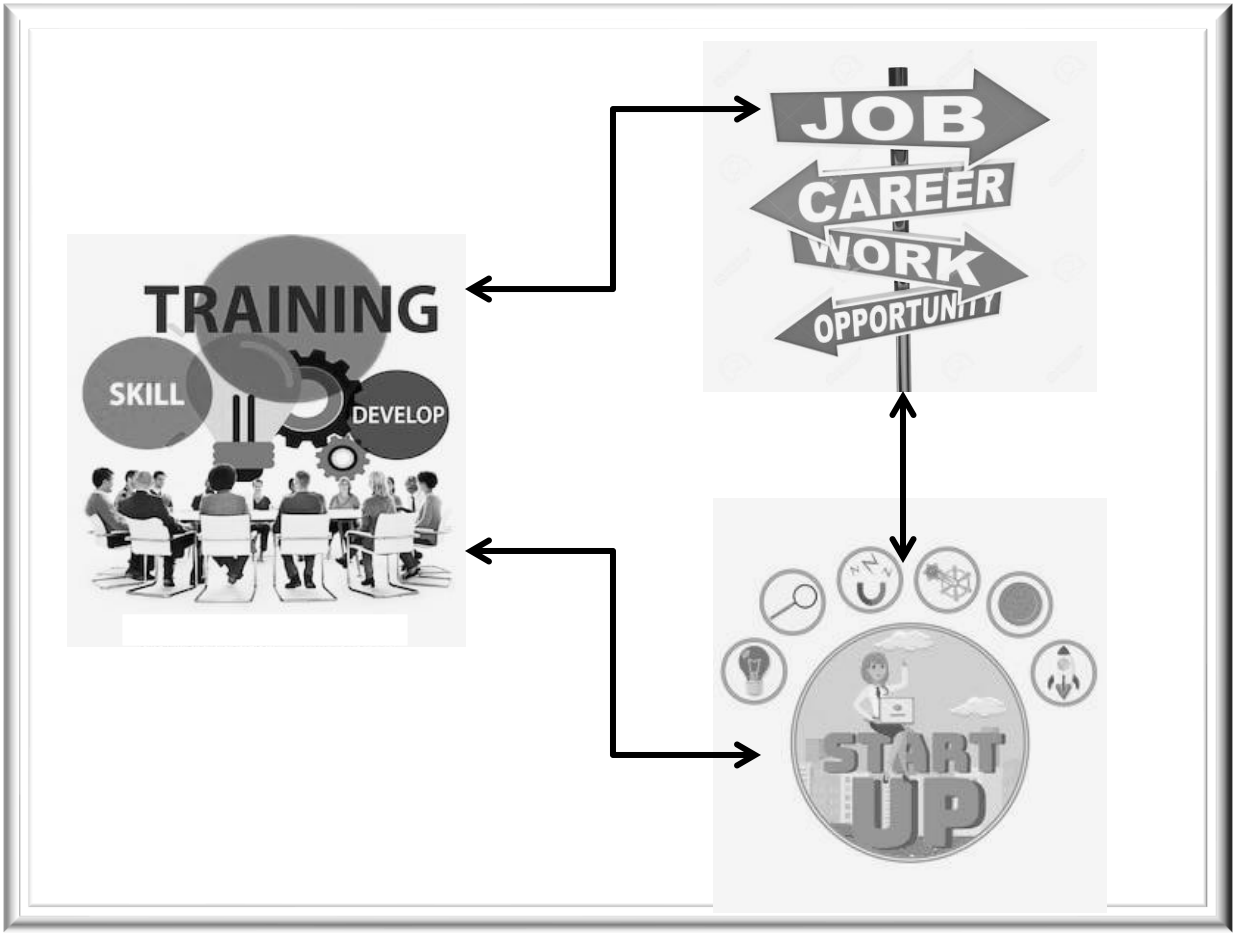
# EXPLORING TRANSITIONS FROM YOUTH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES INTO ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN THE NATIONAL RURAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS (NARYSEC) PROGRAMME




**Johan Ryk**

**Master of Education (MEd) by Course Work and Research Report**

**Student Number: 1773028**

**University of Witwatersrand**

**Course Supervisor: Dr Lynn Hewlett**

**19 June 2020**

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# EXPLORING TRANSITIONS FROM YOUTH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES INTO ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN THE NATIONAL RURAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS (NARYSEC) PROGRAMME

**Johan Ryk**
**1773028**

A research report submitted to the Wits School of Education, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education by combination of coursework and research, Johannesburg, June 2020.

## ABSTRACT

Youth unemployment is a global challenge but is even more acute in sub-Saharan African countries. South Africa is also experiencing high levels of unemployment amongst its youth – the unemployment rate for young people aged 15 to 24 years was 56.4% for quarter two of 2019, while the unemployed rate for those aged 25 to 34 years was 35.6% (Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), 2019). South Africa has an extensive and deep-rooted youth unemployment challenge.

Within the context of youth unemployment, and the proposed skills development, employment and entrepreneurship interventions to address the unemployment of young people, this study aims to understand how young people transition from skills development interventions into economic activity. The semi-structured individual and group interviews that were conducted with the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) youth of this study, provided me the opportunity to study in-depth the experiences of the youth in relation to their attempts to transition into either employment or self-employment.

Providing only skills development interventions for young people is not enough for them to transition into employment or self-employment. What is also required is the creation of an enabling environment, particularly by government, to facilitate the transitioning of the youth into economic activity. This study suggested that the enabling environment with regard to employment, could include work readiness interventions and temporary employment opportunities for the youth; while for entrepreneurship it is suggested that the enabling environment could include structured business support, assistance with securing finance for the business, as well as business "starter packs" that young people require to start their own businesses. In conclusion, the assumption, by many policy makers and government officials, that entrepreneurship is a viable alternative for the millions of unemployed young people who cannot secure jobs, seems to be more complex than suggested. Not all unemployed young people appear to have entrepreneurial aspirations or the requisite attributes to succeed as entrepreneurs.

## KEYWORDS

Employability; Entrepreneurship; Pathways; Self-Employment; Transitions; Work Readiness

## DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.



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JOHAN RYK

19 JUNE 2020

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank:

My supervisor, Dr Lynn Hewlett, for her invaluable guidance and support.

The NARYSEC youth and officials, without whom this research would not have been possible.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| ANC | African National Congress |
| BRICS | The countries Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa |
| CFE | Centre for Entrepreneurship |
| CMEs | Coordinated Market Economies |

| | |
|---|---|
| CRDP | Comprehensive Rural Development Programme |
| DHET | Department of Higher Education and Training |
| DRDLR | Department of Rural Development and Land Reform |
| ECD | Early Childhood Development |
| EPWP | Expanded Public Works Programme |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| HSRC | Human Sciences Research Council |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IPRCC | International Poverty Reduction Centre of China |
| LMEs | Liberal Market Economies |
| NARYSEC | National Rural Youth Service Corps |
| NEET | Not in Employment, Education or Training |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organisations |
| NQF | National Qualifications Framework |
| NSA | National Skills Authority |
| NSDS | National Skills Development Strategy |
| NYDA | National Youth Development Agency |
| NYP | National Youth Policy |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| PIRLS | Progress in International Reading Literacy Study |
| PSET | Post-School Education and Training |
| REID | Rural Enterprise and Industrial Development |
| RID | Rural Infrastructure Development |
| SA | South Africa |
| SCM | Supply Change Management |
| SEDA | Small Enterprise Development Agency |
| SEFA | Small Enterprise Finance Agency |
| SETAs | Sector Education and Training Authorities |

| | |
|---|---|
| SMMEs | Small, Micro and Medium-Sized Enterprises |
| Stats SA | Statistics South Africa |
| TIMMS | Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study |
| TVET | Technical Vocational Education and Training |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| USA | United States of America |
| VET | Vocational Education and Training |

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

Youth unemployment is a global challenge but is even more acute in sub-Saharan African countries. South Africa is also experiencing high levels of unemployment amongst its youth. The National Youth Policy (NYP) 2020 of the Republic of South Africa defines the youth as men and women who are within the age group of 14 to 35 years (National Youth Development Agency [NYDA], 2015). The unemployment rate for young people aged 15 to 24 years was 56.4% for quarter two of 2019, while the unemployed rate for those aged 25 to 34 years was 35.6%, against a national unemployment rate of 29% for the same period. Moreover, of the young people aged 15 to 34 years, 40.3% were not in employment, education or training (NEET) by the end of quarter two of 2019 (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA], 2019). These statistics confirm the view held by various academic commentators (De Lannoy et al., 2018; RebelGroup Advisory Southern Africa, 2017) that South Africa has an extensive and deep-rooted youth unemployment challenge. There is agreement amongst many that if South Africa does not deal with the challenge of youth unemployment, the country could run the risk of a social uprising by the unemployed young people.

To address youth unemployment, Meyer (2017, p. 56) suggests that “entrepreneurship development and increased employability through appropriate skills development have been considered as possible solutions to this growing problem”. The International Labour Organization (2012) argues that relevant *skills development* interventions do make young people more employable and facilitate their uptake in the labour market. This study therefore aims to investigate the transitioning of unemployed young people from skills development interventions into economic activity (employment or self-employment).

This chapter provides the context and background to the youth unemployment challenge and articulates the relevance of the research study that was undertaken. The problem and purpose statements are clarified, and the research questions that guided the research are also reflected upon. A description is then provided of the context within which this study was conducted, which is complemented with an overview of the research methodology which employed. The focus of the chapter then shifts to the conceptual framework that was utilised to obtain, capture and analyse the data. An overview is provided of the remaining chapters of this study, before the key points of this chapter are summarised as part of the concluding paragraph.

## 1.2 Background

Reducing youth unemployment has been a priority for the South African government since the advent of democracy in 1994. The focus of the various initiatives to reduce youth unemployment has been to enable and facilitate the transitioning of these young people into economic activity (RebelGroup Advisory Southern Africa, 2017).

Many authors have, over the years, highlighted various factors that contribute to youth unemployment, at both a macro and micro-economic level. At a macro-economic level, some of the contributing factors include an over-supply of young first-time job seekers, a misalignment between where the jobs are and where the majority of unemployed young people reside, as well as the fact that employers often require prior work experience and specific skills levels that most unemployed young people simply do not possess (Meyer, 2017). The contributing factors at a micro-economic level include how young people search for jobs, to what degree the unemployed young people match the requirements of a job, as well as the unrealistic expectations from youth of the types of jobs they aspire to, and the salaries they want to earn (Meyer, 2017).

With regard to appropriate skills development interventions to enhance the employability of young people, as suggested by the International Labour Organization (2012), technical, vocational education and training (TVET) is considered by many decision makers within

sub-Saharan African countries, as well as donor organisations, as the “magic solution” to address the challenge of youth unemployment (Oketch, 2014). Various commentators (Adams, 2007; Foster, 1977; Gamble, 2003; Wedekind, 2014; Wolf, 2002) do, however, warn against the popular-held notion that TVET is the solution for youth unemployment. TVET is viewed by many as “inferior” to general education, with TVET graduates often struggling to find employment after completing their studies (Allais, 2013; Foster, 1977; Kraak, 2008; Nherera, 2000; Wedekind, 2014; Wolf, 2002).

With regard to entrepreneurship development as a possible solution to deal with youth unemployment, as proposed by Meyer (2017), it is worth noting that the democratic South African government has, since 1994, realised the contribution that entrepreneurship can make towards industrialisation and job creation (AfDB/OECD/UNDP, 2017). The country has, however, not been able to realise the full potential of entrepreneurship in growing the economy and creating employment according to AfDB/OECD/UNDP (2017). Also, Gregory (2018) suggests that becoming an entrepreneur, or being self-employed, remains the last resort for most South African youth when they have to choose a career.

Within the context of youth unemployment, and the proposed skills development, employment and entrepreneurship interventions to address the unemployment of young people, this study aims to understand how young people transition from skills development interventions into economic activity.

## 1.3 Rationale and Purpose of Research

### 1.3.1 Problem Statement.

Large numbers of young people complete skills development programmes but are unable to transition into economic activity upon completion of these programmes. Extensive research has been conducted on skills development interventions that aim to assist with the scourge of unemployment amongst young people, but this research often focuses on analysing the programmes themselves. Less is known about why large numbers of young

people complete such skills development programmes, but still find themselves unemployed or underemployed after these interventions.

Relevant skills development interventions do make young people more employable and can facilitate their uptake in the labour market, as suggested by the International Labour Organization (2012). Unfortunately, providing only training opportunities for young people is not enough for them to transition into economic activity, according to Palmer (2007) and Singh (2016). The concepts of *transitions* (Iannelli & Raffe, 2007; Raffe, 2008) and *pathways* (Keep, 2012; Raffe, 2003) are considered to be central to studies on movements between education and work, while the concepts of *employability* (Datta, Sony & Bino, 2007; Meyer, 2017) and *work readiness* (Caballero et al., 2011; Lau et al., 2018) are crucial in debates on the probability of unemployed young people securing employment.

This study therefore intends to explore the transitions of young people from skills development programmes into economic activity. Within the South African context, skills development interventions that aim to capacitate unemployed young people to facilitate their transitioning into economic activity are often government project interventions.

### 1.3.2 Purpose Statement.

The purpose of this research study is to explore how young people transition from skills development programmes into economic activity. This study intends to research how National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) youth in the Free State have transitioned into either employment or self-employment (entrepreneurship) since they exited the NARYSEC Programme.

### 1.3.3 Research Questions.

The following research questions guided this research study:

a) What is the nature and scope of skills development interventions that could facilitate the transitioning of unemployed youth into economic activity?
b) How can unemployed youth be assisted to facilitate their transitioning from skills development interventions into employment?
c) How can unemployed youth be assisted to facilitate their transitioning from skills development interventions into self-employment?
d) What can we learn from exploring an existing youth skills development programme that aims to achieve b and c above?

## 1.4 Research Design and Context

The contribution of the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) towards the reduction of youth unemployment, particularly amongst young people in rural areas, was to establish the NARYSEC Programme in September 2010, which recruits unemployed rural youth between the ages of 18 to 25 years, who are in possession of a Grade 12 qualification. Youth are enrolled into the NARYSEC Programme for 24 months. Over this period the youth undergo a structured programme which includes five phases – a) orientation and induction; b) youth leadership development; c) community service; d) skills development; and e) preparation for exit (DRDLR, 2015b). The training that is offered to the NARYSEC youth, as part of the skills development phase of the Programme, is mainly learnerships between National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels 2 to 5. Public technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges are the training providers of choice to deliver the training for the youth. The existing NARYSEC policy seeks to “facilitate employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for NARYSEC participants that have completed the 2 year programme” (DRDLR, 2015b, p. 10).

The NARYSEC Programme in the Free State was chosen as the location of this research study, due to the rural nature of the province, as well as the high levels of youth unemployment in the province. The participants of this study included NARYSEC youth and officials, employers who have employed NARYSEC youth, and representatives from youth employment services and small business development agencies.

This research study was an empirical study, and a qualitative research design was employed for the research. The data collection process of this study included semi-structured individual and group interviews, as well as an analysis of relevant programme documents. An inductive approach was used for the data analysis process which allowed the themes and categories to emerge from the transcribed interviews.

## 1.5 Conceptual Framework

The concepts that provided the "lens" through which the data was obtained, captured and analysed for this research study included *youth transitions and pathways, employability and work readiness,* as well as *entrepreneurship*.

## 1.6 Significance of Research

This research study aims to understand how unemployed young people can transition from skills development interventions into either employment or self-employment. This study is relevant insofar as the findings of the study will provide an indication of the nature and scope of the enabling environment that is required to transition unemployed young people into economic activity.

## 1.7 Overview of Chapters

The literature reviewed for this study, as chapter two of this research reports, paints a picture of a difficult journey for unemployed young people to transition into either employment or self-employment. For employment that is sustainable and meaningful, and that provides decent work to the youth, a deliberate, co-ordinated, multi-pronged approach by a range of role-players is proposed. For young emerging entrepreneurs to succeed, it is suggested that an enabling environment must be created for these youth, which should include the provision of adequate technical and business management skills; their having access to experienced mentors; barriers to business entry must be removed for them; and financial assistance must be provided for their businesses. Chapter three of this report articulates the detail of the research methodology that was utilised for this study, as also summarised in the research design and context section earlier in this chapter.

Chapter four reflects the key findings of this study. It is shown that all youth participants of this study held that the training that they had undergone was of good quality. The employed youth further indicated that the training had prepared them for the demands of the workplace, while the youth with businesses held that their training had assisted them with their entrepreneurial journeys. It is shown, however, that providing training interventions is not enough; the youth must also be assisted in their attempts to secure employment or start their own small businesses. For youth who want to secure employment, work-readiness workshops and temporary contract work are proposed as possible interventions to enhance their employability. In addition, it is suggested that, where possible, employment opportunities be identified upfront, followed by training courses linked to the identified opportunities. This approach is likely to facilitate the transitioning of more unemployed youth into employment. For youth with businesses it is suggested that relevant entrepreneurship and business management training, as well as structured business support must be provided to the youth.

The last chapter of this research report provides the discussion and analysis of the key findings. The key message of this study is that the assumption, by many, that entrepreneurship is a viable alternative for the millions of unemployed young people who cannot secure jobs, seems to be flawed. It is shown with this study that not all young people have entrepreneurial aspirations or the requisite attributes to succeed as entrepreneurs. Most of the unemployed young people do not aspire to be self-employed – they would rather prefer to be employed.

## 1.8 Conclusion

This chapter articulated the extensive and deep-rooted youth unemployment challenge of South Africa and highlighted that the country's democratic government has prioritised various skills development, employment and entrepreneurship initiatives to enable and facilitate the transitioning of these young people into economic activity, and thereby reduce youth unemployment.

It was further shown that although relevant skills development interventions do enhance the employability of young people and can improve their chances of entry into the labour market, providing training interventions is not enough. The youth must also be assisted in their attempts to secure employment or start their own small businesses. It was suggested that an enabling environment must be created to facilitate the transitioning of the youth into either employment or self-employment. For youth who want to secure employment, work-readiness workshops and temporary contract work opportunities were suggested as interventions to enhance their employability. On the other hand, for youth with businesses, relevant entrepreneurship and business management training, as well as structured business support were suggested as interventions that could create an enabling environment for aspiring young entrepreneurs.

The next chapter of this research report provides the detail of the literature that was reviewed to better understand how unemployed young people transition from skills

development interventions into economic activity, and to examine the studies that have been undertaken in this area.

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

## 2.1 Literature Review

### 2.1.1 Introduction.

In this chapter the literature that is relevant to the research that was undertaken is presented. The first section deals with the contested relationship between education and the world of work. The complexity of the transitions of young people into economic activity in general is highlighted, and the added complexity of youth transitions within South Africa is also explained. The nature of the education-work relationship is explored, and the factors that impact this relationship between education and the economy are also highlighted. Special attention is paid to the "human capital" theory debate in relation to the education-labour market interface, due to the dominance of human capital theory in relation to education-labour market debates. The proponents of the theory suggest that by raising one's level of education, the likelihood of securing a better job that pays higher salaries is probable. The detractors of the human capital theory do acknowledge the contribution of education in probable success in the labour market, but hold that it is not the only determinant (Bowles, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1975; Collins, 1971). They highlight the importance of the social relations, as well as power struggles that play out within the education-work space, in also determining labour market success.

Starting with the education component of the education-labour market relationship, the focus of the third section of this chapter is on the South African basic education system. The motivation for exploring the nature of the basic education system is because the capabilities that young people require to transition into economic activity are built on the knowledge, skills and attributes they develop during their schooling. The achievements (e.g. improved enrolment rates) as well as the challenges (e.g. poor learner results) of the system are emphasised, particularly since the advent of democracy in 1994 (Bhorat, 2012; Marock, 2008; Murtin, 2013; OECD, 2017).

Having explored the state of basic education in South Africa in the previous section, section four describes skill formation in South Africa, and explains how skill formation impacts the transitioning of young people into economic activity. This section details how "collective" and "liberal" skill formation systems are organised. Collective skill formation systems have received significant attention and have been applauded by both academia and global observers, "because they combine low levels of youth unemployment with high-quality occupational skills and thereby bolster the competitiveness of economies" (Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2012, p. 4). The education and training systems in liberal market economies on the other hand, prioritise formal academic education and general skills (Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2012; Hall & Soskice, 2001). Turning the attention to skill formation in South Africa, the skill formation system in the country has seen extensive reforms since the election of the first democratic government in 1994. However, there seems to be agreement amongst various role-players that the available evidence suggests that the skills reforms that were implemented by the post-apartheid South African government, particularly within technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges, did not produce the envisaged results (Allais, 2013; Gamble, 2003; Kraak, 2008; Wedekind, 2014).

