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Madlala, Auralia

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Student name:
Auralia Madlala

Student number:
1561135

Supervisor:
Dr Rajohane Matshedisho

Title:

An investigation of the usefulness of training provided by the infrastructure sector of Government's Expanded Public Works Programme in addressing youth unemployment in the Gauteng Province

DECLARATION

I declare that except reference to other people's works, which have been duly acknowledged, this research report is my own unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfilment for the award of Master of Arts in Development Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. The report has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Auralia Madlala

15 February 2019

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my beloved Nephew Samkelo Madlala. I hope this inspires you to forge ahead inspite of everything.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not have come to fruition without the assistance of the people mentioned below and to whom I am very grateful:

- Current and former EPWP participants interviewed in this study
- Department of Infrastructure Development (DID) officials and project contractors who agreed to be interviewed
- National Department of Public Works and DID officials who shared EPWP documentation reviewed in this study
- My Supervisor Dr Rajohane Matshedisho for his guidance

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to investigate the usefulness of the training provided by, and the skills acquired from, the infrastructure sector of Government's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in enabling participants, in particular the youth, to get jobs elsewhere in the labour market post EPWP participation.

The notion of usefulness was measured in terms of whether the duration and type of training provided and the skills acquired tallied with the nature of youth unemployment and its main drivers in Gauteng and indeed the whole of South Africa.

The EPWP forms part of an array of initiatives that have been implemented to address two of the most pressing challenges in post-apartheid South Africa, unemployment and poverty, in general, and youth unemployment, in particular. With an emphasis on drawing large numbers of people into productive work so that they gain skills, through training and experience, as they work and thus, increase their employability after their programme participation, all spheres of government and state-owned enterprises have been enjoined to implement the EPWP.

The study focused on the Gauteng province which, despite being the most industrialised region of South Africa, faces one of the highest prevalence rates of youth unemployment. In this province, the study conducted semi-structured interviews with the current and former participants of several EPWPs, namely: the current Charlotte Maxeke Hospital EPWP; the Nelson Mandela Childrens' Hospital EPWP implemented in 2012; the Charlotte Maxeke Hospital Renovation EPWP implemented in 2014 as well as key interviews with Department of Infrastructure Development officials and contractors from the EPWP currently implemented at Charlotte Maxeke Hospital. The objective of these interviews was to obtain information about the type and duration of training provided in these projects as well as to extract their perceptions about whether this training could address youth unemployment in Gauteng and indeed the whole of South Africa.

The study also reviewed documents relating to the implementation of the current Charlotte Maxeke project to gain insight into the intuition behind the implementation. This information formed the basis for investigating the usefulness of the training received from EPWPs. Principally, this study found that training provided by the infrastructure sector of the EPWP is, owing to its short-term nature combined with the limited skills provided, not useful in enhancing the skills of participants. This finding resonates with the verdict reached by other critics about the efficacy of public works in addressing unemployment and poverty in South Africa.

The findings of this study, therefore, means that the already high rates of youth unemployment will not be addressed by the EPWP and will continue to rise until more sustainable solutions are found.

1 CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides context to the current study by defining its purpose and significance and the key questions addressed. This Chapter also provides background to South Africa's unemployment challenge by bringing to the fore literature on this subject. The key arguments about the nature of South Africa's unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, as well as its causes are discussed. The reasons for the adoption of the EPWP in addressing this challenge are also enunciated.

1.1.1 **Background**

South Africa is one of the countries with extremely high rates of unemployment and inequality in the world. In response to South Africa's high unemployment figures, Government, in 2004, introduced the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), to create short-term work opportunities and provide training aimed at equipping EPWP participants with skills that would enable them to gain meaningful employment after exiting the programme.

However, before delving into the role of the EPWP in addressing youth unemployment in the Gauteng province and owing to the seriousness of the unemployment challenge, particularly, youth unemployment, in South Africa, this study deemed it necessary to unpack, in detail, the challenge of unemployment. This to better understand the depth of the problem that the EPWP was designed to address and to also better understand the role that the EPWP was expected to play in tackling unemployment in both the short-term and the long run. In short, although this study is not about unemployment, it was deemed necessary to discuss it in detail in order to get a better appreciation of the depth of the problem and to better understand the role of the EPWP in addressing it.