The last three sections of this chapter deal with the transitioning of unemployed young people into economic activity. With regard to *employment*, it is proposed that a deliberate, co-ordinated, multi-pronged approach by a range of role-players is required for sustainable and meaningful employment of the youth. Also, providing only training opportunities for young people is not enough for them to transition into economic activity; what is required additionally is the creation of an enabling environment to facilitate a smooth transitioning into either employment or entrepreneurial activity. The section that deals with *entrepreneurship* accentuates the significant role that entrepreneurship and small business development play towards alleviating poverty, inequality and unemployment and the contribution of these entrepreneurial endeavours towards economic and social development. The status of entrepreneurship in South Africa is then focused on, by highlighting how becoming an entrepreneur is the last resort for most

South African young people. Challenges for prospective and emerging entrepreneurs include a lack of finance, barriers to accessing markets, as well as a dearth of the requisite skills to start and run successful enterprises. The last section explores how unemployed young people in rural areas transition into jobs or self-employment opportunities. The literature paints a picture of limited evidence of skills development interventions provided to rural youth, as well as sparse data of how many of these youth transition successfully into jobs or entrepreneurship after their training, within the South African context. There is no evidence of interventions in the country that transition unemployed rural youth successfully into economic activity and that do so at a large enough scale to meaningfully contribute to youth unemployment in rural areas.

### 2.1.2 Education and Work Linkages.

The “first job” of youth is critical in ensuring their entry into, and continued participation in the labour market, according to many commentators. It is, however, not just the knowledge, skills and personal attributes of young people, relevant to a specific job, that determine whether they are successful in securing a job or not. The social conditions within which young people live also shape their lives, and these youth “invariably draw on social networks, groups, family ties and other resources to negotiate access to employment” (Lolwana, Ngcwangu, Millenaar & Martin, 2015, p. 13). This view is supported by Schöer, Rankin and Roberts (2014) who found that the most effective channel for matching youth and lower income groups in South Africa with possible jobs, based on empirical evidence (surveys), is through social networks (links with family and friends) – two out of three people who found employment according to these surveys, used their social networks. For many unemployed youth in South Africa, these critical social networks to assist their transitioning into employment are, however, non-existent (De Lannoy et al., 2018; Lolwana et al., 2015; Schöer et al., 2014).

Deliberations on the relationship between education and the economy have been part of engagements amongst academia, governments, policy makers, education providers, and ordinary citizens for many years. This education-economy relationship is complex and has been, and still is, much contested (Allais, 2015; Gamble, 2016; Wheelahan,

Buchanan & Yu, 2015). Collins (1971) for example holds that education has become central to occupational success in contemporary America, and highlights that many studies have shown that the number of years spent in school is a credible determinant of labour market achievement. This view is supported by van de Werfhorst (2011, p. 1078) who holds that "the higher educated earn more, have higher occupational ranks, have better employment contracts, and have a higher probability to be employed than persons with lower levels of qualification".

Adam Smith (1723-1790), the Scottish economist and philosopher, is viewed by many as one of the earliest proponents of the notion of "human capital" with his view that all amassed and beneficial capacities of people can be considered "capital". Becker (1962, p. 9) describes *investing in human capital* as "activities that influence future real income through the embedding of resources into people". The types of activities that facilitate this process of human capital investment include schooling, on-the-job training, health care and pursuing healthy lifestyles, as well as obtaining information about the economy, the labour market and jobs. Similarly, Schultz (1961) identifies five main categories of activities that enhance human capabilities, namely health facilities and services; on-the-job training; formal education; study programmes for adults that are not organised by employers; and migration of workers and their families to access better job opportunities. "Human capital" theory places strong emphasis on the personal investment of individuals through mainly formal education, to ensure employment. The onus to ensure employment is therefore placed on the individual. According to Allais and Nathan (2014, p. 109) "The key idea here is that education enhances individuals' productivity. Employers, it is assumed, are willing to pay higher wages to better educated workers because they will be more productive than uneducated workers". It is therefore assumed that by raising one's level of education, the likelihood of securing a better job that pays higher salaries, is probable.

As alluring as the notion of "human capital" appears, the critique of this theory is varied and comprehensive. Van de Werfhorst (2011) for example holds that according to the human capital theory, it can be assumed that the education system will produce the skills

required by industry, and that employers will be prepared to reward these skills. He argues that within an educational system that has a strong vocational education and training sector, which supply relevant workplace skills, it is more plausible that this theory is befitting to explain the effect of education on earnings. This apparent link between schooling and earnings is, however, not the case in educational systems with a weak vocational education and training sector. He therefore proposes that the direct link between education and the labour market as suggested by the human capital theory is not universal, and does not necessarily apply to all educational and employment realities (van de Werfhorst, 2011). In their critique of the human capital theory, Bowles and Gintis (1975) do acknowledge the role of education in increasing worker productivity – they differ, however, with how education's economic contribution is narrowly viewed in terms of screening and labelling of workers for possible jobs. They argue that any credible human resources theory should contain theories of production, as well as social reproduction. According to them, "the theory of human capital offers no theory of reproduction at all and presents a very partial theory of production, one which abstracts from the social relations of production in favour of technical relations" (Bowles & Gintis, 1975, p. 75). Their critique of the human capital theory emanates from the Marxian theory of the capitalist firm – which views the firm as a place where production with both social and technical aspects take place; and where power relations impact on how production takes place. They further hold that a better skilled workforce is not necessarily a more productive and profitable one. They therefore dispute the fact that higher levels of skill lead to higher levels of productivity, better jobs and consequently better salaries (Bowles & Gintis, 1975).

Collins (1971) also questions whether higher levels of education translate into increased individual productivity or not, and argues that "the better educated employees are not generally more productive, and in some cases are less productive" (Collins, 1971, p. 1006). Also, the available evidence suggests that educational requirements for employment do not prioritise articulation in terms of required skills levels, but rather preferred personal and social attributes of prospective new employees. Bowles (1977) argues similarly, and points out that the hierarchical division of labour that is prevalent

within workplaces creates class structures within society, each with their own culture and that “the operation of the labor market translates differences in class culture into income inequalities and occupational hierarchies” (Bowles, 1977, p. 147). The values and personal attributes of an individual, as well as the characteristics of the appropriate class culture of such an individual, are used to gauge the likelihood of the person securing a prominent job that pays well. Higher levels of education have therefore become more a selection tool for jobs, rather than an indication of ability for productivity of those individuals hired for these jobs.

In summary, the authors who critique the assumptions of human capital theory highlight that the education-labour market relationship is much more complex than what is proposed by the proponents of the theory. Although these critics acknowledge that education does indeed play an integral role in the probability of labour market success, it is not the only determinant (Bowles, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1975; Collins, 1971). They highlight the importance of the social relations, as well as power struggles that play out within the education-work space, in determining labour market success. Also, higher levels of education do not necessarily mean higher levels of productivity – rather, “educational qualifications are used as a screening device that gives broad information about individuals relative to each other” (Allais & Nathan, 2014, p. 110). Although the critique of the “human capital theory” is extensive, this theory does appear, despite the critique, to have an appeal for many. The reason for the allure of this theory, most probably, emanates from the appeal of a “clear and uncomplicated” pathway between education and labour market success. Also, by placing the onus on individuals to increase their education levels, which will enhance their skills and improve their chances of finding a well-paying job, it appears as if it is possible for everyone to secure a quality job – provided that they improve their education levels, that they improve their “human capital”. The appeal of the human capital theory therefore appears to stem from the perceived unambiguous, achievable pathway between education and labour market success, which is accessible to all who are prepared to invest in their personal human capital. However, it is worth noting that by placing the onus to secure employment on the individual, the role

and contribution of government in the education-labour market transitions of individuals is played down or diminished.

Having explored the nature of education and work linkages, the next section examines the education component of these linkages, by investigating the basic education system in South Africa. The achievements and challenges of the system since 1994 are highlighted, and the link between the quality of the system and the prospects of school leavers transitioning into economic activity, are investigated.

### 2.1.3 South African Basic Education System.

The capabilities that young people require for employment or self-employment are built onto the knowledge, skills and personal attributes that they have acquired during their schooling. The quality of schooling in a particular country is therefore relevant to the discussion on how prepared young people are for employment or self-employment after exiting the education system. The South African post-apartheid government has embarked on extensive education policy reforms which were intended to improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in the poorest schools in the country (Soudien, 2007; van der Berg, 2008). The country has seen, since the advent of democracy in 1994, higher levels of educational enrolments compared to other emerging economies, according to Murtin (2013) and the OECD (2017). This educational progress is evident in the growth in primary and secondary school participation rates; with 89% of the South African population older than 15 years being literate by 2004, whilst this achievement is even higher for the 15-24 year old cohort, with 98% of them being literate by 2004.

The drawback to this educational advancement, however, is the fact that the quality of basic education has remained low for the majority of Black African learners. The evidence for this assertion is the results from various international and national surveys done on the schooling system in South Africa, and the poor results achieved by learners from the schools in the poorest areas, which mainly service Black African learners (Jacobs & Hart, 2012; Murtin, 2013). These tests include those international tests that ascertain the

competence of learners in reading (for example PIRLS [the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study]) as well as mathematics (for example TIMSS [the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study]). Performance by South African learners in both tests has been dismal over the years (Soudien, 2007; van der Berg, 2008). This lack of quality improvement in the education system has a negative impact on the skills levels of the learners in the schools, and therefore restricts their prospects of labour market entry and progress, when they exit the education system.

Furthermore, Murtin (2013) argues that the areas that require attention to facilitate improved learner outputs in the South African schooling system include, amongst others, education resources (for example school infrastructure, equipment and learning materials), as well as the quality of teaching and learning. Linked to the quality of teaching and learning is the issue of the involvement of teacher unions in schools, and the impact of their activities on the quality of teaching and learning. The issue of teacher unions, their *militancy* and involvement in the fight against apartheid, as well as their perceived role in promoting the quality of teaching and learning has been contentious according to Msila (2014). It is suggested, by various education commentators, that teacher unions (particularly at the poorest schools) are more concerned with the rights of their members as workers, than with professional conduct and development (of their members), and their role in improving the quality of teaching and learning and improved learner performance (Msila, 2014).

Having explored the performance of the basic education system in South Africa, the focus of this chapter now shifts to the country's post-school education and training (PSET) system. The next section deals with skill formation in South Africa, by first describing the features of "collective" and "liberal" skill formation systems. The reforms of the country's education and training system that have been introduced since 1994 are then described, and an indication is also provided on the perceived results of these reforms. The features of the contemporary South African skills development system are elaborated on, as well as the factors that impacted on, and resulted in the development of the current system.

### 2.1.4 Skill Formation in South Africa.

#### *2.1.4.1 Categories of Skill Formation Systems in Developed Countries.*

The available literature points to two main categories of skill formation systems within the context of developed nations: “collective” skill formation systems and “liberal” skill formation systems. Collective skill formation systems are predominantly found in countries that are portrayed as “coordinated market economies” (CMEs) (as defined by Hall and Soskice (2001) in the “varieties of capitalism” literature) according to Busemeyer and Trampusch (2012). In co-ordinated market economies “firms depend more heavily on non-market relationships to coordinate their endeavors with other actors and to construct their core competencies” (Hall & Soskice, 2001, p. 8). These co-ordinated market economies prioritise vocational education and training, with a combination of workplace-based training which is conducted within firms, and theoretical education which is conducted in vocational schools, producing industry-specific as well as firm-specific skills (Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2012; Iversen & Stephens, 2008). Germany and Denmark are examples of countries with collective skill formation systems. These skill formation systems have received significant attention and have been applauded by both academia and global observers, “because they combine low levels of youth unemployment with high-quality occupational skills and thereby bolster the competitiveness of economies” (Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2012, p. 4). The vocational education and training system of such countries is “collectively organised” – due to the active involvement and co-operation of the state, firms and intermediaries (e.g. industry bodies) in the skill formation process. As a result, firstly, firms pay for training and also administer training within the workplace; secondly, intermediaries play an active role in the administration of training, as well as in the transformation of these skill formation systems; thirdly, transferable and certifiable occupational skills are produced by these systems; and lastly, the sites of training include both workplaces as well as education institutions (Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2012).

In liberal market economies (LMEs) “firms coordinate their activities primarily via hierarchies and competitive market arrangements” (Hall & Soskice, 2001, p. 8). These market relationships are characterised by arms-length and formal business interactions between providers and consumers of products and services. Within LMEs “competition” is the general means of business engagement, and “liberal skill formation systems” are prevalent within these economies. Australia and the United Kingdom (UK) are examples of liberal market economies with liberal skill formation systems. The education and training systems in liberal market economies prioritise *formal academic education* and *general skills* and although in-house training takes place within firms, it is not necessarily apprenticeships (of CMEs) that produce firm-specific or industry-specific skills (Hall & Soskice, 2001). With regard to the link between education and the labour market, Cooney and Long (2010) argue that this connection is relatively weak and unstructured, and that the pathways that do indeed exist are constructed more around individuals than around institutions. Moreover, within these liberal market economies, labour union organisation is weak, which impacts negatively on skill formation as company managers can direct and control aspects of training unilaterally (Cooney & Long, 2010).

Shifting the focus to skill formation in South Africa, the post-apartheid South African government embarked on extensive education and training policy reforms, which were intended to remedy and redress the imbalances of the apartheid past, as manifested in the racialised labour markets and “low skills regime” of the country (Ngcwangu, 2014). Although the post-apartheid skills development system has the mechanisms required for a collective skill formation system, the implementation of the system has not delivered the associated benefits of such a system, as will be shown in the next section of this chapter.

#### *2.1.4.2 South African Skill Formation System.*

Against the background of the South African skill formation journey, Allais (2013) argues that there are four underlying problems that have prevented the country from raising the skills levels of its people. Firstly, “skills development” is seen as the “panacea” to lift people out of poverty and put them on a path of economic prosperity – to either find a job or start their own small business. Ngcwangu (2014, p. 253) suggests that “the emphasis

on skilling is placed as a definite part of the solutions to what is referred to as the 'triple challenge' of unemployment, inequality and poverty in South Africa". The contribution of vocational education, and particularly colleges and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) is viewed as providing a solution to these problems. The reality, however, is that the formal job market is small and cannot provide jobs for all unemployed people, and finding a job does not mean escaping poverty, as many jobs require low-level skills that pay poor wages. Also, starting a small business does not always translate into improved financial status and better living conditions for new business owners.

Secondly, the basic education system of the country is characterised by weak learning outcomes and throughput rates, which have dire consequences for the skills system as it is difficult to build robust vocational skills on a weak general education base. This view is supported by various educational commentators (De Lannoy et al., 2018; Murtin, 2013; Soudien, 2007; van der Berg, 2008). Thirdly, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) has, as is the case in other countries with outcomes-based qualification framework models, embedded a narrow notion of skills, reflecting a "reliance on employer-specified competencies and the breaking up of learning programmes into smaller pieces" (Allais, 2013, p. 212). The result of this narrow notion of skills has resulted in the achievement of low-level competences amongst learners exposed to learning programmes on the NQF. And fourthly, the existence of a highly regulated skills system in the country, which requires of training providers (particularly public vocational colleges) to comply with a highly bureaucratic provision model, does not facilitate the strengthening and expansion of public provision (Allais, 2013).

The new democratic South Africa started out with a technical and vocational education system with weak, if any, links with industry, producing qualifications that are not valued by employers, and that do not ensure employment for graduates of the system (Badroodien, 2004). Wedekind (2014) points out that the contemporary South African college system emerged from the apartheid-era technical training system which mainly provided training of artisans (through the apprenticeship system), with theoretical training provided by the technical colleges while practical training was provided for in firms or

within the training centres of large firms and state-owned enterprises. The strongest component of the apartheid-era technical and vocational education system was the apprenticeship system, according to Allais (2013). The apprenticeship system was, however, reserved for white young males and provided a structured pathway for them into their first jobs, which required technical skills. Employment for these apprentices was guaranteed due to the high demand for qualified technical labour from state-owned entities, as well as the preferential employment policies for whites at the time (Kraak, 2008). The apprenticeship system was only opened up to black youth and workers through the promulgation of the *Manpower Training Act* of 1981. The opening up of the apprenticeship system to those who were previously excluded unfortunately coincided with the emergence of a "disconnect" between the theoretical (colleges) and practical components of the system, particularly as government and state-owned enterprises cut down on their training functions. New apprentices were now not linked to specific workplaces, and training was also not funded by employers. As a result the training became mainly theoretical with trainees struggling to secure sites for the workplace training component (Badroodien, 2004; Gamble, 2003; Kraak, 2008; Wedekind, 2014).

In addition, Kraak (2008) points to the poor articulation that defines the relationships between employers, colleges and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), and the impact that the poor articulation has on the most disadvantaged, namely the unemployed youth. Even though many more opportunities now exist for black youth, many of them are not able to secure sustainable employment on completion of their studies due to weak linkages between employers, colleges and SETAs. Also, employers doubt the value of the qualifications of the vocational institutions and steer clear of appointing their graduates. The challenge facing these young black students is therefore two-fold – the qualifications that they obtain are not valued by employers, and the absence of structured pathways from education to work means that it is unlikely that they will find sustainable employment upon completion of their studies (Kraak, 2008). Moreover, Wedekind (2014) highlights the challenges that have beset the broader post-apartheid vocational college system – poor academic outputs and credibility of college

qualifications, lack of articulation, poor synergy with economic priorities, as well as weak linkages with industry.

In conclusion, the available evidence suggests that the skills reforms that were implemented by the post-apartheid South African government did not produce the envisaged results (Allais, 2013). This lack of significant progress is mainly as a result of the unrealistic expectation of the vocational education system to solve social and economic challenges, rather than solving only educational challenges. What is therefore required to assist in addressing the youth unemployment challenge is a deliberate economic intervention; this is so aptly articulated by Ngcwangu (2014, p. 260): “outside of a fundamental restructuring of the South African economy dealing particularly with high levels of concentration, there can be no meaningful skills development agenda”.

Having explored skill formation in South Africa, as well as the nature and results of the skills reforms that were introduced by the democratic government since 1994, the next section of this chapter explores aspects related to the transitioning of young people into *employment*. It is proposed that a deliberate, co-ordinated, multi-pronged approach by a range of role-players is required for sustainable and meaningful employment of these youth. The challenges that young people encounter when searching for employment are then discussed, which include the absence of social networks that can inform them of and link them to possible job opportunities. In addition, the evidence suggests that providing only training opportunities for young people is not enough for them to transition into economic activity.

## 2.1.5 Transitioning Unemployed Youth into Economic Activity.

### *2.1.5.1 Employment.*

There seems to be consensus amongst many that youth employment that is sustainable and meaningful, and that does provide decent work to the youth, cannot be achieved piecemeal or in isolation. Rather, what is required is a deliberate, co-ordinated, multi-pronged approach by a range of role-players (International Labour Organization, 2012).

This view is supported by Meyer (2017) as well as Marock (2008, p. 4) who holds that "to address the complexities of youth employability a multi-disciplinary as well as a multi-sectoral analytical approach is necessary". Also, the International Labour Organization (ILO) contend that "youth employment is a cross-cutting and high-priority issue that needs to be addressed within the framework of an interdisciplinary, multi-sectoral, and multi-stakeholder approach" (International Labour Organization, 2012, p. vii). Moreover, Lolwana et al. (2015, p. 6) argue that

> the problem of youth unemployment has tended to be treated as an individual problem by illustrating the 'skills deficits' of young people rather than taking into account the critical role of public policy and institutions that mediate access to skills training and employment.

The *interdisciplinary, multi-sectoral, and multi-stakeholder approach* to address youth unemployment, as proposed by the ILO, is not a reality in South Africa, however. Rather, the youth employment interventions in the country are driven by government, private sector or non-government organisations (NGOs), with limited integration and co-operation across these sectors (Marock, 2008).

With regard to the work done by the International Labour Organization (2012) on *Youth Employment Interventions in Africa*, they highlight that *skills development* is the central thematic area for most of the youth development interventions that they had studied. They hold the view that relevant skills development interventions do make young people more employable and facilitate their uptake in the labour market. Providing only training opportunities for young people is, however, not enough for them to transition into economic activity, according to Palmer (2007) and Singh (2016). What is required additionally is the creation of an enabling environment to facilitate a smooth transitioning for youth into either employment or entrepreneurial activity. The government's role in establishing this enabling environment for economic activity is critical, according to Palmer (2007). In addition, the International Labour Organization (2012) also found limited private sector involvement in the youth development programmes across most African countries. This trend is also true for South Africa, as is the lack of decisive

government intervention in creating an enabling environment to transition unemployed young people into economic activity.