1.1.2 **The picture of unemployment in South Africa**

Coupled with the twin evils of poverty and inequality, unemployment constitutes what Pali Lehohla (the former Statistician General at Statistics South Africa[1]) has called a "cocktail of disasters"

1 Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) is a government agency for the collection and analysis of vital national statistics such as poverty headcount and unemployment levels in the country.

(Powell, 2016: 2). According to Davies and Thurlow (2010:437), a quarter of South Africa's labour force were affected by unemployment. Whilst there is no belabouring that South Africa faces high levels of unemployment, there is not only no consensus on the actual number of unemployed people in South Africa, but also on its causes. Disagreements on the actual numbers of unemployed people arise from contestations on what should be considered as the appropriate definition of unemployment for the analysis of the labour market. Data from Statistics South Africa (StatsSA, 2017) indicate that in the period 1994 – 2018, "the number of unemployed people more than doubled – from 2.5 million in 1994 to 6.2 million in 2018, using the narrow definition of unemployment".[2] Data from the Quarterly Labour Force Survey put the unemployment rate at 27.7% (StatsSA, 2017) but the picture becomes more gloomy when the expanded definition of unemployment is used. Peyper (2017) states that "according to the expanded definition of unemployment, which includes discouraged workers, South Africa's unemployment rate stood at 36.6%.

Existing literature attributes South Africa's high unemployment rate to several factors. Kingdon and Knight (2007:818) argue that high rates of unemployment are caused by an increase in surplus labour. According to these scholars, the death of apartheid saw restrictions on the movement to urban areas lifted and an influx of people seeking new employment possibilities that this was perceived to present. Banerjee et al (2008:716) attribute the country's high unemployment rate to, among other factors, the increased supply of labour that came about as a result of a mass arrival of African women into the labour market following the demise of apartheid. Kirk (2010) posits that unemployment is driven by low levels of education resulting in a pool of unskilled and insufficiently-skilled workers; the dearth of apprenticeship and very low wages that prevent employers from employing workers at a rate that both parties would be prepared to work for and remunerate for. Other scholars focus their attention to government efforts to address unemployment and argue that various government department programmes including the Expanded Public Works Programmes (EPWPs) – are inadequate (Meyiwa et al., 2014). Moyo (2013) argues that as far as training and skilling is concerned – the EPWP is premised on a "linear incremental model" which problematically presupposes that education/training increases the probability of employment (Moyo, 2013:52).

2 In terms of the narrow definition, the unemployed are people who (a) were not employed in the reference period prior to the interview; (b) actively looked for work or attempted at starting business in the four weeks before the interview; and (c) were willing or available to work or would have been able to start business in the reference week (Statistics South Africa [StatsSA], 2012).

For scholars such as Pons-Vignon and Di Paola (2013:629) and Pons-Vignon, and Anseeuw (2009), high rates of unemployment represent a failure by the African National Congress (ANC)-led government in relation to its own promises at the dawn of democracy in 1994. Thus, argues Pons-Vignon and Anseeuw (2009), that these failures have burst the bubble that characterised the post-apartheid euphoria. But what is the landscape of youth unemployment, is a question addressed in the following section.

1.1.3 **Youth unemployment**

In South Africa, as in most other African countries, the already high unemployment rates were further exacerbated by the global financial crisis, which saw African labour markets' unemployment rising from 27.5 per cent in 2008 to 32.7 per cent in 2010 (Verick, 2012, cited in Ismail & Kollamparambil, 2015:301). The young people were affected the most with youth unemployment rates increasing from an already high rate of 51.5 per cent to a staggering 60.3 per cent (Verick, 2012, cited in Ismail and Kollamparambil, 2015:301). The youth unemployment rate for those younger than 25 years was, in 2017, 67.4%, using the expanded definition of unemployment (Peyper, 2017), making this a national crisis as there is a relationship between youth unemployment and critical social ills such as drug abuse and crime (Freeman, 1999).