The focus of this chapter now shifts towards entrepreneurship by emphasising the role that entrepreneurship and small business development can play towards alleviating poverty, inequality and unemployment, and the possible contribution of entrepreneurial endeavours towards economic and social development. The status of entrepreneurship in South Africa is then focused on, by highlighting how becoming an entrepreneur is the last resort for most South African young people. Challenges for prospective and emerging entrepreneurs are emphasised, which include a lack of finance, barriers to accessing markets, as well as a dearth of the requisite skills to start and run successful enterprises.

#### *2.1.5.2 Entrepreneurship.*

Promoting entrepreneurship and expanding and growing the small business sector can contribute meaningfully to job creation, tackle unemployment and inequality, as well as enable sustainable economic and social development; this is particularly relevant to emerging economies with high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment (Meyer, 2017; OECD, 2018). The South African government has, two decades ago, realised the contribution that entrepreneurship and small, micro and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) could make towards industrialisation and job creation (AfDB/OECD/UNDP, 2017). The country has, however, not been able to realise the full potential of entrepreneurship in growing the economy and creating employment according to AfDB/OECD/UNDP (2017, p. 2), who hold that “success has been limited due to inadequate technical and business management skills; lack of experienced mentoring of entrepreneurs; barriers to business entry, and lack of access to finance”. Also, Gregory (2018) holds that becoming an entrepreneur, or being self-employed, remains the last resort for most South Africans, particularly youth, when having to choose a career. The view that entrepreneurial pursuit is particularly low in South Africa is supported by Lewis and Gasealahwe (2017, p. 6) who argue that “large incumbent firms continue to dominate many South African markets and rates of entrepreneurship are relatively low compared to other emerging market economies”.

AfDB/OECD/UNDP (2017) highlight three factors that prevent most entrepreneurs in South Africa from meaningfully contributing to the economy of the country, in their view. Firstly, there is a lack of the required skills amongst prospective entrepreneurs for running a successful business, which include literacy and numeracy skills, technical skills, business operation and management skills, as well as inadequate support for these entrepreneurs. Secondly, there are barriers to accessing markets for these entrepreneurs, as the markets are often dominated by big private sector businesses. And thirdly, as also suggested by Gregory (2018), these entrepreneurs struggle to obtain financing for their businesses, with many of them not being aware of funding sources that are available and how to access these funds. Lewis and Gasealahwe (2017) also stress the value of having the required finances, the requisite knowledge and skills as well as access to networks to succeed as an entrepreneur. Erasing obstacles to entry (for example the overall level of business regulation and how enabling or restrictive it is), knowing a successful entrepreneur (as a possible role-model), previously acquired work experience, as well as the confidence and belief of personal competence to succeed, are additional factors required for entrepreneurial activity, according to them.

Furthermore, evidence across the world proposes that training and business support services have been the most successful components of entrepreneurship and small business development programmes. The value of entrepreneurial education and training is also highlighted by Meyer (2017) in the pursuit of capacitating and building resilient entrepreneurs with the requisite knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to succeed. Within South Africa, enterprise development interventions are varied and offered by government, private sector as well as the non-government sector, targeting various interest groups (e.g. unemployed youth, women, etc.). These interventions do include the components of training and business support services, but are not co-ordinated and are not delivered capably, which results in the interventions being ineffective with the possible impact of these interventions being diminished (Lewis & Gasealahwe, 2017).

The last section of this chapter explores to what extent unemployed young people in rural areas are able to benefit from the various skills development, employment and entrepreneurship initiatives that are being implemented.

### 2.1.6 Skilling and Transitioning Unemployed Rural Youth into Economic Activity.

It is worth noting that not much is known about skills development within a rural context, as most of the policies or research on skills development have a sectoral or occupational lens, rather than looking at skills development through a spatial location lens. There appears therefore to be limited research on rural skills development, both from a supply and a demand perspective. Also, rural skills are generally associated with agriculture and other primary sectors (e.g. mining) as these primary sectors and agricultural activities are perceived as the main contributors to economic development in rural areas (Jacobs & Hart, 2012; Maluleke & Harley, 2016). It is, however, interesting to note that for various reasons, particularly historical (apartheid past) in the case of South Africa, agriculture is not viewed as a viable and preferred path out of unemployment and poverty, and into economic activity, for many unemployed rural young people. These young people rather prefer to acquire skills (e.g. information technology (IT) or business) that they perceive would provide them with more opportunities and mobility to find employment within urban areas (Jacobs & Hart, 2012).

The third version of the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) of South Africa acknowledges the urban bias of the country's economic development path and previous skills development strategies and interventions. The NSDS III therefore prioritises skills for rural development and rural people. (Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2016). Also, the NSDS III highlights how youth are the most marginalised when considering the high levels of unemployment amongst rural communities. Particular attention is therefore proposed by the strategy to skill young people so that they can transition into economic activity (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2016). When taking into account the deliberate focus of the NSDS III on youth, as well as

on rural development, one would assume that rural youth would be prime beneficiaries of the various interventions that were implemented as part of the strategy, since 2011.

The National Skills Authority (NSA) of South Africa commissioned an evaluation of the implementation of the NSDS III which was published in 2019. The evaluation confirmed the youth bias of the strategy with 76% of those individuals who had accessed funded skills development opportunities (as part of the implementation of the strategy) being under the age of 35 years, 32% of these youth being younger than 25 years. The evaluation report acknowledged the fact that although the skills system has indeed made a contribution towards the challenge of youth unemployment, by skilling unemployed youth, the contribution has been minimal given the extent of the unemployment challenge amongst young people in the country. A further concern highlighted in the report is the low throughput rate for the skills development interventions. An example is clearly seen with learnerships, the primary skills development intervention for the NARYSEC Programme: the total enrolment was 342 591 for the period of the evaluation (2011 to 2016), with a total of 189 287 learners completing their learnership, an average throughput rate of 55% (National Skills Authority [NSA], 2019). Furthermore, the evaluation was not able to establish how many of the young people who have been skilled through these skills development interventions, either found employment or started their own businesses after their training. This was due to a lack of reliable data and the lack of a tracking mechanism for youth who complete their training. The evaluation report does also acknowledge that youth unemployment has not improved since the inception of the NSDS III in 2011 (NSA, 2019). The report does not provide any indication of the number of unemployed rural youth who participated in and completed skills development interventions, or the number of unemployed rural youth who found employment or started their own businesses after their training. This is worrisome given the explicit focus of the NSDS III on capacitating unemployed rural youth to facilitate their transitioning into economic activity. Shifting the focus to other Southern African countries, the International Labour Organization (2012) highlights that on average, youth employment interventions in the region are scarce, notwithstanding the fact that the region has high levels of youth unemployment. Namibia and Botswana, for example, are two countries with extensive

rural footprints and high levels of youth unemployment, but these countries have not implemented any youth employment interventions.

It is clear from the work done by the NSA role-players that small numbers of unemployed youth are benefitting from skills development interventions, and that even fewer youth are transitioned into economic activity after their training. With regard to the support for unemployed rural young people, the picture is starker – with most initiatives appearing not to possess data, and therefore not able to report on the support that is provided to these youth. It does appear as if the rest of the African continent has a similar experience to South Africa with regard to youth employment interventions – Fox et al. (2016, p. i4) suggest that although most African governments have prioritised youth employment programmes as a strategy to alleviate the high levels of youth unemployment on the continent, the reality is that "when evaluated, these programmes are usually found wanting". They cite the Ghana National Youth Employment programme as a public example of such a youth employment programme that did not deliver the required results to transition the youth into employment.

### 2.1.7 Conclusion.

This section emphasised, within the context of the transitioning of young people, how contested the relationship between education and the world of work is. Special attention was paid to the varied and complex debates with regard to the "human capital" theory in relation to the education-labour market relationship. The motivation for this emphasis is because the "human capital" theory frames, to a large extent, the South African education-labour market discourse and policy formulation process. Although the critique of the "human capital" theory is extensive, this theory nonetheless appears to have an appeal for many, stemming from the perceived unambiguous, achievable pathway between education and labour market success, which is accessible to all who are prepared to invest in their personal human capital.

Focusing on the education component of the education-labour market linkages, the current state of the South African basic education system was discussed. It was

suggested that the main achievement of the system was the increased enrolment trend of the system, while the weaknesses include a lack of educational resources, as well as the poor quality of teaching and learning in particularly the disadvantaged schools. Shifting focus to post-school education and training (PSET), skill formation within the South African context was discussed against the background of skill formation literature; how “collective” and “liberal” skill formation systems are organised, as articulated by Busemeyer and Trampusch (2012). The skill formation system in South Africa has seen extensive reforms since the election of the first democratic government in 1994. However, there seems to be agreement amongst various commentators that the available evidence suggests that the skills reforms that were implemented did not produce the envisaged results; particularly in terms of the challenges that have beset the broader post-apartheid vocational college system – poor academic outputs and credibility of college qualifications, lack of articulation, poor synergy with economic priorities, as well as weak linkages with industry (Wedekind, 2014).

The concluding sections dealt with the transitioning of unemployed youth into either employment or entrepreneurial activity. With regard to employment, it was proposed by the International Labour Organization (2012) that a deliberate, co-ordinated, multi-pronged approach by a range of role-players is required for sustainable and meaningful employment of the youth. This approach is not prevalent in South Africa. Also, it was shown that providing only training opportunities for young people is not enough for them to transition into economic activity – what is required additionally is the creation of an enabling environment, particularly by government, to facilitate this transitioning. The significant role that entrepreneurship and small business development play towards alleviating unemployment and the contribution of these entrepreneurial endeavours towards economic and social development, were also discussed. The status of entrepreneurship in South Africa was underscored by highlighting how becoming an entrepreneur is the last resort for most South African young people. Challenges for prospective and emerging entrepreneurs include a lack of finance, barriers to accessing markets, as well as a dearth of the requisite skills to start and run successful enterprises. Turning the attention to unemployed rural young people, and the support that is provided

to them in relation to skills development interventions and facilitating their transitions into economic activity, the literature suggests that data in this regard is limited and is often not available. This shortcoming results in organisations (for example the NSA stakeholders) not reporting on beneficiaries of their skills development, employment and enterprise development interventions from this target group.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed painted a picture of a difficult journey for unemployed young people to transition into either employment or entrepreneurship, with this journey being even tougher for young people who reside in rural areas. It is therefore suggested that if we are to assist unemployed rural young people to transition into economic activity, then we might have to think differently about employment and jobs, and we will also have to consider economic reforms that will enable economic growth that creates jobs and facilitate entrepreneurship development. For employment that is sustainable and meaningful, and that provides decent work to the youth, a deliberate, co-ordinated, multi-pronged approach by a range of role-players is proposed. For young emerging entrepreneurs to succeed, it is suggested that an enabling environment must be created for these youth, which should include the provision of adequate technical and business management skills, their having access to experienced mentors, barriers to business entry being removed, and financial assistance being provided for their businesses.

The next section provides the details of the conceptual framework of this research study.

## 2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that provided the “lens” through which the data was obtained, captured and analysed was shaped by the concepts of *youth transitions and pathways, employability and work readiness* as well as *entrepreneurship*.

### 2.2.1 Youth Transitions and Pathways.

The transitions of young people into economic activity generally, have become uncertain, and young people are also over-represented in most forms of precarious work when they are able to transition into employment successfully. The pathways for young people into economic activity are varied and extensive, and their labour market transition is not a linear transition. Rather, the labour market transition of the youth is complex and often fragmented – for example, youth move from education into employment (either formal or informal) but can find themselves unemployed again during such periods of employment. Also, youth often transition from education into the labour market, only then to return to the education system (Furlong & Kelly, 2005; Kogan & Unt, 2005; Walther, 2006; Wheelahan, Moodie & Buchanan, 2012).

The "varieties of capitalism" literature (Hall & Soskice, 2001) explores the relationship between education and the labour market within the context of *co-ordinated market economies* and *liberal market economies*. This literature suggests that different countries have different transition systems, and that these systems reflect the character of the political, economic and social institutions of a specific country (Wheelahan et al., 2015).

Within the context of education-work linkages, Iannelli and Raffe (2007, p. 50) define the concept of "transition system" as "the relatively enduring features of a country's institutional and structural arrangements which shape young people's transitions". In countries with strong linkages, there is regular interaction and communication between educational and labour market role-players. Firms and organised labour, for example, play an active role in the conceptualisation, development and implementation of vocational training programmes, and as a result "vocational education is more likely to contribute to young people's human capital, because the skills it develops more closely reflect employers' demands and current occupational practice" (Iannelli & Raffe, 2007, p. 50). Moreover, the vocational programmes where educational and labour market role-players work closely together, have more credibility and currency in the labour market, as employers know what is being imparted, as well as what they are getting when they employ young people with these qualifications. Also, during training, learners have

contact with employers and are able to access the required recruitment networks of these firms, to secure employment on completion of their studies (Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2012; Iannelli & Raffe, 2007; Wheelahan et al., 2015).

Educational “pathways” are shaped by the labour market of a specific country, and the labour market also influences how young people can utilise their education and qualifications to apply for, and secure, jobs. The links between education and the labour market are, however, unstructured (except for regulated professions, e.g. nurses and engineers) and also differ within and across different economic sectors. To strengthen the education and labour market link, and to facilitate better alignment between qualifications, pathways and jobs, interventions are required on both the supply side (education and training system) and demand side (economy and labour market) (Wheelahan et al., 2012; Wheelahan et al., 2015). The concept of “pathways” has, according to Keep (2012), emerged in many countries as a useful tool for securing various policy goals pertaining to skill formation, transitions and employment. It is argued that clearly defined pathways that link education with either work or further studies is one of the crucial elements for a well-defined transition system – a view that is also supported by Raffe (2008).

“Pathways” is a useful concept for organising the current debates with regard to education-work transitions, and can also provide a connection between policy and empirical research, as well as between policy and theoretical debates within the education-work transitions space (Raffe, 2003). The concept of pathways has received criticism from various commentators, for example Cohen and Ainley (2000), Dwyer and Wyn (1998) and Furlong and Evans (1997). Raffe (2003) views “pathways” as a *metaphor*, a way of relaying meaning; and not necessarily as a theory or robust tool for analysis. He does, however, acknowledge the drawbacks of metaphors, highlighting that they can be vague, that they can be used in a myriad of ways, and that they can have different meanings. He further proposes that the solution is not to ditch the concept, but for the users of the concept to be much more deliberate and reflective when using it. It is worth noting that many commentators (e.g. Keep, 2012; Vaughan, 2003; Wheelahan et

al., 2012; Wheelahan et al., 2015) use Raffe's *metaphor* notion of the pathways concept. Moreover, Vaughan (2003) argues that "pathways" seems to suggest a smooth and uninterrupted experience and progression for people within and between educational institutions, and between educational institutions and the workplace. This is a perspective which is supported by McKenzie (2000, p. 1), who refers to the "imagery of the pathway, with its sense of order and structure, and linked education and training experiences that lead to employment". This suggested orderly and structured link between education and training and employment is, however, not the reality in South Africa. Rather, the labour market transition of the South African youth is complex and often fragmented (Furlong & Kelly, 2005; Kogan & Unt, 2005; Walther, 2006; Wheelahan et al., 2012).

According to Raffe (2003), the metaphor concept of pathways is used in three different ways in policy analysis and research across different countries, namely: (1) to differentiate the key types of pathways from education to employment, their strengths and weaknesses, and to establish their role and prominence in a functional transition system; (2) to investigate the linkages and dependencies between pathways, and to establish how systems of pathways can be organised for optimal results; and (3) to scrutinise and understand the correlation between pathways and the "navigations" of the youth who utilise these pathways, specifically in relation to how best these pathways can be structured so that the young people are *enabled* to direct and manage their own education-labour market journeys.

The third use as articulated above is of particular significance for this study. This use of the pathways concept relates to the analysis of the relationship between pathways, as organised opportunities for young people, and the deliberate use of these opportunities by the young people. Raffe (2003) introduces the corresponding metaphor of "navigations" to explain this relationship by holding that "if the concept of pathways reflects a policy-making perspective, the concept of navigations reflects the perspective of individuals who use pathways" (Raffe, 2003, p. 13). In addition, Keep (2012) suggests that transitions from education to work have been a policy focus in OECD countries for at least the last 30 years. These policies appear to pick up on the *agency* of the youth that

should be developed and supported, so that they can steer their own career paths and decide on and control their own transition processes (Keep, 2012; Vaughan, 2003). This trend also suggests a shift towards individuals (away from employers or governments) to manage their own education, careers and transitioning into the labour market – a link therefore with the "human capital" theory. This shift towards individuals is, however, problematic as it diminishes the responsibility placed on government and industry (employers) for job creation, which could result in individuals being "blamed" if they cannot secure employment.

Having dealt with the concepts of transitions and pathways, the focus of this chapter now shifts towards the concepts of employability and work readiness.

### 2.2.2 Employability and Work Readiness.

There is no internationally agreed upon definition of "employability". The different cultures, as well as the varied economic and labour market systems within countries, mean that different nations attach different meanings to the concept "employability". Also, the nature and meaning of the concept has changed over time, with the developments and changes experienced with regard to the nature of work – from long-term employment to more precarious work (Datta et al., 2007; Marock, 2008). The concept "employability" is also highly contested, with Datta et al. (2007, p. 9) proposing that "'employability' appears to be an approach or orientation rather than an operational concept, with little theoretical backup". It also is true that the concept has initiated and shaped poverty alleviation and job creation policies in countries across the world. Datta et al. (2007, p. 11), in attempting to formulate a definition for "employability", suggest that "employable means having the qualities to maintain employment, progress in work place and able to be employed in different work place". Meyer (2017, p. 59), on the other hand, defines employability as "the personal aptitude to convey and complete work related tasks". According to McKenzie and Wurzburg (as cited in Marock, 2008, p. 5), generally speaking "lifelong employability is the capacity to be productive and to hold rewarding jobs during a working life, and to be equipped with up-to-date skills and competences".

Datta et al. (2007) suggest that there appears to be consensus that three types of qualities are significant with regard to assessing a prospective candidate's employability. Firstly, the *core technical and academic skills* of a specific job are significant and are often developed through academic studies. Meyer (2017) supports the notion that relevant technical skills enhance the employability of candidates. Secondly, *process skills*, which are developed through work experience, are important; for example, the skills required for teamwork and problem solving. And thirdly, *personal attributes*, which complement the technical and process skills of an employee, are also of significance. These attributes include for example integrity, flexibility and being on time. Moreover, Datta et al. (2007) highlight that process skills and personal attributes are considered as soft skills, and are preferred over technical skills by employers who value employability as these employers prefer potential (of prospective employees) over already acquired skills sets. In addition, the value of practical work experience in assisting youth to secure employment, particularly that "first job", was highlighted in the work of Marock (2008). Practical work experience improves the technical skills of young people, builds their confidence, and exposes them to problem-solving and teamwork techniques.

Both the supply and demand sides have a responsibility with regard to employability. The supply side (education and training system) should build the core technical and academic skills required by a specific job, while firms should provide the enabling environment for building the required process skills and by also providing on-the-job training. Prospective candidates should build the requisite attributes required for work, both while studying as well as during employment (Datta et al., 2007). What is interesting to note is the fact that various commentators do underscore the personal responsibility placed upon individuals with regard to their own employability, referring to the responsibility to develop the requisite knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that are attractive for prospective employers. These commentators do, however, also highlight the importance of the *context* within which a specific individual is located in shaping employability – which includes the education and training activities that build and develop the personal capacity, as well as the institutions (e.g. schools, colleges and firms) that enable or hinder the

employability of individuals, and the economy and labour market within which the individual strives to secure employment (Marock, 2008).

According to Caballero, Walker and Fuller-Tyszkiewicz (2011), the concept of "work readiness" is comparatively new, and not much empirical research has been done in this area. The research, however, that has been conducted points towards employers placing increased significance on graduates of the education and training system and new labour market entrants being "work ready". The reality of an ever-changing workplace, due to economic and technological advancements, and the need to have employees with the requisite capacity to deal with the demands of the new workplace, has illuminated the need for "work ready" new labour market entrants (Caballero & Walker, 2010). The "work readiness" concept appears in the literature as an indicator of the potential of graduates of the education and training system, in relation to the likelihood of their success in the workplace. In addition, the success in the work environment refers to what extent these graduates are able to secure employment (by meeting the selection criteria of employers), as well as progress within a firm (once employed) in relation to securing promotion and career progression (Caballero et al., 2011). Writing on the topic of career development of youth in Malaysia, Lau, Baranovich and Leong (2018) agree with Caballero et al. (2011) that the concept of "work readiness" is relatively new, and highlight that the concept has not received the required attention in Malaysia. They furthermore hold that work readiness is a work-related skill that is imperative for both adults and young people to secure employment and achieve success as entry-level employees within a work context.

The concept of work readiness is, however, contested. The contestation is in relation to how "work readiness" is defined, as well as how plausible "work readiness" is as a predictor of graduate success. Work readiness is defined as "the extent to which graduates are perceived to possess the attitudes and attributes that make them prepared or ready for success in the work environment" (Caballero et al., 2011, p. 42). For Lau et al. (2018, p. 18) "work readiness is the first credential for entry-level workers that incorporates practical readiness as well as academic readiness to carry out the tasks and responsibilities most important to successful performance of entry level work in the 21st

century workplace". LeFebvre (2013, p. 30) holds that "a 'work ready' individual possesses the foundational skills needed to be minimally qualified for a specific occupation as determined through a job analysis or occupational profile". Within this context, she defines *foundational skills* as "the fundamental, portable skills that are critical to training and workplace success" (LeFebvre, 2013, p. 30). These skills, according to her, form the base for further learning, and these skills are not job-specific, but rather have relevance across various jobs, occupations and economic sectors.

With regard to which skills are viewed as *work readiness skills*, Clark (2013, p. 3) suggests that:

> Work readiness skills include both foundational cognitive skills such as reading for information, applied mathematics, locating information, problem solving, and critical thinking and noncognitive skills, or soft skills, which are defined as personal characteristics and behavioral skills that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance, and career prospects such as adaptability, integrity, cooperation, and workplace discipline.

The generic work readiness skills, according to Lau et al. (2018, p. 14) include "communication skills, problem-solving skills, computer literacy, information literacy, ability and willingness to learn, and teamwork". It is worth noting, however, that various studies that were conducted into work readiness and the performance of graduates in the workplace, pointed out that there is no consensus amongst employers on the generic skills and attributes that are to be indicators of work readiness (Caballero & Walker, 2010; Caballero et al., 2011).

In summary, it is clear from the literature reviewed that both "employability" and "work readiness" are contested concepts. There is no consensus amongst academic commentators and employers on which skills make young people *employable* or *work ready*. Also, the required work readiness skills do have generic elements as well as job-specific, technical elements, and these skills are developed during the pre-employment phase (while at educational institutions) as well as while employed (within firms). Individuals, particularly young people, have a responsibility to develop the requisite skills

that would enhance their chances of finding employment, but educational institutions and firms have a responsibility too to build these skills and create an enabling environment to enhance these skills. Various studies conducted into work readiness have however pointed out that there is no consensus amongst employers on the generic skills and attributes that are to be indicators of work readiness. The focus of this chapter now shifts to the concept of “entrepreneurship”.

### 2.2.3 Entrepreneurship.

*Entrepreneurship* has become contemporary in various public debates, with governments and policy-makers proposing entrepreneurship as a viable strategy to alleviate unemployment and contribute towards future economic prosperity for individuals and countries. Notwithstanding the apparent importance and currency of entrepreneurship, a consistent, precise definition of the concept appears to have not materialised, according to Iversen, Jørgensen and Malchow-Møller (2008), and Gutterman (2014). Cunningham and Lischeron (1991) suggest that it is not surprising that a coherent definition of entrepreneurship has not been developed, given the disparity in viewpoints on what an entrepreneur is and what entrepreneurship entails. Within the absence of an agreed-upon definition, Gutterman (2014, p. 1) suggests that “the more viable and useful approach is to view entrepreneurship as a process that includes the discovery, enactment, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities to create future goods and services”. Shane and Venkataraman (2000, p. 218) propose that the field of entrepreneurship is the “scholarly examination of how, by whom, and with what effects opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated, and exploited”. In addition, Kaufmann and Dant (1999) suggest that current definitions of entrepreneurship can broadly be classified into three groupings: firstly, definitions that articulate the attributes reportedly possessed by entrepreneurs; secondly, definitions that articulate the process involved in entrepreneurship, as well as the outcomes of the process; and thirdly, definitions that articulate the entrepreneurial activities that are executed by the entrepreneur.

Moreover, the terms *self-employment* and *entrepreneurship* are often used interchangeably in much of the literature. Some scholars do separate the two terms,

viewing entrepreneurship more in relation to an organisation (as opposed to an individual), with a particular focus on the innovation-oriented culture of the organisation (Kukoc & Regan, 2008). For the purposes of this study, the interchangeable use of the two terms was adopted. Being self-employed is defined as working for oneself, as opposed to being employed by an organisation or working for someone else. Individuals who are self-employed are often described as entrepreneurs, small business owners or consultants (Halvorsen & Morrow-Howell, 2017).

Furthermore, Thurik, Carree, van Stel and Audretsch (2007) propose that there are two definite relationships between unemployment and self-employment: firstly, where high levels of unemployment may serve as a stimulus for unemployed individuals to consider and explore opportunities for self-employment (the unemployment push or the “refugee” effect) ; and secondly, where increased levels of self-employment may be an indicator of improved entrepreneurial activity that could result in a decrease in the levels of unemployment in the future (the pull or “entrepreneurial” effect). The relationship between unemployment and self-employment is contested – with some commentators claiming that unemployment influences self-employment activities, while other scholars hold that start-up firms (through self-employment) employ workers which results in a decrease in unemployment statistics (Pfeiffer & Reize, 1998; Picot, Manser & Lin, 1998; Thurik et al., 2007). With regard to the implications for public policies, Thurik et al. (2007, p. 3) propose that “public policy to generate jobs and reduce unemployment is well served by focusing on entrepreneurship but that it takes considerable time (eight years or more) for the results to become visible”.

Although South Africa has not been able to harness and exploit the full potential of entrepreneurship to create jobs and reduce unemployment, as articulated in the literature review of this study, promoting entrepreneurship amongst unemployed rural youth is of particular significance, given the fact that the formal rural economies are not large and diverse enough to provide employment opportunities for the large numbers of unemployed young people (Jacobs & Hart, 2012).

Figure 1 below illustrates the relationships amongst the overarching purpose of this study, the two key research questions, and the concepts of employability, work readiness and entrepreneurship drawn from the literature. Within the context of these relationships, skills development is proposed as the intervention to assist unemployed young people to *transition* into economic activity – either employment or self-employment. The suggested *pathway* along which young people are to *transition* from the skills development intervention into employment may require aspects of *employability* and *work readiness*. The suggested *pathway* along which young people are to *transition* from the skills development intervention into self-employment may require aspects of *entrepreneurship*.

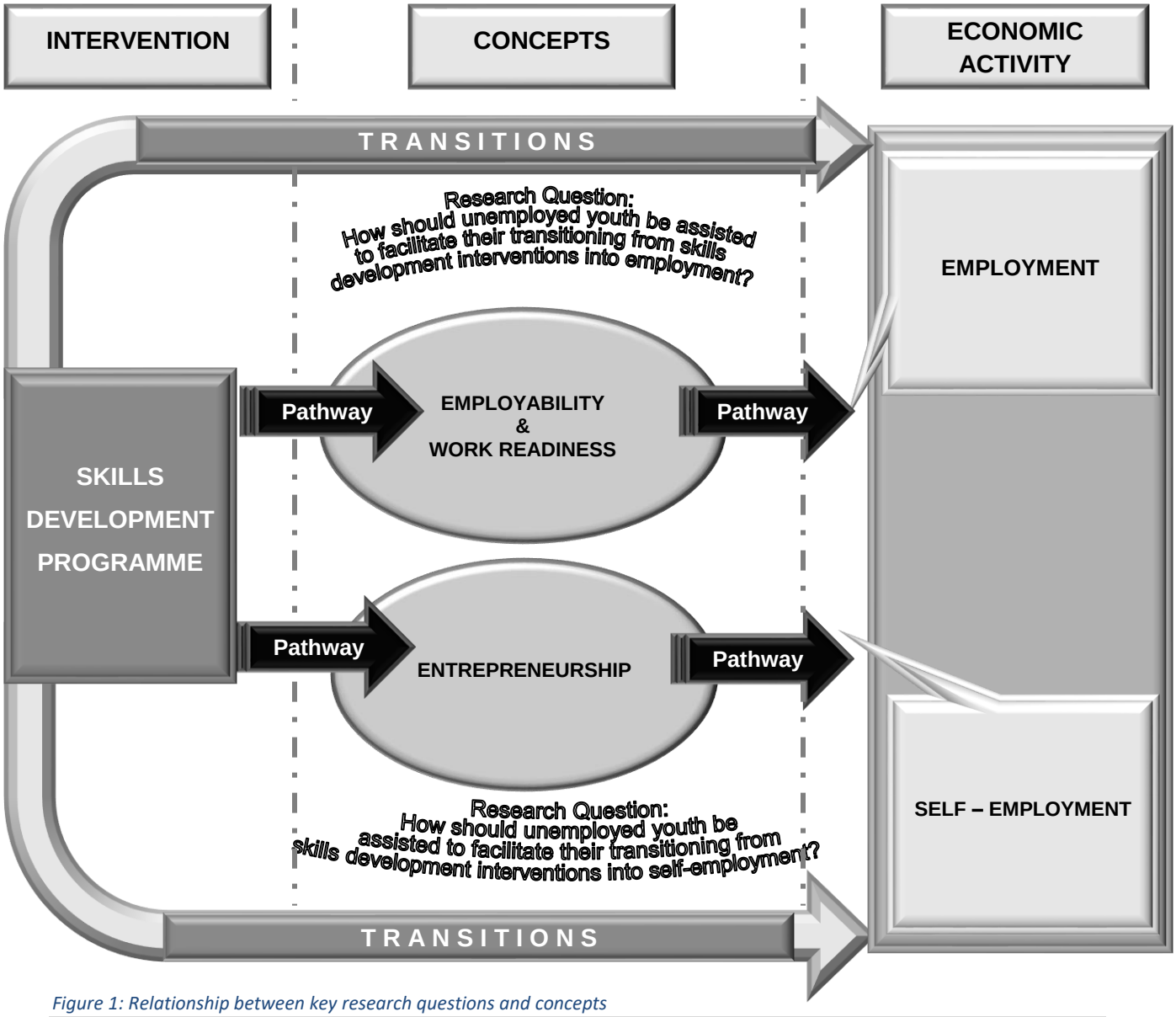


*Figure 1: Relationship between key research questions and concepts*

### 2.2.4 Conclusion.

The literature reviewed for this study painted a picture of a complex and fragmented transitioning of youth from education to the labour market. The education system on the one hand, both basic education and post-school education and training (PSET), is characterised by systemic weaknesses. The quality of basic education has remained low for most of the disadvantaged learners; while the PSET sector is characterised by poor academic outputs and questionable credibility of college qualifications, lack of articulation, poor synergy with economic priorities, as well as weak linkages with industry. The labour market, on the other hand, is characterised by a sluggish economy that does not create jobs, which means that "employment" in its traditional sense would not provide jobs for most unemployed young people. Also, for those young people who want to consider self-employment as a career choice, due to the limited jobs available in the formal economy, the entrepreneurial journey will be challenging – owing to the lack of an enabling environment and the absence of required support for emerging youth entrepreneurs.

To provide for the complex and challenging environment within which South African young people, particularly those in rural areas, have to transition from education to the labour market, I decided to conduct an empirical study, utilising a qualitative research design. The qualitative approach was appropriate, as it allowed me the opportunity to study, in-depth, the experiences of the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) youth in relation to their attempts to transition into economic activity. To obtain a nuanced understanding of the experiences of the NARYSEC youth in this regard, a varied sample of relevant participants was incorporated into this study – which included NARYSEC youth and officials, employers of NARYSEC youth, and representatives from youth employment and small business development agencies. The data collection process included semi-structured interviews, which allowed the participants the opportunity to express their experiences and insights in their own words. In addition, an inductive approach was used for the data analysis process which allowed themes and categories to emerge from the transcribed interviews (the "voices" of the participants). This is outlined further in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains why a qualitative research design was utilised for this empirical study. The qualitative approach allowed for the opportunity to study, in-depth, the experiences of the NARYSEC youth in relation to their transitioning into economic activity. Qualitative methods, namely individual and group interviews, were the primary methods for the collection of data for this study. The location where this research study was conducted was the Free State Province, due to the rural nature of the province, as well as the high levels of unemployment across the province. The participants of this study included NARYSEC youth, NARYSEC officials, employers who have employed NARYSEC youth, and representatives from youth employment services and small business development agencies. Table 1 on page 58 below provides the detail of the number of interviews that were conducted.

The data collection process of this study included semi-structured individual and group interviews, as well as an analysis of relevant programme documents. The interviews allowed the participants the opportunity to express their experiences and insights in their own words. An inductive approach was used for the data analysis process which allowed the themes and categories to emerge from the transcribed interviews. The ethical considerations relating to informed consent from the participants, the confidentiality of the participants of the study, as well as the consequences of the interviews were upheld in this study. The sample of youth interviewed is not representative of all the youth who have exited the NARYSEC Programme in the Free State, but a fair attempt was made to sample a grouping of respondents that reflect stakeholders involved in the Programme.

## 3.2 Research Approach

This study was undertaken to explore transitions of young people from skills development programmes into economic activity, within the context of the NARYSEC Programme. This research study was an *empirical study*, and a *qualitative research design* was employed. According to Scott and Usher (1996, p. 10), empirical research is frequently described as "involving the collection, analysis and presentation of primary data in a rigorous, systematic and methodical way". They further hold that the data is not of much use in and of itself but gains significance only when used with *descriptions* (what happened?), *explanations* (why did it happen?) or *generalisations* (relevance beyond the specific) (Scott & Usher, 1996). The specific intensive design was chosen for the study because it provided me the opportunity to study in-depth, with "thick descriptions" as defined by Geertz (1973), the past-experiences of NARYSEC youth who have exited the Programme in relation to their transitions into economic activity.

A *qualitative approach* to research is defined by Creswell (2003, p. 18) as:

> one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (i.e., the multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially and historically constructed, with an intent of developing a theory or pattern) or advocacy/participatory perspectives (i.e., political, issue-oriented, collaborative, or change oriented) or both. It also uses strategies of inquiry such as narratives, phenomenologies, ethnographies, grounded theory studies, or case studies.

He further suggests that within this approach, the researcher gathers open-ended emerging data with the main aim of using the data to develop themes. Creswell (2007, p. 37) suggests that "*Qualitative research* begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem".

Qualitative methods were the predominant method for the collection of data for this study. The value of qualitative methods, particularly individual and group interviews, have long been acknowledged in the social science research field (Mason, 1996). Interviews, for example, allow interviewees the opportunity to express their experiences, views and insights in their own words. The interactive nature of interviews also meant that I had the opportunity to explore in-depth the relevant topics and to probe further emerging issues and themes, which resulted in a broadened understanding of the topics that were being investigated (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

A semi-structured individual interview was conducted with a Free State youth who started his own small business. Semi-structured individual interviews were also conducted with employed NARYSEC youth, NARYSEC officials, and an official from the Rural Enterprise and Industrial Development (REID) branch of the DRDLR in the Free State. Employers of the employed NARYSEC youth who were interviewed, representatives from two employment agencies and an enterprise development agency also participated in semi-structured individual interviews. Semi-structured group interviews were conducted with unemployed NARYSEC youth. A semi-structured group interview was also conducted with nine NARYSEC youth who have all started their own small businesses; these young people were from eight provinces. The group interview with the youth with businesses was an opportunity that became available to me , and I decided to include the interview in the research study, although the contexts that were referred to within the interview were not necessarily Free State specific.

## 3.3 Population and Sample

The location where this research study was conducted was the Free State Province. The choice of location is due to the rural nature of the province, as well as the high levels of unemployment across the province. The unemployment rate in the Free State for quarter 2 of 2019 stood at 34.4% (with the expanded unemployment rate at 41.6%) against the national unemployment rate of 29% (with the expanded unemployment rate at 38.5%). The expanded unemployment rate includes those individuals who have become

discouraged and stopped looking for work. The picture is even worse for rural areas in the Free State, with the unemployment rate for non-metro areas at 36.5% for the same period – 7.5% higher than the national unemployment rate (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA], 2019). The Free State is also the province where the NARYSEC College is located (in Thaba 'Nchu) and where activities with NARYSEC youth are often conducted – this choice of location therefore had a *convenience* element to it as I often travelled to the NARYSEC College for work commitments. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, pp. 113-114) define *convenience sampling* as "choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained or those who happen to be available and accessible at the time". Convenience sampling is also at times referred to as "accidental" or "opportunity" sampling. The researcher therefore compiles the sample from those individuals that s/he has easy access to – as was the case with this study.

The participants of this study included: NARYSEC youth who have exited the Programme; NARYSEC officials from the Free State, Gauteng and National Office; employers who have employed NARYSEC youth in the Free State; youth employment services agencies; and small business development agencies. The participants for this research study were all purposively selected. In *purposive sampling* the researchers "handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought" (Cohen et al., 2007, pp. 114-115). The researcher therefore compiles the sample for a specific purpose – based on the specific needs of the researcher. For this study my needs were individuals who had the requisite knowledge and experience of the NARYSEC Programme, and insights into how the Programme was transitioning exited youth into economic activity (NARYSEC youth and officials were selected); as well as individuals with extensive knowledge and experience of youth employment and enterprise development interventions (representatives from youth employment and enterprise development agencies were selected). The aim of purposive sampling is to include "knowledgeable" people – individuals who have in-depth understanding of specific issues, relevant to the research study (Cohen et al., 2007). I viewed the NARYSEC youth and officials, and the representatives from the youth

employment and enterprise development agencies as the “knowledgeable” people for this study.

The table below provides an overview of the research design, participants and sample sizes of this study:

Table 1:

*Research design, participants and sample size for study*

| **Category of Participant** | **Criteria** | **Data Collection Tool** | **Size of Sample** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Youth who have exited the NARYSEC Programme | Youth who found employment | Semi-structured Individual Interview | 3 interviews with one participant each = 3 participants |
| | Youth who started their own small businesses | Semi-structured Group Interview | 1 group interview with 9 participants = 9 participants |
| | | Semi-structured Individual Interview | 1 participant |
| | Youth who are still unemployed | Semi-structured Group Interview | 2 group interviews – one with 3 participants and one with 2 participants = 5 participants |
| 2. NARYSEC Officials | Free State Provincial NARYSEC Director | Semi-structured Individual Interview | 1 participant |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Free State Deputy Director responsible for NARYSEC exit strategy | | 1 participant |
| | Free State Deputy Director responsible for skills development | | 1 participant |
| | National Deputy Director responsible for NARYSEC exit strategy | | 1 participant |
| | Gauteng Deputy Director responsible for NARYSEC exit strategy | | 1 participant |
| 3. Free State Employers | Employers who have employed NARYSEC youth who were interviewed | Semi-structured Individual Interview | 2 interviews with one participant each = 2 participants |
| 4. Youth Employment Services Agencies | Agencies that provide services to unemployed youth to secure employment | Semi-structured Individual Interview | 2 interviews with one participant each = 2 participants |
| 5. Small Business Development Agencies | Agencies that provide services and support to youth who want to start their own small businesses | Semi-structured Individual Interview | 3 interviews with one participant each = 3 participants |
| **Total Number of Participants** | | | **30** |

## 3.4 Data Collection Strategies and Instruments

The data collection process which was employed for this study was a *qualitative methods approach* – semi-structured individual and group interviews were conducted. These interviews were supplemented by document analysis.

The *interview* is defined as “a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation” (Cannell & Kahn, as cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 351). With semi-structured interviews, the researcher prepares a set of predetermined questions on specific topics, relevant to the research. Although these questions are generally asked in a structured and uniformed manner from all interviewees, the interviewer is allowed the freedom to digress and probe further than the responses to the standardised questions (Lune & Berg, 2017). The reason for selecting semi-structured interviews as the data collection tool for this study is for the flexibility provided by this tool, which facilitates verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as allowing opportunities for in-depth delving into complex issues relevant to this study. The semi-structured approach allowed participants the opportunity to contribute the inputs that they viewed relevant and essential for a nuanced and “thick” description of the transitions of NARYSEC youth into economic activity (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Geertz, 1973).

G*roup interviews* have grown in popularity within the methodology of interviewing, according to Cohen et al. (2007). Group interviews allow for different participants to respond to the same question from the researcher – which allows for interesting and robust discussion amongst participants and generates a broader scope of responses than would have been possible with individual interviews. The group interview also provides the researcher with insights that can be explored with the participants of the individual interviews. Additional benefits of the group interview include the fact that a group of participants are interviewed at once, which saves time, and that the varied views and experiences of the participants on the same issue provides a cross-reference mechanism, which generates a more comprehensive and reliable record (Cohen et al., 2007). The semi-structured individual and group interviews therefore provided powerful tools for the data collection process of this study.