There is a broad consensus among scholars and public commentators alike that South Africa's daunting challenge of unemployment is a youth unemployment problem in particular (Mayer et al., 2011). The Quarterly Labour Force Surveys (QLFS) have consistently shown that unemployment is concentrated in the 14-35 age cohorts, which accounted for 72% of the unemployed in 2010 (Stats SA, 2011). Using South Africa's definition of "youth" (15 to 34) (National Youth Policy, 2009-2014, 2009:12), about 3 million young people were unemployed in December 2010 and 1.3 million were discouraged.[3] This translates into an unemployment rate of 34.5 percent and represents 72 per cent of overall unemployment (National Treasury, 2011:13). Recent data indicates that, in South Africa, youth unemployment has further increased with unemployment rate for those younger than 25 years at a staggering 67.4%, using the expanded definition of unemployment (Peyper, 2017). Also, latest data show that the youth remain vulnerable in South Africa's labour market with 38.6% (10.9 percentage points above the national

3 Stats SA defines the "discouraged" work seekers as those who would prefer to be in employment, but have given up on their job searches because they believe the job search to be futile.

average) youth unemployed during Quarter 3 of 2017 (StatsSA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey [QLFS], Q.3, 2017).

While youth unemployment is not unique to South Africa and thus, a global phenomenon, analysts have argued that the country's unemployment rate dwarfs that of other comparative countries. Rankin and Roberts (2011:128) reveal that half of those youth in the 15-24-year age bracket were unemployed in 2005. This was much higher than the rate in other sub-Sahara African countries where approximately 21% were unemployed – and other regions such as North Africa and the Middle East (25%) and Central and South America (16%) (Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2007, cited in (Rankin & Roberts, 2011:128).

The main drivers of youth unemployment in South Africa are a contested issue. Some authors (Bhorat, 2004) blame apartheid for the current high levels of unemployment, others emphasise the "inconvenient truth" to use Bauml (undated) phraseology, that current high unemployment rates are rather a result of current labour market challenges, while other authors (e.g. Mayer et al., 2011; Lieuw-Kie-Song, 2009) assert that high youth unemployment demonstrates the inefficaciousness of the initiatives that have been designed to address it over the years. Rees (1986) cited in Rankin and Roberts (2011:129) explains youth unemployment in terms of the demographic characteristics of young job entrants. He argues that young people are most likely to walk away from employment or get fired from a job owing to: (a) emotional immaturity; (b) lack of experience to compete with older employees; and (c) the low likelihood of their dependence on wages given that they are less likely to have children of their own to provide for and that they may, in fact, be receiving financial assistance from their own families.

The consensus among scholars is that the youth unemployment situation in South Africa is aggravated by asymmetric information regarding the productivity of young work seekers which decreases the desire of firms to hire youth; lack of work-related skills and credentials; spatial dislocation; lack of information and connections for acquiring appropriate skills; and limited opportunities for entry-level work that is career-oriented (Mlatsheni & Rospabe, 2002; Mlatsheni, 2009; Moyo, 2019; National Treasury, 2011; Yu, 2013; Blumenfeld, undated). Guma, (2011) and Smith (2011) cited in Yu (2013:3) point to the centrality of access to information and spatial location as the main predictors of youth unemployment in South Africa. They reveal that young people who are located close to economic nodes and those from families with more resources, and those with better access to information have better employment prospects compared to those from poor families that are also located in areas that suffer from high employment-opportunity deficits. They argue that young people from poor families tend to face difficulties to search for

jobs as limited financial resources constrain their access to information and mobility to seek for work and/or relocate closer to areas with relatively abundant job opportunities. To address youth unemployment, the argument continues, constraints to hiring and successful job search should be addressed. Bhorat and Mayet (2013) identify the main constraints to hiring as (i) labour-dispute resolution procedures and (ii) job centres that provide job information, as well as (iii) spatial approaches to reduce commuting/travel time (Bhorat & Mayet, 2013). The main constraints on successful job search, these scholars continue, are (i) information access, (ii) labour-dispute resolution procedures, and (iii) spatial location and transport barriers.

Some scholars attribute being unemployed, especially for those from wealthy families, to unrealistic expectations about their employment likelihood and reservation wages, thereby "taking long time to 'shop around' for a job that meets their expectations" (Mlatsheni, 2007; Von Fintel & Black, 2007; Rankin & Roberts, 2011; Roberts, 2011), cited in Yu (2013:3). Other scholars argue that youth unemployment is neither driven by spatial dislocation nor by the "unfavourable" demographic characteristics of young labour market entrants. For instance, Altman (2013) reveals that even though the macro-economy has been creating jobs, many of these were lost in the global economic crisis which ensued from 2008 and that they will not return. In other words, youth unemployment has nothing to do with the lack of skills, spatial dislocation and lack of information. There aren't simply enough jobs for the young people wanting to work. Hence, argues Rankin (2013) that, given the scarcity of jobs, the youth need to revise their job search strategies. Door-to-door cold job searches, the argument continues, are no longer effective because the competition for jobs has reached cutthroat levels.

The foregoing indicates that the debate on the main drivers of youth unemployment is a complex screenshot from which one can decipher several pixels. The consensus is that as hordes of young people remain jobless, the need to find a solution has become urgent. This is so especially as there is an increasing "Malemanisation" of youth, to use Fiona Ford's (2011) phraseology. "Malemanisation" refers to a phenomenon where young people, due to disillusionment with the lack of jobs, are increasingly drawn to radical oppositional politics espoused by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and its leader, Julius Malema. These young people are easily attracted to radical politics and embrace high levels of anger and frustration nurtured by poverty, illiteracy and joblessness (Forde, 2011: 227, 232). The unfulfilled expectations for jobs especially in South Africa's urban areas have engendered and exacerbated violent protests where poor and disgruntled young people have taken centre stage.

Recognising the vulnerability of youth in the labour market as a major challenge that needs urgent attention, the National Planning Commission (NPC, 2011) declared that for the next 20 years, "policies should be viewed through a youth lens". This illustrates an acceptance of the existence of a "youth problem" that needs to be tackled more effectively (Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE), 2012:10). The key assumption underpinning government's conceptualisation of youth unemployment is that it is prevalent not only because of demand-side deficiencies (inadequate job opportunities), but also because the youth lack skills, work experience, job search abilities and financial resources to find employment (National Treasury, 2011). Based on this assumption, a myriad of programmes aimed at addressing youth unemployment and facilitating youth's transition from education and training into the work place have been implemented (Swartz, et al., 2012). The Expanded Public Works Programmes form part of these programmes.

1.1.4 Government response to unemployment – The Expanded Public Works Programme

Rooted in Keynesian theory which posits that unemployment is caused by leakages in the economy due to hoarding, leading to a reduction in aggregate demand (Mphei, 1996), the EPWPs are designed to provide poverty and income relief to the poor and lowly skilled through engagement in socially useful activities, while at the same time equipping participants with formal training and work experience both of which are expected to increase the future employability of participants.

The EPWPs have been debunked as a "two economies" solution. First introduced by the former President Thabo Mbeki in his now famous "Letter from the President", the "two economies" metaphor has become the central modality for the conceptualization of poverty and chronic poverty in the public discourse in South Africa (Mbeki, 2003a). It is a "two economies" solution in the sense that it is styled as a ladder between the second (periphery) to the first (core) economies. Dominant in the "two economies" analysis is the celebration of employment as pathway toward socio-economic emancipation through the public works programme (Marais,2011:184). The "two economies" theorem attributes large-scale unemployment and impoverishment amongst the majority of African citizens in the putative "second economy" to their uncoupling from the "first economy" (Marais, 2011:195). As Mbeki (2003a) argued, the way to beat the poverty of the unemployed is to abrogate the structural faults that were carefully constructed during colonial and apartheid South Africa by building sturdy (market focused) ladders between the second and first

economies (Isobel, 2007; Marais, 2011). The centrality of EPWP in doing so is borne by Thabo Mbeki's (2003b) characterisation of EPWP as a "nation-wide programme which will draw significant numbers of the unemployed into productive employment, so that workers gain skills while they are gainfully employed and increase their capacity to earn an income once they leave the programme". McCord (2004:4) defines the EPWP as a short-medium term supply-side interventions meant to provide employment in the short term, pending the realisation of increased employment arising from growth and improved labour supply. Four population segments are targeted in EPWPs, namely: the unemployed, able, and willing to work; the poor; largely unskilled people; and vulnerable groups in society - women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