A semi-structured group interview was convened with nine NARYSEC youth from eight provinces who had started their own small businesses. Two of these young entrepreneurs were female, while the other seven were male. These youth were part of the delegation that attended the *seminar on poverty reduction through industrialization in South Africa 2018*, which was organised by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform in partnership with the International Poverty Reduction Center in China (IPRCC). The youth were selected, by their respective provincial NARYSEC officials, as youth with businesses who could benefit from the engagements of the seminar. The seminar was hosted in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa from 24 May 2018 to 07 June 2018. The group interview, although not part of the original research plan, was an opportunity that became available to me , and was conducted at the venue where the conference was hosted. The group interview elicited insights from the youth on how they started their small businesses, the nature of their businesses, and the support that they had received from NARYSEC officials and other institutions and individuals in setting up and running their businesses. Furthermore, advice was obtained from these emerging entrepreneurs on the type of assistance that the NARYSEC Programme should provide to youth who want to become entrepreneurs. The responses provided by the participants of the group interview stimulated further ideas and discussion which provided for in-depth and textured engagements in the semi-structured interviews.

A semi-structured individual interview was conducted with one NARYSEC youth who started his own small business. Insights were obtained from this entrepreneur on the nature of his business, the support that he had received from NARYSEC staff and other organisations in setting up his businesses, as well as the type of assistance he would have preferred from the NARYSEC programme on his business development journey. The contribution of the skills development phase of the NARYSEC Programme towards the entrepreneurial journey of these emerging business owners were also explored during the engagements of the individual and group interviews. The interview questions for the youth with businesses are reflected in Annexure 1.

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with three youth who secured employment, as well as the two employers who employed them. The interviews with the employed youth extracted insights on how these youth were able to secure employment and to what degree they were assisted by the NARYSEC officials in their job seeking endeavours. The youth were also requested to provide their views on whether the skills development that they had undergone as part of the NARYSEC Programme had prepared them for the demands of the workplace. The employers, on the other hand, provided insights into reasons why the NARYSEC youth were employed, as well as inputs on their conduct and performance in the workplace. Advice was also obtained from these employers on how a government-led skills development programme like the NARYSEC Programme can better equip and support the youth so that a larger number of them transition into economic activity. The interview questions for the employed youth are reflected in Annexure 2, while the questions for the employers are contained in Annexure 3.

Two semi-structured group interviews were conducted with five unemployed NARYSEC youth – one interview with three youth and the other interview with two youth. The interviews elicited insights on the experiences of these youth in their attempts to secure employment, the reasons why they had been unsuccessful in this regard, and the support provided to them by NARYSEC officials and other organisations in their attempts to secure employment. The contribution of the skills development phase of the NARYSEC Programme in their preparations for labour market entry was also explored. In addition, these unemployed youth provided advice on the types of support that the NARYSEC Programme can provide to youth who want to secure employment when they exit the Programme. The interview questions for the unemployed youth are reflected in Annexure 4.

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with five NARYSEC officials – three of whom are located within the Free State Province, one in the Gauteng Province and one at the national office of the DRDLR in Pretoria. These interviews extracted views and insights on how the NARYSEC youth transition into economic activity. Inputs were

sourced on the available support for NARYSEC youth in their attempts to secure a job or start their own small business, and to what degree the support meets the needs of the youth. Furthermore, these officials provided details of their own experiences on how NARYSEC youth are supported in terms of their transitioning into economic activity – with a strong focus on the nature of the challenges being experienced by the Programme in this regard. The interview questions for the NARYSEC officials are reflected in Annexure 5.

Two semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with organisations that provide support services to unemployed youth in their endeavours to secure employment. Inputs were obtained on the nature and scope of the support services provided by these organisations, as well as the uptake of these services by unemployed youth, with special focus on rural youth. Furthermore, insights were obtained on the type of support that government driven skills development programmes can provide to the youth beneficiaries of these programmes to assist their transitioning into economic activity on completion of these interventions. The interview questions for the youth employment services agencies are contained in Annexure 6.

A semi-structured individual interview was conducted with the manager of one of the Centres for Entrepreneurship (CFEs) within the Free State Province. These centres are a joint initiative of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Department of Small Business Development with its subsidiary entities, the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) and the Small Enterprise Financial Agency (SEFA). There are 14 of these centres across the country, located at public TVET colleges (12) and Universities of Technology (two). The mandate of these centres is to promote and support youth entrepreneurs. The interview focused on the nature and scope of support provided by the centre, as well as the uptake of these services by youth. In addition, insights and advice were obtained on the type of support that is required by unemployed youth to start and run their own small businesses. On the day that the interview was conducted with the centre manager, four graduates of the centre (who are not NARYSEC youth) made presentations on their own entrepreneurial journeys, as well

as the support that they had received from the centre in setting up and running their own businesses. Furthermore, the Rural Enterprise and Industrial Development (REID) branch of the DRDLR provides support and services to rural enterprises and communities. A semi-structured individual interview was conducted with the Free State REID Director to obtain the detail of the nature and scope of their services to rural enterprises, as well as the uptake of these services. I also explored the issue of support provided to rural youth and the nature of such support. The interview questions for the small business development agencies are contained in Annexure 7.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted at venues that were convenient to the participants, and I travelled to where participants were located. The employed NARYSEC youth, for example, were interviewed at their places of employment, as were their supervisors. The REID Director and two Free State Deputy Directors were interviewed in their respective offices. The other three NARYSEC officials requested the interviews to be conducted in my office. The representative from the one youth employment services agency was interviewed in his office, while the representative from the other youth employment services agency was interviewed at a restaurant of his choice. The interview with the manager of the Centre for Entrepreneurship (CFE) was conducted at the centre.

An interview was scheduled with a representative from the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), but due to the busy schedule of the relevant official, the interview never materialised.

## 3.5 Data Analysis Process

This section describes how the qualitative data was analysed. I transcribed all the individual and group interviews, which provided me access to “rich” data and detailed and comprehensive pictures of what participants had shared in the interviews. I started with a process of coding the transcripts, without a set of predetermined themes and categories. The themes and categories were allowed to emerge from the transcribed interviews – an inductive approach was therefore used for the data analysis process

(Anderson, 2007; Burnard, 1991). It must be stated, however, that the themes that emerged during the literature review process of this study did influence the inductive approach of identifying themes and categories from the interviews. The themes from the literature review process were illuminated during the process of coding the interviews. This is not surprising, as also highlighted by Bazeley (2009, p. 9): "*Emergent* themes are often remarkably similar to those in the literature". All the interview descriptions that were relevant to the study, namely those descriptions that would provide insights in answering the research question, were highlighted. The relevant descriptions were then re-read and divided into *meaning units* – with units separated because there was a change in meaning from the one unit to the next. Similar meaning units were grouped together, and then allocated preliminary categories, by utilising words and phrases from the transcribed texts (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Anderson, 2007; Burnard, 1991; Cohen et al., 2007). These preliminary categories and themes were revised and re-labelled as I continued coding the data.

The coding process was characterised by having to go back to sections of the transcripts to code and re-code information and changing the categories and sub-categories numerous times. This process, as experienced in this study, is in line with the literature on coding (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Anderson, 2007; Cohen et al., 2007) that highlight how this process contains numerous iterative phases of coding. Burnard (1991), for example, outlines fourteen stages for his proposed method of thematic content analysis. The broad categories that were developed for this study resonated with the key concepts from the literature reviewed for the study. Some of the themes that emerged included unemployed youth, employment, entrepreneurship, job-readiness skills, technical skills, business support, demand-led skills development and partnerships. I then used these themes to guide the way in which I presented the data. For example, the broad categories that were used for presenting the data included the themes of employed youth, youth with businesses and unemployed youth.

## 3.6 Ethical Considerations

According to Cohen et al. (2007, p. 51), “a major ethical dilemma is that which requires researchers to strike a balance between the demands placed on them as professional scientists in pursuit of truth, and their subjects’ rights and values potentially threatened by the research”. They term this dilemma the “costs/benefits ratio” – which refers to the probable social benefits of the research against the personal costs to the participants of the research study. The ethical considerations that informed my research included *informed consent* from the participants of my research study; the *confidentiality* of the research participants; as well as the *consequences* of the interviews. Ethical clearance for this study was granted by the Ethics Committee in Education of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (Protocol Number: 2018ECE).

*Informed consent* is defined as “the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions” (Diener & Crandall, as cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 52). Informed consent, according to them, has four components – competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension. Firstly, *competence* assumes that individuals will make the right decisions if they have access to the applicable information; secondly, *voluntarism* refers to the fact that participants of the research study do so of their own free will, cognisant of the risks that their involvement might expose them too; thirdly, *full information* means that participants have full knowledge of the possible consequences of their participation in the research; and fourthly, *comprehension* refers to participants having comprehensive understanding of the nature of a research study and their own involvement in it (Cohen et al., 2007). Lune and Berg (2017, p. 46) define *informed consent* as “the knowing consent of individuals to participate as an exercise of their choice, free from any element of fraud, deceit, duress, or similar unfair inducement or manipulation”. It therefore means that participants are consciously participating in the research project and are doing so of their own free will.

The *confidentiality* of the identity of the participants of a study is imperative, and any breach of such confidentiality should be done in agreement with the relevant participants, according to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (as cited in Cohen et al., 2007). *Confidentiality* and *anonymity* are often used interchangeably, as if they have the same meaning, which is not the case as they have evidently different meanings (Lune & Berg, 2017). Within the context of confidentiality, the nature of *anonymity* is that the identity of participants should not be disclosed through the information that they had provided. When conducting face-to-face interviews, it is impossible for the researcher to guarantee anonymity, however, at best the researcher can promise confidentiality (Cohen et al., 2007; Lune & Berg, 2017). The use of pseudonyms, codes, etc. (as used by this researcher) goes a long way to protect the identity of participants.

Information letters (see Annexure 8) were drafted and sent to participants who had access to email facilities, prior to conducting the interviews. In the case of participants without email access, information letters were provided at the interview venues and the content of the letters were discussed with the participants before the commencement of the individual and group interviews. Participants were informed that the study aimed to analyse how young people transition from skills development programmes into economic activity within the context of the National Rural Youth Services (NARYSEC) Programme, and that their participation was voluntary. In addition, participants were informed that they would not be forced to answer any questions they were not comfortable answering, that their participation would not provide for any advantage, disadvantage or remuneration, and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any stage. Consent forms (see Annexure 9) were signed by all participants of this study. The individual and group interviews were recorded, and all participants signed consent forms (see Annexure 10) to give permission for these recordings at the outset of the individual and group interviews.

Participants were informed that the research findings would be used for academic purposes only, and that pseudonyms would be used to protect their identities. No names of participants have been used for this study. Positions of Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) officials have, however, been used to explain

their roles and responsibilities in relation to the NARYSEC Programme in general, and to the focus of this study in particular. This means that I was not able to guarantee the anonymity of these officials but could at best promise them confidentiality. Moreover, participants were informed that all research data would be kept securely on password protected files and be destroyed five years after completion of the research study.

## 3.7 Research Limitations

As can be expected with a study of this nature, which concerns a government youth programme implemented across all nine provinces, and which recruits and skills thousands of unemployed rural youth, there were limitations with conducting the research.

The sample of youth interviewed is not representative of all the Free State youth who have exited the NARYSEC Programme, but a reasonable attempt has been made to sample a grouping of respondents that reflect stakeholders involved in the Programme. I struggled to obtain information on the NARYSEC youth from the Free State who have exited the programme. Although the provincial NARYSEC office does have information of youth who have exited, no structured information is available on whether these youth are employed, have started their own businesses or are still unemployed. The reason for this shortcoming is because the NARYSEC Programme (across the nine provinces) does not track youth once they exit the Programme. The Programme implementers indicated that exited youth are not tracked because the main aim of the Programme is to skill the youth, and not necessarily to ensure their transitioning into economic activity; although it is hoped that youth would find jobs or start their own businesses after being skilled. The contact information of the exited youth that was available was consequently dated, which was evident when I tried to contact the youth using the telephone numbers from the lists that were provided – an average of three to five telephone calls had to be made before reaching a youth. Also, when finally reaching the youth, it was found that many of them were still unemployed. It was therefore a struggle to secure interviews with youth who had either found employment or started their own businesses.

I am the Skills Development Director of the NARYSEC Programme and provide strategic oversight for the implementation of the skills development phase of the Programme across the nine provinces. My responsibilities include ensuring that provinces develop skills development plans, and then I and my national office team provide the quality assurance, monitoring and support for the implementation of the provincial skills development plans. I therefore work closely with provincial NARYSEC teams, particularly Provincial Directors and Skills Development Deputy Directors, with regard to the implementation of all skills development aspects of the Programme. My role in the NARYSEC Programme therefore has direct bearing on this research study that explores the transitioning of youth from skills development programmes into economic activity, within the context of the NARYSEC Programme. The link between my role in the NARYSEC Programme and this research study is in relation to the experiences of the youth participants of the skills development phase of the Programme, and to what degree the training had assisted them in their transitioning into economic activity.

All the officials interviewed as part of this study are known to me , with most of the youth who were interviewed also being familiar with me and my role in the NARYSEC Programme. The advantage of this reality is that I had experiences, insights and access in relation to the NARYSEC Programme which would not otherwise have been possible. Also, because of my in-depth understanding of the NARYSEC Programme, I could delve, with the participants of this study, into their lived experiences of the Programme, and the support that was and should be provided to transition the graduates of the Programme into economic activity. The drawback of my position in the NARYSEC Programme in relation to this study is that of *power relationships* – both with the NARYSEC youth and the officials. Power relations, according to Alshenqeeti (2014), refers to the interrelated power at play between the interviewer and the interviewee during an actual interview – which can be intentional or unintentional. I mediated this situation by informing participants that they were under no obligation to participate in this study and that their participation was voluntary. Moreover, I stressed at the outset of, and during the interviews that I was conducting the research as an MEd student of the University of the

Witwatersrand, and not as the Skills Development Director of the NARYSEC Programme. I also did not allow my knowledge of the performance of the NARYSEC Programme to date influence the data collection process, but instead ensured that the experiences of the participants were captured and reflected as conveyed by them during the interviews.

# CHAPTER FOUR: EXPERIENCES OF NARYSEC YOUTH IN TRANSITIONING INTO ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter organises and presents the data that was collected for this study. The first section provides the profile of the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) youth participants of this study. Section two deals with the employed youth who were interviewed, while section three is about the youth who have started businesses. Section four engages the unemployed youth, while the last section deals with the nature and scope of the support that was provided to the youth in their attempts to transition into economic activity.

## 4.2 NARYSEC Youth: Profile of Participants

The table below presents the key statistics obtained about the NARYSEC youth participants of this study. The code EY refers to employed youth; code UY refers to unemployed youth; and code YWB refers to youth with business.

Table 2:

*Key statistics of NARYSEC youth participants*

| Participant Code | Gender | Recruitment Year | Exit Year | Training Course | Province |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EY1 | Female | 2015 | 2017 | Professional Cookery NQF Level 4 | Free State |
| EY2 | Female | 2013 | 2017 | Professional Cookery NQF Level 4 | Limpopo |
| EY3 | Male | 2015 | 2017 | Professional Cookery NQF Level 4 | Free State |
| UY1 | Male | 2015 | 2017 | Plumbing NQF Level 4 | Free State |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UY2 | Male | 2015 | 2017 | Professional Cookery NQF Level 4 | Free State |
| UY3 | Male | 2015 | 2017 | Electrical Engineering NQF Level 2 | Free State |
| UY4 | Male | 2016 | 2018 | Business Administration NQF Level 4 | Free State |
| UY5 | Male | 2016 | 2018 | Business Administration NQF Level 4 | Free State |
| YWB1 | Male | 2015 | 2017 | Plumbing NQF Level 4 | Free State |
| YWB2 | Male | 2010 | 2014 | Community House Building NQF Level 2 | Western Cape |
| YWB3 | Female | 2013 | 2017 | Early Childhood Development NQF Level 4 | Eastern Cape |
| YWB4 | Male | 2016 | 2018 | New Venture Creation NQF Level 4 | Gauteng |
| YWB5 | Male | 2016 | 2018 | Security Services Grades A to E | Mpumalanga |
| YWB6 | Male | 2016 | 2018 | Security Services Grades A to E | Mpumalanga |
| YWB7 | Female | 2015 | 2017 | Plant Production NQF Level 4 | Limpopo |
| YWB8 | Male | 2010 | 2014 | Building and Civil Construction NQF Level 3 | Free State |
| YWB9 | Male | 2012 | 2014 | Mixed Farming Systems NQF Level 2 | KwaZulu-Natal |
| YWB10 | Male | 2013 | 2017 | Plant Production NQF Level 2 | North West |

As can be seen from the table above, nine of the youth who were interviewed were from the Free State, with two youth each from Limpopo and Mpumalanga, and one youth each from the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, North West and the Western Cape. The eighteen youth who were interviewed covered five recruitment intakes of the NARYSEC

Programme – 2010, 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2016. Four of the youth who were interviewed were female, while the remaining 14 were male. The training courses undergone by sixteen of the youth were one-year learnership qualifications from NQF level 2 to 4. The remaining two youth completed grades A to E security training which was conducted over six months. Also, some youth were enrolled into the NARYSEC Programme for four years, while others were enrolled for two years only.

Although the original NARYSEC Programme was envisaged to be two years, the programme implementers were not able to complete all programme elements within that period. The executive management team of the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) then decided to extend the Programme by another two years. One of the reasons for the delay with implementation was the fact that the required staff, to facilitate the smooth running of the different programme activities, were not appointed at the outset of the NARYSEC Programme. The Programme, for example, did not have the required skills development managers in all the provinces and at the national office to ensure the effective implementation of the skills development phase of the Programme. As a result, numerous delays were experienced with the implementation of the training courses across the nine provinces. The actual training that was offered to the youth was a one-year full-time learnership, during the two years as well as four years Programme. Also, the Programme did not have in place the required District Co-ordinators who are responsible for the youth at a district level and who oversee the day-to-day implementation of the Programme. The review process of the NARYSEC Programme during March 2014 found that the required capacity was then in place, and the duration period of the Programme was moved back to two years (Jacobs & Habiyaremye, 2018).

## 4.3 Employed Youth

### 4.3.1 Contribution of Skills Development in transitioning youth into Employment.

The three employed youth were asked whether the training that they had received during the NARYSEC Programme had assisted them to find employment. All three youth agreed that their training was of good quality and that the training had indeed prepared them for the work that they were doing in their current jobs. All of them studied professional cookery and were employed as assistant chefs. The quote below illustrates how one of the youth articulated the contribution of the training in preparing her for the demands of the workplace:

> *It did a lot. Because some of the things we did not know. It helped a lot. And we did also not know that there was paperwork in a kitchen. We thought all chefs are only cooking. They were working with computers. We did not know about those. It was the best. (Employed youth 1)*

The supervisor at the NARYSEC College kitchen also confirmed that the aspiring chefs who were working at the college did have the required knowledge of professional cookery when they arrived, but only needed the workplace exposure and mentoring to enhance their knowledge and skills.

By the time that the interviews were conducted with the employed youth, the two Free State youth had not received their certificates, even though their training had been completed more than a year before. They both viewed the delay with the issuing of their certificates as unacceptable and as a negative aspect of the NARYSEC Programme. One youth held that the fact that they had not received their certificates was contributing to their fellow students not being able to secure jobs, while the other youth had a different view on this matter. The two quotes below illustrate the differing views:

*Other people don't want to look for jobs, they just sitting at home saying that we don't have certificate, NARYSEC is wasting our time. They're not applying. Ja, they are not applying. They're blaming the certificate. Yes, they can do something. (Employed youth 1)*

*That is the weakness. For instance, now, like I have said, some of us, even some of my colleagues they still did not get their certificates and they are unemployed. We are still calling to follow up: 'Where is our certificate?' (Employed youth 3)*

These differing views seem to suggest that there is not consensus on whether not being in possession of a certificate is a deterrent to finding a job. Also, both these youth did not have their certificates but found employment. The section that deals with the unemployed youth of this study will highlight how all the unemployed youth held the view that the fact that they did not have their certificates had hampered their chances of finding employment.

### 4.3.2 Path into Employment.

The employed youth were probed on how they were able to secure their current employment. The youth (EY1) who found employment at a hotel indicated that she had done the structured workplace training component of her learnership at the same hotel. When asked why she thought they had employed her, she responded in the following manner:

*Because I wanted the best for me. Because now that we are in the hotel…I know in NARYSEC we were working five working days, but here things are very different. We had to listen what we had to do here, what they were wanting us to do here. That's why I decided to listen. But I didn't know that they were going to hire me. I did not know. The reason why I was working hard was because when I'm looking for the other job this hotel was going to be my reference. That is why I was working that hard. (Employed youth 1)*

The supervisor of this employed youth seems to agree with her and responded in the following manner when asked why they had appointed her: "*What I noticed about her is that she would go an extra mile. She would work as if she was permanently employed. So, in a nutshell, what my take was that … was the tenacity and the character".* The Limpopo youth who was employed at the NARYSEC College spoke about her own hard work and dedication that had assisted her to get a contract from the college catering company.

Although the youth who was employed by the hotel (EY1) was one of four NARYSEC youth who had done their workplace training at the same hotel, the other three youth were not asked to stay on after their training. When asked why she thought they had not been employed like she was, she mentioned their lack of commitment and dedication as reasons, as articulated in the quote below:

> *It was because of behaviour… Some of the things they did not want to do, like cleaning the kitchen and as chefs, we know that we have to clean the kitchen. They did not want to clean, saying that they are not here to clean up. They were very stubborn. Yes, they did not want to work on weekends. (Employed youth 1)*

The other two employed youth were part of 20 NARYSEC youth who were employed by the catering company that was awarded the contract to provide catering services at the NARYSEC College in Thaba 'Nchu. The contract that the company had signed with the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) indicated that a certain number of NAYSEC youth, who had completed their professional cookery training, had to be employed by the company for the duration of the catering contract. The two youth indicated that they appreciated the opportunity that they were provided to earn an income, gain valuable work experience and enhance their professional cookery skills at the NARYSEC College.

The two Free State employed youth were part of a group of 50 youth from the Thaba 'Nchu area who were recruited into the NARYSEC Programme during 2015. These youth were recruited with a clear exit plan – some of them had to provide maintenance services at the NARYSEC college, while the others had to work in the kitchen at the college once they had completed the NARYSEC Programme. As a result, the 50 youth could select their training courses from three pre-determined qualifications – professional cookery, plumbing and electrical engineering. The Free State NARYSEC officials indicated that the envisaged employment opportunities did not, however, materialise for these youth. The staffing structure of the NARYSEC College had not been approved yet, and as a result College staff could not be appointed. They added that some of the 50 youth were provided with temporary employment opportunities at the College by the services providers who were contracted by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) to provide catering and cleaning services, as well as infrastructure renovations.

## 4.4 Youth with Businesses

### 4.4.1 Contribution of Skills Development in transitioning youth into Entrepreneurship.

The nine youth who were part of the group interview were asked how they would rate the quality of the training they had received from the NARYSEC Programme, and to what degree the training had assisted them on their business journeys. The two youth who studied security services indicated that the training they received was of a high standard, and that the grade A certificate that they had obtained, which included firearm training, was very rare within the security industry. The youth from KwaZulu-Natal who studied mixed farming systems also indicated that the training she had received was of a good quality, and that it had assisted her to start her Marula jam-making business. The Limpopo youth who studied plant production indicated that she enjoyed the training, learnt a great deal, and decided to study further by enrolling onto a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 4 plant production qualification after she exited the NARYSEC Programme.

The Free State youth who was part of the group interview studied building and civil construction and started, with some other youth, a construction co-operative when he exited the NARYSEC Programme. He seems to have made a success of the construction field into which he decided to venture:

> *I'm the one who manufactured the paving in Thaba 'Nchu…We are 10 who have a co-operative in construction. Yes, we have a co-operative in Free State that can manufacture bricks and build and paint and everything. (Youth with Business 8)*

The youth from the Eastern Cape who studied early childhood development (ECD) also confirmed that the training that she had received was of a high quality. However, the drawback for her, in relation to her NARYSEC training experience, was that she had not received her certificate by the time that the group interview was conducted. The other eight youth who were part of the group interview indicated that they had all received their certificates, although there had been initial delays with the issuing of the certificates.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that all the NARYSEC youth with businesses who participated in this study indicated that they did not receive any entrepreneurship or business-related skills development interventions while in the NARYSEC Programme.

### 4.4.2 Path into Entrepreneurship.

The youth with business (YWB1) with whom a semi-structured individual interview was conducted, was requested to give an account of the nature of his business journey. He decided to study plumbing due to the fact that he was a “helper” for someone in his community who had a small plumbing business, before he joined the NARYSEC Programme. He indicated that this experience ignited in him an interest in plumbing and in being self-employed – or, as articulated by him: “*I never liked to be employed by anyone*”. He explained that he understood that being self-employed was hard work and that he was prepared to put in the required effort: “*Hard work, yes, sweat and blood, that's all we do - success will come naturally*”. At the time of our interview the company of the

NARYSEC entrepreneur was busy doing work for two clients and was employing four people on a part-time basis. What was clear from the engagements with this young man was the fact that he understood that hard work and dedication were required to succeed as an entrepreneur.

When asked about the funding for his business, he responded that he had never received any funding for his business. When he was in the NARYSEC Programme he saved his monthly stipend and bought plumbing tools with the savings. Also, most of the money that he makes from his business is ploughed back into his business – "*to buy more tools*". The four youth entrepreneurs of the Centre for Entrepreneurship (CFE) all spoke about funding that they either won through business competitions or that they had sourced from small business funding agencies. When asked how they got to know about the existence of these opportunities and how they were able to submit the often-complicated funding applications, they all answered in the same way – "*I got to know about it through the CFE, and they assisted me to apply*".

The youth with businesses from the group interview had small businesses that cut across agriculture, construction, events management and security services. Most of these youth were part of co-operatives that were formed with other NAYSEC youth, on advice from their provincial NARYSEC officials. It was clear from the engagements with these youth that most of these co-operatives were not functioning optimally. They suggested that the unavailability of land, and the lack of finance and machinery and equipment were the main reasons for this. The Gauteng official also mentioned these challenges in either preventing youth from considering entrepreneurship as a career choice, or from hampering them to succeed as emerging entrepreneurs.

The Free State Rural Enterprise and Industrial Development (REID) Director suggested that not all people have an entrepreneurial interest and passion, which often impacts on the success of a business. He highlighted the importance of exposing aspiring young entrepreneurs to small businesses (successful and struggling ones) so that they can understand what is required to run a small business. He also stressed the importance for

the youth entrepreneurs to be allocated *mentors* (experienced business people) who can guide and support them during their business journeys. This view was supported by two of the youth entrepreneurs at the Centre for Entrepreneurship (CFE) – they indicated that it is particularly important for young entrepreneurs in rural areas to have people both within, and outside their business focus area, from whom they can learn and receive guidance on their business journeys.

Finally, the supervisor of the youth who was employed at the hotel suggested that it was important for youth to first build up the requisite knowledge, skills and experience, by being employed, before they started their own small businesses; to learn as much as possible about all aspects of the business into which they were planning to venture.

## 4.5 Unemployed Youth

### 4.5.1 Contribution of Skills Development in transitioning youth into Economic Activity.

The unemployed youth were asked how they would rate the training that they had received as part of the skills development phase of the NARYSEC Programme. All five youth indicated that the training was of good quality. The two youth who studied business administration explained that what they had learnt during the training had assisted them with the administrative work that they were required to do at a local school, as part of their community service. The unemployed youth who studied professional cookery had the following to say when asked whether his training was of value:

> *So, it helped me a lot because I could understand what's going on in the hospitality industry. It was very good, because I could answer people without even going to my supervisor. And I knew what to do when I got to the job. (Unemployed youth 2)*

The electrical engineering youth articulated his training experience as follows: "*Great experience, because it allowed me to be hands on. And you see, that's what I like about electricity so far. And I think it was cool, until we struggle to get our certificate".*

The experience of not receiving a certificate after the completion of the training was not a unique experience to the electrical engineering youth. The professional cookery youth, as well as the two youth who studied business administration had also not been issued with their certificates by the time of their interviews, which meant that the plumbing youth was the only one of the five unemployed youth who had received a certificate. The youth without certificates all indicated that the fact that they had not received their certificates was hampering their chances of finding a job. In addition, the Free State manager responsible for the NARYSEC exit strategy suggested that the level of training that is offered to the NARYSEC youth is also a hindrance to these youth finding employment. She suggested that the one-year qualifications (mainly learnerships) between National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels 2 and 4 that most NARYSEC youth possess when they exit the Programme, do not allow them to compete favourably with youth with better qualifications (e.g. diplomas and degrees).

Finally, the training that Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator offers to the unemployed youth whom they match with employment opportunities is noncredit-bearing, does not culminate in a qualification and is for a short period (not more than eight weeks). The focus of the training is to prepare the young person for the demands of the actual job opportunity, in the shortest time. The work readiness programme, or the "bridge" as it is referred to, is less about the technical skills for the job, and more about cultivating the appropriate attitude and behaviour amongst the youth – the "bridge" is therefore a behaviour change intervention rather than a training one, according to the Harambee executive who was interviewed for this study. All the unemployed NARYSEC youth indicated that work readiness interventions were not provided to them to assist in their endeavours to secure employment.

### 4.5.2 Preparations for Transitioning into Economic Activity.

When asked what they had done in their attempts to secure employment, the two youth who studied business administration indicated that they had applied for many jobs (both online and hardcopy applications), without any success. The electrical engineering youth indicated that he was offered the opportunity to be employed by the company that was contracted for the NARYSEC College renovation project. He was one of three electrical engineering youth who were given the job opportunity at the college, with an additional four or five plumbing youth. Also, the unemployed plumbing youth was employed by the company that was awarded the cleaning contract at the NARYSEC College. The cleaning contract required of the appointed service provider, as was the case with the college renovations and catering contracts, that it employ exited NARYSEC youth for the duration of the contract. These youth indicated that the temporary employment contracts allowed them the opportunity to earn an income, gain valuable work experience, and enhance their skills.

The unemployed professional cookery youth indicated that the hotel where he did his workplace training provided him with an opportunity to do part-time work, after he completed his training. He was required to assist when the hotel was hosting conferences and other big events. The hotel was not able to appoint him permanently, as their conference and events business was not that substantial. He assisted the hotel for six months but had to stop with the part time job as it was not sustainable – the available shifts were sporadic and what he was paid barely covered his travel and catering expenses.

Furthermore, three of the unemployed youth were enrolled into the NARYSEC Programme in 2015, while the other two were enrolled in 2016. The Free State NARYSEC officials indicated that the recruitment from 2015 until 2017 was aligned to the Agri-parks programme of government that was led by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR). An Agri-park is a network, located within a district municipality, where various agricultural activities and rural transformation services are provided to farmers. These activities and services include amongst others, agro-production, agro-

processing, marketing, logistics, extension services and skills development (DRDLR, 2015). Moreover, youth were recruited from the feeder areas of these Agri-parks, and the training courses that the youth were enrolled on were aligned to the commodities and business opportunities that were identified for these Agri-parks. The Free State NARYSEC Director explained that the Agri-parks was a long-term project, and that these parks were not functional yet – due to the extensive infrastructure development that was required to get the parks operational. The employment and enterprise opportunities that were envisaged for the NARYSEC youth who were recruited for these parks had therefore not yet materialised. The result was that the youth have completed their training, they have exited the NARYSEC Programme, but they could not transition into the projected economic activity (jobs or businesses) of these Agri-parks.

Consequently, the Free State NARYSEC team decided to shift the focus of the training programmes that they offered to new recruits away from the Agri-parks. The learning programmes that have been introduced recently include qualifications that will allow the youth to start their own small businesses. The youth, however, appear to not consider self-employment as a career opportunity, as articulated by the Free State NARYSEC skills development manager: "*Those skills that will promote entrepreneurship for the learners are the least selected skills by the youth".* She referred to how, with the previous intake of 128 new recruits in the Free State, most of the youth opted for qualifications (e.g. business administration) that would require of them to secure employment. The other Free State Deputy Director also mentioned that the majority of youth want to find employment when they exit the Programme: "*All they have known is...so and so works in town somewhere, and I want to be like that*".

## 4.6 Support from the NARYSEC Programme for the Youth to transition into Economic Activity

The Free State youth who were recruited during 2015 and 2016 attended exit strategy workshops. The exit strategy workshops were, according to most of the youth who were

interviewed, useful as information was provided to them in terms of how to prepare for, and apply for jobs, as well as how to start and register their own small businesses. The workshops were attended by various stakeholders, for example the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), TVET Colleges, government departments, government agencies (e.g. the Small Enterprise Development Agency and the Free State Development Agency), SETAs and other non-governmental organisations. The drawback of the workshops was the fact that there was no follow-up after the workshop from either the NARYSEC officials or the stakeholders who participated in the workshop. No support was therefore provided to the youth after the workshop to assist their transitioning into economic activity.

The lack of support for the youth to either find employment or start their own small businesses is a significant shortcoming of the NARYSEC Programme, according to the majority of the youth who were interviewed. The Free State NARYSEC Director admitted that the NARYSEC Programme has not done much in relation to the transitioning of the youth into economic activity. He highlighted that although there had been successes with some youth finding jobs or starting their own businesses, it was difficult for the Programme to claim these successes as the reality was that many of these young people had secured their own opportunities. During the policy review process of the NARYSEC Programme in 2018, the reasons that were proposed for the poor showing of the programme in transitioning youth into economic activity included inadequate capacity within the programme to execute this function, the fact that this function is not budgeted for, as well as insufficient internal and external partnerships (DRDLR, 2018).

## 4.7 Summary of Research Findings

In this chapter the findings of this research study are presented. Section one dealt with the profile of the NARYSEC youth participants of the study which highlighted that nine of the youth were from the Free State, with two youth each from Limpopo and Mpumalanga, and one youth each from the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, North West and the Western Cape. The eighteen youth who were interviewed covered five recruitment intakes of the NARYSEC Programme, namely 2010, 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2016. Four of

the youth were female, while the remaining 14 were male. Three of the youth were employed, ten were emerging entrepreneurs and five were unemployed.

The second section reflected the experiences of the employed youth of this study. All three employed youth agreed that the training that they had undergone was of good quality and that the training had prepared them for the work that they were doing as assistant chefs. When asked how they had been able to secure their “first jobs”, two of employed youth said that their commitment and dedication, and their preparedness to do more than what was expected from them had assisted them to find their jobs – which was also confirmed by their supervisors. In conclusion, it was underscored by some participants that there was a need to think differently about “work” and that opportunities outside of the formal economy will also have to be considered to transition more unemployed young people into employment.

The third section dealt with the experiences of the youth of this study who started small businesses. The youth with a small business with whom an individual interview was conducted, indicated that he understood that self-discipline, hard work and dedication were required if he were to succeed as an emerging entrepreneur – and that he was prepared to put in the hard work. All the youth confirmed that the training that they had received was of good quality, and that it had assisted them in starting their businesses. The youth however indicated that only technical training had been provided to them, and that no entrepreneurship or business management training had been forthcoming. In addition, no structured business support had been provided to these youth by the NARYSEC Programme or other partners. The result was that the majority of youth businesses that were engaged during this study were struggling. The youth suggested that the unavailability of land, and the lack of finance and machinery and equipment were the main reasons why their businesses were not functioning optimally. In conclusion, it was suggested by some participants of this study that not all people have an entrepreneurial interest and passion, and that many unemployed young people would prefer to be employed rather than to start their own small business.

Section four captured the experiences of the young people who were still unemployed when this research was conducted. All five of these youth confirmed that the training that they had received was of good quality. Only one of the five unemployed youth had received his certificate by the time that this research was conducted, however. The fact that 80% of these youth had not received their certificates was proposed by them as a significant contributing factor towards their not being able to secure their "first jobs". In addition, the youth indicated that they were not assisted in their attempts to secure employment – for example, no work-readiness interventions were provided to them. The study also highlighted how one youth had to give up a low-paying job because the wages he was paid could not cover all his expenses. He then had to, like many other unemployed young people, explore opportunities in the informal sector to earn an income. In conclusion, various participants of this study suggested an approach where possible employment opportunities are identified upfront, with the training courses then linked to the identified opportunities. This was considered to be the most likely approach to facilitate the transitioning of more unemployed youth into economic activity.

The last section of this chapter documented the detail of the support that the youth had received to facilitate their transitioning into economic activity. All the youth who were recruited since 2015 agreed that the exit strategy workshops that they attended were useful, as information was shared with them on how to search for jobs and how to start their own small businesses. The drawback, however, was the fact that there was no follow-up and support for them after the workshops. All the NARYSEC youth and officials agreed that the NARYSEC Programme did not provide the required support to the youth to facilitate their transitioning into economic activity. In conclusion, it was suggested by most of the participants of this study that the NARYSEC Programme forge partnerships with internal and external, as well as public and private partners, to assist with transitioning more youth into either employment or self-employment.

# CHAPTER FIVE: HOW CAN THE TRANSITIONS OF YOUTH INTO ECONOMIC ACTIVITY BE ENABLED?

## 5.1 Introduction

To conclude this research study, the findings of the study will be reflected on and general conclusions will be drawn. These conclusions are presented under the following headings: a) transitioning of youth into employment; b) transitioning of youth into entrepreneurship; c) cross-cutting enablers to transition youth into economic activity; and d) recommendations for the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Programme.

Before discussing the key findings of this study, it is worth noting that a limitation of this study was the fact that a quantitative survey with a representative sample of NARYSEC youth, to establish how many of them were employed, self-employed or unemployed, could not be conducted. The findings of such a survey would have been useful in determining the composition of the sample of participants and questions for the interviews. This was however not possible due to the fact that there was no tracking system in place for the exited youth, with the result that there was no up-to-date database of exited youth available to source a representative sample.

## 5.2 Discussion

### 5.2.1 Transitioning of youth into Employment.

All the employed youth of this study agreed that the training that they had undergone was of good quality and that the training had prepared them for the work that they were doing as assistant chefs. Various authors highlight the importance of the *context* within which a specific individual is located, in shaping their “employability” – which includes the education and training activities that build and develop the personal capacity of such an individual (Marock, 2008). The education and training activities of the skills development

intervention had therefore enhanced the “work readiness” or “employability” of these youth (Marock, 2008). The experience of the employed youth of this study appears to align with the position held by the International Labour Organization (2012) that relevant skills development interventions do make young people more employable and do facilitate their entry into the labour market. Moreover, one of the employed youth found employment at the hotel where she had done the structured workplace training component of her learnership. The experience of this youth is an example of how, during training, learners have contact with employers and are able to access the required recruitment networks of these firms to secure employment upon completion of their studies (Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2012; Iannelli & Raffe, 2007; Wheelahan et al., 2015). The workplaces where unemployed young people conduct their structured workplace training therefore provide opportunities for possible employment for these youth after the training, provided of course that the young person performs and behaves in a manner that is in line with the values and culture of the relevant workplace.

This research study has also shown how one of the professional cookery youth was able to secure employment, even though she had not received her certificate. She said that her commitment and dedication, and her preparedness to do more than what was expected from her, had assisted her to find a job – which was confirmed by her supervisor. This view is in line with literature (Datta et al., 2007; Meyer, 2017) that points to the personal responsibility placed on individuals to enhance their own employability – by their developing the required *core technical and academic skills* of a specific job; *process skills* (e.g. teamwork and problem solving) which are developed through work experience; and *personal attributes* (e.g. integrity, flexibility and being on time) which complement the technical and process skills of an employee. Process skills and personal attributes are considered as soft skills, and are preferred over technical skills by employers who value employability, as these employers prefer potential over already acquired skills sets (Datta et al., 2007; Marock, 2008; Meyer, 2017). This might explain why this NARYSEC youth was able to secure employment even though she did not have proof (in the form of the certificate) that she had acquired the technical skills. Also, the “first job” that this

NARYSEC youth had secured is significant in ensuring her entry into and continued participation in the labour market, according to Schöer et al. (2014).

Although the contribution of the individual in enhancing his/her employability is acknowledged, various commentators, for example De Lannoy et al. (2018), Meyer (2017) and Schöer et al. (2014) underscore the contribution of factors outside the influence of the individual in determining whether such an individual is able to secure employment or not. The external factors that influence the employability of an individual include an over-supply of young first-time job seekers, a misalignment between where the jobs are and where the majority of unemployed people are located, the fact that employers often require prospective employees to possess prior work experience, as well as the existence of social networks that would link unemployed individuals with prospective jobs (De Lannoy et al., 2018; Meyer, 2017; Schöer et al., 2014). The youth participants of this study also had to contend with some of these external factors in their endeavours to transition into employment.

All five unemployed youth of this study confirmed that the training that they had received was of good quality. Only one of these five youth had, however, received his certificate by the time that this research was conducted. The fact that 80% of these unemployed youth had not received their certificates was proposed by them as a significant contributing factor towards their not being able to secure their “first jobs”. In response to the question why there were delays with the issuing of certificates, the NARYSEC Free State skills development manager highlighted the challenges that were experienced with training that was delivered for the Programme by the TVET colleges. The colleges often sub-contracted private training providers for the delivery of the training, and the colleges did not monitor, on a regular basis, the training that was delivered. This lack of consistent monitoring of the training resulted in delays with training and with completing all administrative processes that are required for certification by the relevant SETAs. Consequently, there were often delays with the issuing of the certificates. This delay with the issuing of certificates after the completion of the skills development phase of the NARYSEC Programme was also highlighted as a drawback of the Programme by Jacobs

and Habiyaremye (2018). The well-documented challenges that are experienced by the South African TVET Colleges in delivering on their education and training mandate (Allais, 2013; Badroodien, 2004; Gamble, 2003; Wedekind, 2014), and as articulated in chapter 2 of this study, were also prevalent when these colleges delivered training for the NARYSEC Programme.

Providing only training opportunities for young people, as was the case with the unemployed youth of this study, appears to not have been enough for them to transition into economic activity. What is required additionally is the creation of an *enabling environment* to facilitate their transitioning into employment (International Labour Organization, 2012). The government of any country has a critical role in establishing this enabling environment, while the involvement of the private sector is also imperative for these youth development interventions to succeed (International Labour Organization, 2012; Palmer, 2007; Singh, 2016). The suggested enabling environment for employment could include, for example, to ensure that youth receive their certificates after training has been completed; to conduct work readiness interventions with the youth that could provide them with the necessary *process skills* (e.g. problem solving) that are required in the workplace; as well as appropriate *attributes* (e.g. being on time) that would assist them to deal with the demands of the workplace. The skills development interventions for employment should therefore include elements of work readiness, to complement the technical skills that are provided to the youth. Moreover, government contracts like the ones at the NARYSEC College, as documented in this research report, could serve as temporary employment opportunities for the youth; where the youth could gain valuable work experience, enhance the technical skills that they have obtained during the skills development intervention and develop the process skills that are valued in workplaces (Datta et al., 2007; Meyer, 2017). The employers of the youth on these projects should view these temporary jobs as a means to enhance the employability of these youth and provide them with the appropriate opportunities to develop the relevant workplace skills.

This study has also shown that skills development interventions that are demand-led have a better chance of transitioning youth into employment. Possible employment

opportunities for the youth should be identified upfront, and the training courses that are offered to the youth should then be aligned to the identified opportunities. The approach used by Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator in matching unemployed youth with available jobs is one such demand-led approach, as articulated by the Harambee executive during the interview conducted with him. Job opportunities are first secured, which are mainly entry-level jobs, and then unemployed youth who meet the requirements of the jobs are sourced from the database of the organisation. These young people are then enrolled onto a bridging programme (of eight weeks at most) with the aim of preparing them for the specific requirements of the available jobs. The training that is provided to the youth during the "bridge" is non-credit bearing. Once the youth have completed the bridging programme, where their progress is closely monitored, they go for interviews with the companies that have the job opportunities. Interview preparation forms part of the bridging programme that the youth undergo for specific job opportunities. The organisation has, to date, assisted over 50 000 unemployed young people to secure their "first jobs", according to the executive manager who leads the knowledge and research capability of the organisation.

In addition, it is worth noting that the preferred channel (for job seekers and employers) for matching youth and lower income groups in South Africa with possible jobs is through social networks (links with family and friends) – close to 70% of people who found employment used their social networks, with the remaining 30% of people finding employment via formal channels (e.g. newspaper and online advertisements) and direct channels (e.g. enquiring at specific workplaces) (De Lannoy et al., 2018; Schöer et al., 2014). The available evidence therefore suggests that the social networks of unemployed young people are critical in their chances of securing their "first job", in particular (Lolwana et al., 2015). For the unemployed young people of this study, as is the case for many other rural youth, these critical social networks to assist their transitioning into employment, are unfortunately non-existent (De Lannoy et al., 2018).

In conclusion, a further reality with regard to employment prospects for young people in South Africa, is the fact that "preparation for work" interventions, in most instances,

prepare youth for employment in the formal economy, even though the reality is that this economy does not have adequate available jobs to absorb most of the unemployed youth (Lolwana et al., 2015). The reality is that the South African economy does not currently grow at the required rate that can create enough entry-level jobs for all the unemployed young people in the country. Additionally, as this study has shown, young people sometimes give up low-paying employment opportunities because the wages they earn do not cover all their expenses. These young people then rather seek employment opportunities in the informal sector, or 'hustle', to 'make a living' (Thieme, 2018). A study done by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 20 developing countries during 2012-13 found that approximately 75% of young workers (aged 15 to 29 years) in these countries were involved in informal employment. Rural youth are also more likely (than their urban counterparts) to be in informal employment (Shehu & Nilsson, 2014). There is therefore a need to think differently about "work", and opportunities outside the formal economy will have to be considered as "*opportunities for economic engagement*" for the youth, or "*opportunities that will grow their employability*". Having dealt with the transitioning of youth into employment, the focus now shifts towards the transitioning of youth into entrepreneurship.

### 5.2.2 Transitioning of youth into Entrepreneurship.

Promoting entrepreneurship amongst the youth can alleviate youth unemployment and contribute towards job creation, particularly within the context of emerging economies like South Africa, according to Meyer (2017) and OECD (2018). South Africa has not, however, been able to realise the full potential of entrepreneurship in growing the economy and creating employment according to AfDB/OECD/UNDP (2017). They suggest that the limited success has been due to "inadequate technical and business management skills; lack of experienced mentoring of entrepreneurs; barriers to business entry, and lack of access to finance" (AfDB/OECD/UNDP, 2017, p. 2). All the aspiring young entrepreneurs of this study indicated that the training that they had received, had assisted them on their entrepreneurial journeys. The technical skills that these youth acquired during their training were significant, given that one of the factors that prevent

entrepreneurs in South Africa from being successful is the lack of the requisite technical skills linked to their enterprises (AfDB/OECD/UNDP, 2017).

This study has shown that although it is important to capacitate young entrepreneurs with the requisite technical skills of an enterprise, they also require the relevant business management skills to operate their businesses successfully. The fact that no entrepreneurial training was provided to the youth of this study is a significant shortcoming as such training enhances the required qualities and skills to start and run a business (Mbuya & Schachtebeck, 2016). This study has also shown that it is important for emerging young entrepreneurs to understand that self-discipline, dedication and hard work are prerequisites for business success (Booyens & Galvaan, 2015). Once these youth have started their businesses, it is also important that they have access to mentors who can advise, guide and support them on their entrepreneurial journeys (Booyens & Galvaan, 2015). Moreover, it was further suggested by the findings of this study that it is important for prospective entrepreneurs to first seek employment, in order to build up the required knowledge, skills, experience and understanding of all aspects of a particular business, before starting such a business. Also, the young entrepreneurs need to be exposed to small businesses, successful and struggling ones, to get a first-hand sense of what it takes to run your own small business. The forging of partnerships with the private sector, as articulated in the findings of this study, is therefore critical for government youth development programmes so that aspiring young entrepreneurs are provided with the business support as highlighted above.

The majority of young entrepreneurs of this study indicated that their businesses were struggling. This study suggests that the lack of business support for these youth might explain why their enterprises were not operating optimally. The enabling environment that is required for entrepreneurs to succeed, as suggested by Palmer (2007), was not provided to these aspiring entrepreneurs in particular, and is also not available to prospective South African entrepreneurs in general. Within this context, some participants of this study, as well as some commentators suggest that becoming an entrepreneur or being self-employed remains the last resort for most South Africans,

particularly youth, when having to choose a career (Gregory, 2018; Lewis & Gasealahwe, 2017). This view might stem from the fact that the number of successful entrepreneurs in South Africa is the lowest on the African continent (Booyens & Galvaan, 2015). This view is however contested. A study conducted by Mbuya and Schachtebeck (2016, p. 228) with 603 urban South African university students, for example, found that "students view entrepreneurship as a valuable career path" and that these young people held "strong positive views and beliefs regarding their intention to pursue this career path". Similarly, in a study conducted by Malebana (2014) with 329 final year rural university students, he found that the majority of these students planned to start a business in the future.

Furthermore, there seems to be consensus amongst various commentators that there is a lack of funding available for small businesses in South Africa (AfDB/OECD/UNDP, 2017; Gregory, 2018; Lewis & Gasealahwe, 2017). The youth with businesses of this study indicated that they also did not have the required finances to operate their businesses optimally. In addition, Gregory (2018) further suggests that many entrepreneurs are not aware of the various funding sources that are available and how to access these funds. It was, however, shown with this study how the Centre for Entrepreneurship (CFE) team informed their youth entrepreneurs of funding sources for small businesses, and assisted them to apply and secure funding for their businesses. Additional stumbling blocks for the NARYSEC youth with businesses included the unavailability of land (for business premises), the lack of machinery and equipment, and not having access to business networks. The support that was provided to these youth was only in relation to the administration processes to start a business, and even this support was haphazard. No support has been provided in terms of how to run a business (Jacobs & Habiyaremye, 2018).

The enabling environment that is required for aspiring entrepreneurs to succeed, as suggested by Palmer (2007), should include assistance with securing finance for the business, having premises from which to operate the business, and the use of the required machinery and equipment to run the business. Additional required support relates to access to markets for the products or services of the small business, as well as

business “starter packs” that contain the “tools of the trade” that young people require to start their own businesses. It was further suggested by this study that the entrepreneurship model of the Centre for Entrepreneurship (CFE) created the enabling environment for their aspiring young entrepreneurs to succeed. It was shown how the CFE entrepreneurs were allowed to operate from the offices of the CFE, utilising the machinery and equipment of the centre, and how the centre team informed them of funding sources for small businesses, and assisted them to apply and secure funding for their businesses.

In conclusion, the assumption by various policy makers and government officials that entrepreneurship is a viable alternative for the millions of unemployed young people who cannot secure jobs, seems to be more complex than suggested . Not all unemployed young people appear to have entrepreneurial aspirations or the requisite attributes to succeed as entrepreneurs. The NARYSEC experience in the Free State for example has shown that most youth select training courses that would enable them to find employment, rather than start an enterprise. Also, those young people who do decide to venture into the entrepreneurial space often struggle, due to the absence of the enabling environment that is required to facilitate their entry, progress and success in business. Moreover, the aim of shorter skills development interventions, for example learnerships, which is often the skill development intervention of youth development programmes, is aimed at equipping learners for employment in the formal economy (Rankin, Roberts & Schöer, 2014), and is not necessarily aimed at equipping youth with the requisite technical and business knowledge and skills to start and run their own small businesses.

### 5.2.3 Cross-cutting enablers to transition youth into economic activity.

This study has illuminated three specific cross-cutting enablers that can contribute to the transitioning of unemployed young people from skills development programmes into economic activity.

Firstly, the significance and value of *partnerships* was highlighted. For youth development programmes to be sustainable and meaningful, and to transition youth into economic activity, a deliberate, co-ordinated, multi-pronged approach by a range of role-players is required (International Labour Organization, 2012; Lolwana et al., 2015; Marock, 2008; Meyer, 2017). This study corroborated this finding and suggested that the range of role-players should include internal and external, as well as public and private partners. This study further suggests that the nature of the partnerships with these role-players should be around identifying and securing employment and enterprise development opportunities for the youth, as well as assisting with the creation of the enabling environment for employment or self-employment for the youth.

Secondly, as highlighted throughout this study, the *social networks* of unemployed young people are critical for them to secure their "first" jobs (Lolwana et al., 2015). These social networks are also crucial for young people who want to start their own small businesses. The reality for most unemployed rural youth is that these social networks are to a large extent non-existent (De Lannoy et al., 2018). The result is that these young people struggle to access opportunities for jobs and enterprises because of the absence of these social networks. The findings of this study suggest that the custodians of the youth development programmes assist the young people of their programmes to create and develop the requisite social networks that would facilitate their transitioning into economic activity.

Thirdly, this study has highlighted the need to think differently about "work" and the findings of the study suggest that opportunities outside the formal economy will have to be considered as *"opportunities for economic engagement*" for the youth, or "*opportunities that will grow their employability*". The small businesses of aspiring young entrepreneurs can provide opportunities for economic engagement or opportunities that will enhance the employability of those youth who want to secure employment. Government youth development programmes could therefore explore how youth small businesses can be

supported so that these businesses can indeed provide the opportunities to other youth to enhance their employability or facilitate their economic engagement.

Having dealt with the general findings for the transitions of youth from skills development interventions into economic activity, the chapter now looks at specific recommendations for the NARYSEC Programme.

### 5.2.4 Recommendations for the NARYSEC Programme.

Five recommendations are proposed for the NARYSEC Programme, based on the findings of this research study. Firstly, it is recommended that the custodians of the NARYSEC Programme explore *partnerships*, with a range of role-players, who might be able to assist with transitioning larger numbers of NARYSEC youth into either employment or self-employment. These partnerships should be with branches within the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR), other government departments and government agencies, as well as private sector organisations. Moreover, it is suggested that a responsive mechanism be devised for government youth programmes to partner, in particular, with private sector organisations that can provide job and enterprise development opportunities for the youth.

Secondly, the projects that the DRDLR embark on present opportunities for employment and enterprise development for the youth, which can be negotiated with the service providers that are contracted to deliver these projects. The benefits of the youth being employed on these projects, although on a temporary basis, include earning an income, gaining valuable work experience and improving their skills. The acquired experience and improved skills will stand these youth in good stead to secure future employment once these projects have been completed. For those youth who have started their own small businesses, opportunities could be explored with the service providers to sub-contract these youth businesses in delivering the required products and services for the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR).

Thirdly, it is recommended that the NARYSEC Programme employs a *demand-led* skills development approach, so that larger numbers of youth can be transitioned into employment. Possible employment opportunities could be identified up-front for the youth, while the skills development interventions can be tailor-made for the requirements of the identified job opportunities, which will include the required type, level and duration of the training courses.

Fourthly, the drawback of the training experience for many of the NARYSEC youth participants of this study was the delay with the issuing of their certificates. All the unemployed youth without certificates suggested that the fact that they had not received their certificates hampered their chances of finding employment. It is therefore recommended that the NARYSEC officials establish the required partnerships with their training providers and SETAs to develop and implement the necessary skills development monitoring and evaluation system, so that there are no unnecessary delays with the issuing of training certificates.

Lastly, it is recommended that the NARYSEC Programme invests in a learner tracking system. Such a system will enable the programme implementers to keep in touch with youth who have exited the Programme and allow them to obtain information on how many of these youth have found employment, started their own small businesses or are still unemployed. Social network platforms that are popular amongst young people could be utilised for this purpose.

## 5.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to explore how young people transition from skills development programmes into economic activity. To understand the transitions of the young people, this study researched how the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) youth in the Free State had transitioned into either employment or self-employment (entrepreneurship) since they exited the NARYSEC Programme.

To explore and understand the transitions into economic activity of the youth participants of this study, a qualitative research design was utilised. The research that was conducted was an empirical study, and a qualitative approach was employed, which allowed me the opportunity to study, in-depth, the experiences of the NARYSEC youth in relation to their transitioning into economic activity. The location where this research study was conducted was the Free State Province, due to the rural nature of the province, as well as the high levels of unemployment across the province. The participants of this study included NARYSEC youth and officials, employers who had employed NARYSEC youth, and representatives from youth employment services and small business development agencies. The data collection process of this study included semi-structured individual and group interviews, supplemented by document analysis. The interviews allowed the participants the opportunity to express their experiences and insights in their own words. An inductive approach was used for the data analysis process which allowed the themes and categories to emerge from the transcribed interviews.

The following results were delivered by this research study. Firstly, all youth agreed that the training that they had undergone was of good quality. The employed youth further indicated that the training had prepared them for the work that they were doing as assistant chefs, while the youth with businesses explained that their training had assisted them on their entrepreneurial journeys. This study suggests that the technical skills that the employed youth and the youth with businesses had received were significant. However, the findings of this study further suggested that the technical skills alone are not adequate to transition the young people into economic activity. What is additionally required is that they be provided with opportunities that will also develop their process skills and the requisite attributes relevant to the workplace. Work readiness interventions, and temporary employment contracts were suggested by the findings of this study as possible opportunities to develop these skills and attributes amongst the youth who want to secure employment. For the youth with businesses, this study further suggested that the skills development interventions must also include the requisite entrepreneurship and business management skills that will assist the emerging entrepreneurs to run their

businesses successfully. In addition, the importance of self-discipline, dedication and hard work, as pre-requisites for business success, were also underscored.

Secondly, this study has shown that providing only the relevant skills development interventions is not enough to transition the youth into economic activity. What is additionally required is the creation of an enabling environment to facilitate the transitioning. For young people to transition into employment, this study suggested that providing youth with work readiness interventions and temporary contract work (to gain work experience and enhance their workplace skills) would assist with creating the enabling environment for them to transition into employment. In addition, the findings of this study suggested that skills development interventions that are demand-led have a better chance of transitioning youth into employment. Possible employment opportunities for the youth should be identified upfront, and the training courses that are offered to the youth should then be aligned to the identified opportunities. Furthermore, for young entrepreneurs the findings of this study suggested that the enabling environment should include structured business support, as well as assistance with securing finance for the business, having premises from which to operate the business, and the use of the required machinery and equipment to run the business. Additional required support related to access to markets, as well as business "starter packs" that contain the "tools of the trade" that young people require to start their own businesses.

In conclusion, this study has shown that the assumption, by many policy makers and government officials, that entrepreneurship is a viable alternative for the millions of unemployed young people who cannot secure jobs, seems to be more complex than suggested. Not all unemployed young people appear to have entrepreneurial aspirations or the requisite attributes to succeed as entrepreneurs. Also, if those unemployed young people who do have entrepreneurial aspirations and the requisite business attributes are not provided with the enabling environment for emerging entrepreneurs, then they too will not succeed.

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**Annexure 1: Information letter to the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR)**

Chief Director NARYSEC
Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR)
[Date to be filled in]

**RE: INFORMATION LETTER TO THE DRDLR TO REQUEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

My name is Johan Ryk, and I am an MEd student at the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am currently employed by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) as the Skills Development Director for the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Programme. As a requirement of my degree, I am conducting research into whether the NARYSEC youth have been able to transition into economic activity, after they exited the Programme. My research is titled *Exploring transitions from youth skills development programmes into economic activity in the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Programme* and aims to analyse how young people transition from skills development programmes into economic activity. I will endeavour to provide feedback to your Department as well as participants on the outcomes of the research.

While your Department's involvement in this study is of importance, it is completely voluntary and you may decline to participate at any stage of the research. While my interest in this research arose out of my work as the Skills Development Director of the NARYSEC Programme, my role as the researcher for this study is in my personal capacity so as to undertake academic research to fulfil the requirements of a MEd degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) and its officials are under no obligation to participate in the research and may at any time during the research process refuse to continue their participation.

Should the Department consent to participate in this research of youth transitions into economic activity, within the context of the NARYSEC Programme, I would like to request permission to interview six to eight officials involved in the NARYSEC Programme.

As part of the research, I will also be requesting documentation to assist in my analysis of how the NARYSEC Programme currently manages the exit of the youth into economic activity. In addition, this may include policy and strategy documents and questions about the design thereof.

Once the information has been provided the Free State NARYSEC officials, as well as National Office officials responsible for the NARYSEC exit strategy will partake in one focus group of approximately 40 – 60 minutes in September - November 2018, which will be audio-taped and transcribed. I will travel to the location convenient for the focus group and will cover all expenses incurred.

I will use pseudonyms for all officials and will not mention any participant by their name, title or position although anonymity cannot be guaranteed as NARYSEC colleagues may know each other professionally.

The data collected will be analysed and documented in a research report. The research findings will be used for academic purposes only, which may include books, journals and conference proceedings.

All research data will be kept securely in a locked cabinet or on password protected files and will be completely destroyed five years after completion of the research study.

Should you require further information throughout the course of the research, please do not hesitate to contact me on 082 940 2118 or Johan.Ryk@drdlr.gov.za. A summary of the research report and findings can be made available to you electronically upon finalisation in June 2019 should you wish to receive same.

A meeting with yourself can be set up to take you through the study and the information required from the Department for the purpose of the study. I look forward to your response at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

***Johan Ryk***

MEd student at the University of the Witwatersrand

**Supervisor:** Dr Lynn Hewlett (Email: Lynn.Hewlett@wits.ac.za)

**Annexure 2: Information Letter for NARYSEC Officials**

[Date to be filled in]
Dear [Participant's full name]

**RE: INFORMATION LETTER TO NARYSEC OFFICIALS TO REQUEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

My name is Johan Ryk, and I am an MEd student at the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am currently employed by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) as the Skills Development Director for the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Programme. As a requirement of my degree, I am conducting research into whether the NARYSEC youth have been able to transition into economic activity, after they exited the Programme. My research is titled *Exploring transitions from youth skills development programmes into economic activity in the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Programme* and aims to analyse how young people transition from skills development programmes into economic activity.

As a student at the University of the Witwatersrand, I am obligated to conduct research that is in line with the ethical protocols of the University of Witwatersrand and as such it is important that the participants in this research should not feel obliged to participate in light of my current role as the Skills Development Director of the NARYSEC Programme.

As the study focuses on the transitioning of NARYSEC youth into economic activity after exiting the Programme, you have been purposively selected to be interviewed. You are receiving this letter as you are familiar with the current practices and results of the NARYSEC exit strategy. As such, I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. If you agree, participation will involve the following:

- You will be involved in a focus group in September - November 2018 which will last approximately 40 – 60 minutes.
- This focus group will take place at your convenience and in a venue of your determination.
- The focus group, with your permission, will be audiotaped to ensure that accurate information is captured.

- You will not be forced to answer any questions you are not comfortable answering.

Your participation will not provide for any advantage, disadvantage or remuneration, but will assist in establishing an understanding of the required elements of a youth skills development programme that would facilitate successful transitioning into economic activity. It is hoped this research will contribute towards improving the current NARYSEC exit strategy for future participants.

The transcribed interviews will be available to you. The data collected will be analysed and documented in a research report. The research findings will be used for academic purposes only, which might include books, journals and conference proceedings.

All research data will be kept securely in a locked cabinet or on password protected files and will be completely destroyed 5 years after completion of the research study.

Should you require further information throughout the course of the research, please do not hesitate to contact me on 082 940 2118 or Johan.Ryk@drdlr.gov.za. A summary of the research report and findings can be made available to you electronically upon finalisation in June 2019 should you wish to receive same.

A meeting with yourself can be set up to take you through the study and the information required from yourself for the purpose of the study. I look forward to your response at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

***Johan Ryk***
MEd student at the University of the Witwatersrand

**Supervisor:** Dr Lynn Hewlett (Email: Lynn.Hewlett@wits.ac.za)

**Annexure 3: Information Letter for NARYSEC Youth**

[Date to be filled in]
Dear [Participant's full name]

**RE: INFORMATION LETTER TO NARYSEC YOUTH TO REQUEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

My name is Johan Ryk, and I am an MEd student at the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am currently employed by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) as the Skills Development Director for the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Programme. As a requirement of my degree, I am conducting research into whether the NARYSEC youth have been able to transition into economic activity, after they exited the Programme. My research is titled *Exploring transitions from youth skills development programmes into economic activity in the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Programme* and aims to analyse how young people transition from skills development programmes into economic activity.

As a student at the University of the Witwatersrand, I am obligated to conduct research that is in line with the ethical protocols of the University of Witwatersrand and as such it is important that the participants in this research should not feel obliged to participate in light of my current role as the Skills Development Director of the NARYSEC Programme.

As the study focuses on the transitioning of NARYSEC youth into economic activity after exiting the Programme, you have been purposively selected to be interviewed. You are receiving this letter as you are an ex-NARYSEC youth who is familiar with the practices and results of the NARYSEC exit strategy. As such, I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. If you agree, participation will involve the following:

- You will be involved in an interview in September - November 2018 which will last approximately 40 – 60 minutes.
- This interview will take place at your convenience and in a venue of your determination.
- The interview, with your permission, will be audiotaped to ensure that accurate information is captured.

- You will not be forced to answer any questions you are not comfortable answering.

Your participation will not provide for any advantage, disadvantage or remuneration, but will assist in establishing an understanding of the required elements of a youth skills development programme that would facilitate successful transitioning into economic activity. It is hoped this research will contribute towards improving the current NARYSEC exit strategy for future participants.

The transcribed interviews will be available to you should you require to see them. The data collected will be analysed and documented in a research report. The research findings will be used for academic purposes only, which might include books, journals and conference proceedings. I will use pseudonyms to protect your anonymity.

All research data will be kept securely in a locked cabinet or on password protected files and will be completely destroyed five years after completion of the research study.

Should you require further information throughout the course of the research, please do not hesitate to contact me on 082 940 2118 or Johan.Ryk@drdlr.gov.za. A summary of the research report and findings can be made available to you electronically upon finalisation in June 2019 should you wish to receive same.

A meeting with yourself can be set up to take you through the study and the information required from yourself for the purpose of the study. I look forward to your response at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

***Johan Ryk***
MEd student at the University of the Witwatersrand

**Supervisor:** Dr Lynn Hewlett (Email: Lynn.Hewlett@wits.ac.za)

**Annexure 4: Information Letter for Employers**

[Date to be filled in]
Dear [Participant's full name]

**RE: INFORMATION LETTER TO EMPLOYERS TO REQUEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

My name is Johan Ryk, and I am an MEd student at the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am currently employed by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) as the Skills Development Director for the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Programme. As a requirement of my degree, I am conducting research into whether the NARYSEC youth have been able to transition into economic activity, after they exited the Programme. My research is titled *Exploring transitions from youth skills development programmes into economic activity in the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Programme* and aims to analyse how young people transition from skills development programmes into economic activity.

As the study focuses on the transitioning of NARYSEC youth into economic activity after exiting the Programme, you have been purposively selected to be interviewed. You are receiving this letter as you have employed a NARYSEC youth after exiting the Programme, and would be able to provide insights into the recruitment and selection criteria and processes used for appointing the youth. As such, I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. If you agree, participation will involve the following:

- You will be involved in an interview in September - November 2018 which will last approximately 40 – 60 minutes.
- This interview will take place at your convenience and in a venue of your determination.
- The interview, with your permission, will be audiotaped to ensure that accurate information is captured.
- You will not be forced to answer any questions you are not comfortable answering.

Your participation will not provide for any advantage, disadvantage or remuneration, but will assist in establishing an understanding of the required elements of a youth skills development

programme that would facilitate successful transitioning into economic activity. It is hoped this research will contribute towards improving the current NARYSEC exit strategy.

The transcribed interviews will be available to you. The data collected will be analysed and documented in a research report. The research findings will be used for academic purposes only, which might include books, journals and conference proceedings. I will use pseudonyms to protect your anonymity.

All research data will be kept securely in a locked cabinet or on password protected files and will be completely destroyed five years after completion of the research study.

Should you require further information throughout the course of the research, please do not hesitate to contact me on 082 940 2118 or Johan.Ryk@drdlr.gov.za. A summary of the research report and findings can be made available to you electronically upon finalisation in June 2019 should you wish to receive same.

A meeting with yourself can be set up to take you through the study and the information required from yourself for the purpose of the study. I look forward to your response at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

***Johan Ryk***
MEd student at the University of the Witwatersrand

**Supervisor:** Dr Lynn Hewlett (Email: Lynn.Hewlett@wits.ac.za)

**Annexure 5: Information Letter for Employment Agencies**

[Date to be filled in]
Dear [Participant's full name]

**RE: INFORMATION LETTER TO EMPLOYMENT AGENCY TO REQUEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

My name is Johan Ryk, and I am an MEd student at the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am currently employed by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) as the Skills Development Director for the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Programme. As a requirement of my degree, I am conducting research into whether the NARYSEC youth have been able to transition into economic activity, after they exited the Programme. My research is titled *Exploring transitions from youth skills development programmes into economic activity in the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Programme* and aims to analyse how young people transition from skills development programmes into economic activity.

As the study focuses on the transitioning of NARYSEC youth into economic activity, after exiting the Programme, you have been purposively selected to be interviewed. You are receiving this letter as you are providing employment services to job-seekers, and as such would be able to provide insights into the available services for unemployed youth, as well as the uptake rates of these services by rural youth in particular. As such, I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. If you agree, participation will involve the following:

- You will be involved in an interview in September - November 2018 which will last approximately 40 – 60 minutes.
- This interview will take place at your convenience and in a venue of your determination.
- The interview, with your permission, will be audiotaped to ensure that accurate information is captured.
- You will not be forced to answer any questions you are not comfortable answering.

Your participation will not provide for any advantage, disadvantage or remuneration, but will assist in establishing an understanding of the required elements of a youth skills development

programme that would facilitate successful transitioning into economic activity. It is hoped this research will contribute towards improving the current NARYSEC exit strategy.

The transcribed interviews will be available to you. The data collected will be analysed and documented in a research report. The research findings will be used for academic purposes only, which might include books, journals and conference proceedings. I will use pseudonyms to protect your anonymity.

All research data will be kept securely in a locked cabinet or on password protected files and will be completely destroyed five years after completion of the research study.

Should you require further information throughout the course of the research, please do not hesitate to contact me on 082 940 2118 or Johan.Ryk@drdlr.gov.za. A summary of the research report and findings can be made available to you electronically upon finalisation in June 2019 should you wish to receive same.

A meeting with yourself can be set up to take you through the study and the information required from yourself for the purpose of the study. I look forward to your response at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

***Johan Ryk***
MEd student at the University of the Witwatersrand

**Supervisor:** Dr Lynn Hewlett (Email: Lynn.Hewlett@wits.ac.za)

**Annexure 6: Information Letter for Small Business Development Agencies**

[Date to be filled in]
Dear [Participant's full name]

**RE: INFORMATION LETTER TO SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY TO REQUEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

My name is Johan Ryk, and I am an MEd student at the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am currently employed by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) as the Skills Development Director for the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Programme. As a requirement of my degree, I am conducting research into whether the NARYSEC youth have been able to transition into economic activity, after they exited the Programme. My research is titled *Exploring transitions from youth skills development programmes into economic activity in the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Programme* and aims to analyse how young people transition from skills development programmes into economic activity.

As the study focuses on the transitioning of NARYSEC youth into economic activity, after exiting the Programme, you have been purposively selected to be interviewed. You are receiving this letter as you are providing small business development services to entrepreneurs, and as such would be able to provide insights into the available services for aspiring and existing young entrepreneurs, as well as the uptake rates of these services by rural youth in particular. As such, I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. If you agree, participation will involve the following:

- You will be involved in an interview in September - November 2018 which will last approximately 40 – 60 minutes.
- This interview will take place at your convenience and in a venue of your determination.
- The interview, with your permission, will be audiotaped to ensure that accurate information is captured.
- You will not be forced to answer any questions you are not comfortable answering.

Your participation will not provide for any advantage, disadvantage or remuneration, but will assist in establishing an understanding of the required elements of a youth skills development programme that would facilitate successful transitioning into economic activity. It is hoped this research will contribute towards improving the current NARYSEC exit strategy.

The transcribed interviews will be available to you. The data collected will be analysed and documented in a research report. The research findings will be used for academic purposes only, which might include books, journals and conference proceedings. I will use pseudonyms to protect your anonymity.

All research data will be kept securely in a locked cabinet or on password protected files and will be completely destroyed five years after completion of the research study.

Should you require further information throughout the course of the research, please do not hesitate to contact me on 082 940 2118 or Johan.Ryk@drdlr.gov.za. A summary of the research report and findings can be made available to you electronically upon finalisation in June 2019 should you wish to receive same.

A meeting with yourself can be set up to take you through the study and the information required from yourself for the purpose of the study. I look forward to your response at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

***Johan Ryk***
MEd student at the University of the Witwatersrand

**Supervisor:** Dr Lynn Hewlett (Email: Lynn.Hewlett@wits.ac.za)

**Annexure 7: NARYSEC Youth/Employer/Employment Agency/Small Business Development Agency participant: Consent form**

***Exploring transitions from youth skills development programmes into economic activity in the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Programme***

**PARTICIPANTS INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWS**

The participant, _____ (*participant's full name*)

Please circle either the **Yes/No** to show that you the participant understand what it will mean to consent and participate:

- As the participant I have read and I understand the information sheet. **Yes/ No**

- My participation is completely voluntary and I understand that I may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without any punishment or negative consequences. **Yes/ No**

- As the participant I will also not be advantaged, disadvantaged or paid for participating. **Yes/ No**
- As the participant I do not have to answer any questions I don't feel comfortable answering. **Yes/ No**
- A pseudonym will be used to ensure anonymity in all academic writing including books, journal, conferences and debate. **Yes/ No**

The participant has been informed before agreeing to participate that his/her identity will be anonymous. The report will not use your name but may refer to your title and organisation.

By signing below I, the participant give consent to participate in the research project and individual interviews.

**Signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

**Annexure 8: NARYSEC Officials participant: Consent form**

***Exploring transitions from youth skills development programmes into economic activity in the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Programme***

**PARTICIPANTS INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWS**

The participant, _____ (*participant's full name*)

Please circle either the **Yes/No** to show that you the participant understand what it will mean to consent and participate:

- As the participant I have read and I understand the information sheet. **Yes / No**

- My participation is completely voluntary and I understand that I may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without any punishment or negative consequences. **Yes /No**

- As the participant I will also not be advantaged, disadvantaged or paid for participating. **Yes / No**
- As the participant I do not have to answer any questions I don't feel comfortable answering. **Yes / No**
- A pseudonym will be used to ensure anonymity in all academic writing including books, journal, conferences and debate. **Yes / No**

The participant has been informed before agreeing to participate that his/her confidentiality will be respected. The report will not use your name but may refer to your title and organisation.

By signing below I, the participant give consent to participate in the research project and focus group.

**Signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

**Annexure 9: NARYSEC Officials/NARYSEC Youth/Employers/Employment Agencies/Small Business Development Agencies: Audio-recording**

***Exploring transitions from youth skills development programmes into economic activity in the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Programme***

**PARTICIPANTS INFORMED CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING AND TRANSCRIBING INTERVIEWS**

I, _____ (*participant's full name*)

Please circle either the **Yes/No** to show that you understand what it will mean to consent and participate:

- My participation is completely voluntary and I may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without any punishment or negative consequences.

  **Yes / No**

- I will also not be advantaged, disadvantaged or paid for participating.

  **Yes / No**

- A pseudonym (e.g. participant 1) will be used to ensure anonymity in all academic writing including books, journal and conferences. **Yes / No**

- The audio recordings will be used to make sure the researcher uses exactly what I answered to the interview questions. **Yes / No**

- All audio-taped and transcribed responses will be safely kept in a locked cabinet and completely destroyed between three – five years after completion of the research project.

  **Yes / No**

By signing below I give consent for interviews to be audio- taped and transcribed.

**Signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

**Annexure 10: NARYSEC OFFICIALS INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:**

1. Can you provide a brief overview of your responsibilities (including key activities) within the NARYSEC Programme, with particular reference to the NARYSEC exit strategy?
2. What do you think is the main purpose of the NARYSEC exit strategy?
3. Does the content of the strategy provide for all the available pathways for youth to exit the NARYSEC Programme successfully? Explain your answer.
4. What support is provided to NARYSEC youth in preparation for their exit of the programme?
5. Does the skills development phase of the NARYSEC Programme complement, support and facilitate the implementation of the exit strategy? Explain your answer.
6. Does the community service phase of the NARYSEC Programme complement, support and facilitate the implementation of the exit strategy? Explain your answer.
7. Does the youth leadership development phase of the NARYSEC Programme complement, support and facilitate the implementation of the exit strategy? Explain your answer.
8. Do you believe that the NARYSEC youth benefit from the implementation of the exit strategy? Provide reasons for your answer.
9. Does the NARYSEC Programme have statistics on the success rate of the exit strategy? If yes, provide the detail of how youth are tracked, as well as the statistics; if no, provide reasons why the programme is not tracking the youth who have exited the programme.
10. Is the current success rate of youth transitioning into economic activity when exiting the programme satisfactory, in your view? Explain your answer. What steps can be taken to increase the success rate?
11. What are the hindrances to exiting NARYSEC youth successfully?
12. Which partnerships have you established to assist with the NARYSEC exit strategy, and what is the nature of these partnerships?
13. Which factors contribute to successful transitioning of NARYSEC youth into economic activity?
14. How do you keep abreast of developments and best practices with regard to exit opportunities for youth in development programmes like NARYSEC?

**Annexure 11: NARYSEC YOUTH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:**

1. Can you provide a brief overview of your NARYSEC journey? When were you recruited into the programme, which activities did you participate in while in the programme and what was your experience in this regard, and when did you exit?
2. What has been your experience of the implementation of the NARYSEC exit strategy? Do you believe that the NARYSEC youth benefit from the implementation of the exit strategy? Provide reasons for your answer.
3. What support have you received from NARYSEC officials with regard your exit from the programme?
4. What support have you received from other persons/organisations with regard your exit from the NARYSEC programme?
5. Did the skills development phase of the NARYSEC Programme assist with your exit from the programme? Explain your answer.
6. Did the community service phase of the NARYSEC Programme assist with your exit from the programme? Explain your answer.
7. Did the youth leadership development phase of the NARYSEC Programme assist with your exit from the programme? Explain your answer.
8. Has the NARYSEC Programme tracked your progress since you exited the programme? Do you think that tracking the youth after exit will assist them? Explain your answer.
9. How successful is the NARYSEC Programme in transitioning youth into economic activity, in your view? Explain your answer. What steps can be taken to increase the success rate?
10. What are the challenges with the implementation of the NARYSEC exit strategy?
11. What support would you have preferred to receive from the NARYSEC Programme with regard your exit from the programme?
12. For the youth who secured employment:
    a. When did you secure your employment and what is the nature of your employment?
    b. What steps did you take in order to secure this employment?
    c. Who assisted you in securing the employment, and what was the nature of the assistance?
    d. How can current NARYSEC youth be assisted to secure employment when they exit the programme, and who could provide the assistance?

e. What steps must these NARYSEC youth take themselves to improve their chances of securing employment?

13. For the youth who started and maintained their own businesses:
    a. When did you start your business and what is the nature of your business?
    b. What steps did you take to start and maintain your business?
    c. Who assisted you in setting up and running your business, and what was the nature of the assistance?
    d. How can current NARYSEC youth be assisted to set up and run their own businesses when they exit?
    e. What steps must these NARYSEC youth take themselves to improve their chances of business success?
14. For the youth who are unemployed:
    a. How long have you been unemployed after exiting the NARYSEC Programme?
    b. What steps have you taken to either find employment or start your own business?
    c. Who assisted you in your attempts to secure employment or set up your own business, and what was the nature of the assistance?
    d. How can current NARYSEC youth be assisted to secure employment or set up their own businesses when they exit?
    e. Are there any steps that these NARYSEC youth can take themselves to improve their chances of economic activity?

**Annexure 12: EMPLOYER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:**

1. Can you provide a brief overview of the nature of your business?
2. What is your knowledge and experience of the NARYSEC Programme?
3. You have employed one of the ex-NARYSEC youth. Please provide insights on the reasons for employing this NARYSEC youth.
4. Does your company have a specific strategy for recruiting and employing young people?
5. How has the performance of the NARYSEC youth been since appointing them? Can you tell me about the observed knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of the youth?
6. Have you experienced challenging aspects with regard the performance of the NARYSEC youth in your company? Please elaborate.
7. Are there any attributes that secured the youth employment as well as success in the workplace?
8. How can a youth programme (e.g. the NARYSEC Programme) assist young people with securing employment, and also coping with the demands of the workplace?
9. Which additional measures can government take to ensure employment opportunities for young people?
10. Which partnerships will assist the NARYSEC Programme to facilitate employment for their youth, and what should be the nature of these partnerships?
11. Would you prefer to have a partnership with the NARYSEC Programme? If yes, what should be the nature of the partnership; and if no, why?

**Annexure 13: EMPLOYMENT AGENCY INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:**

1. Can you provide a brief overview of the nature of your services, the targeted beneficiaries, your footprint, as well as an indication of the uptake of your services?
2. Do you have a specific strategy to provide services to youth? If yes, please elaborate; if no, why?
3. Do you have a specific strategy to provide services to unemployed youth in rural areas? If yes, please elaborate; if no, why?
4. What are the challenges for unemployed young people to secure employment? What are the additional challenges for youth in rural areas?
5. What are the required attributes that will improve the chances of rural youth securing employment?
6. How can a youth programme (e.g. the NARYSEC Programme) assist young people with securing employment?
7. Which partnerships will assist the NARYSEC Programme to facilitate employment for their youth, and what should be the nature of these partnerships?
8. Which additional measures can government take to ensure employment for unemployed young people?

**Annexure 14: SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:**

1. Can you provide a brief overview of the nature of your services, the targeted beneficiaries, your footprint, as well as an indication of the uptake of your services?
2. Do you have a specific strategy to provide services to youth? If yes, please elaborate; if no, why?
3. Do you have a specific strategy to provide services to aspiring and existing entrepreneurs in rural areas? If yes, please elaborate; if no, why?
4. What are the challenges with young people setting up and running successful businesses? What are the additional challenges for youth entrepreneurs in rural areas?
5. What are the required attributes that will improve the chances of rural youth becoming successful entrepreneurs?
6. How can a youth programme (e.g. the NARYSEC Programme) assist young people with setting up and running successful businesses?
7. What is your knowledge and experience of the NARYSEC Programme?
8. Which partnerships will assist the NARYSEC Programme to facilitate the setting up and running of successful businesses by their youth, and what should be the nature of these partnerships?
9. Would you prefer to have a partnership with the NARYSEC Programme? If yes, what should be the nature of the partnership; and if no, why?
10. Which additional measures can government take to ensure entrepreneurial opportunities for young people?