In the official discourse, the EPWPs defined as "nationwide programme covering all spheres of government and state-owned enterprises that aims to draw significant numbers of unemployed into productive work accompanied by training so that they increase the capacity to earn…either through the labour market or through entrepreneurial activity" (EPWP, 2005 cited in Moyo, 2013). Their primary purpose is poverty alleviation through the employment of the unemployed poor in labour intensive public works that seek to provide public assets (McCord, 2002, 2004:4; Thwala, 2006). The government's preference for EPWP over other unemployment and poverty interventions arises from the recent anti-poverty policy discourse's heavy emphasis on the need to assist the poor "graduate" from dependence on social grants to employment. Hence, public works are hailed as a bridge into the blessed world of formal employment (Marais, 2011:183). The envisaged ideal was that the EPWP will create opportunities for everyone willing to earn a living (Marais, 2011: 183).

Coordinated through the Department of Public Works (DPW), the EPWP is implemented through four sectors (Infrastructure, Social, Non-State and Environment & Culture). Most work opportunities provided by the EPWP have been, however, created by the infrastructure sector. Currently, this programme is in its 3rd phase of implementation and is envisaged to create 6 million work opportunities between 2014 and 2019. All spheres of government (local, provincial and national) have been designated to implement labour intensive methods of construction so as to: (1) provide poverty and income relief through temporary work for the poor and unemployed; (2) provide participants with opportunities to be exposed to the world of work to enhance their skills and future earning potential; and (3) to ensure transformative developmental impacts through the assets created and services provided through the programmes such as food security, community safety, building community institutions that include schools and clinics, enhancing the environment and improving the quality of life in communities.

Despite the policy prominence of the EPWP and the training expectations attached to them, few studies (see McCord, 2005b, Moyo, 2013) explore the usefulness of training from the perspective of EPWP participants, hence this study captures the opinions, experiences and perceptions of the EPWP participants in the Gauteng province. It does so because it assumes an epistemological position that accepts that the experiences and views of these participants are valid scientific knowledge. By capturing participants' onsite experiences and perceptions about training they received, the researcher was able to determine whether or not the training and the work experience could contribute to help participants gain work post EPWP participation. The researcher's approach was an inductive one which accepted that there are multiple realities or experiences among EPWP participants that could be analysed or socially defined.

1.2 Geographical focus of the study

This study focuses on the Gauteng province, the most developed and industrialised in South Africa. The Gauteng Provincial Government (GPG) regards youth development as an important part of the province's vision to transform Gauteng into a globally competitive city region which is both prosperous and addresses the people's needs. For instance, GPG adopted the Gauteng Integrated Youth Development Strategy (GIYDS) (2010-2014) in May 2010, which sets new targets and priorities for youth development in Gauteng. This strategy is aligned to the national strategy, which in turn draws from key national policy frameworks including the National Youth Policy (NYP), the National Industrial Policy Framework (NIPF), the Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP), the New Growth Path (NGP), the National Skills Development-South Africa (NSD-SA), the National Skills Development Strategy III (NSDS) and others. Underpinning the GIYDS are the following four strategic pillars which contribute towards creating an enabling environment for young people to reach their full potential in Gauteng, namely:

i. Youth development advocacy
ii. Youth labour market and employment strategy
iii. Youth friendly government services
iv. Youth citizenship rights and responsibilities

Furthermore, the policy is designed to guide the private, civic and NGO sectors to initiate programmes which are aligned to national and provincial priorities and respond to the identified

needs pertaining to youth development. Even so, the Gauteng province remains one of the provinces facing the highest levels of youth unemployment, with its rate reaching 30,2 per cent during the 3rd quarter of 2017 (Gauteng Economic Bulletin, 2017:17). According to Ismail and Kollamparambil (2015:308), young people who live in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape experienced the highest unemployment durations while those in the Gauteng Province experienced the next highest durations. Youth unemployment in the Gauteng Province is attributed to South Africa's large structural unemployment, with the available jobs largely benefiting skilled workers (Banerjee et al., 2008).

1.3 The purpose of the research

The purpose of this study was to investigate the usefulness of the training provided by, and the skills acquired from, the infrastructure sector of Government's EPWPs in enabling participants, particularly the youth, to get jobs elsewhere in the labour market post participation in these programmes.

The study focused on the Gauteng province which, despite being the most industrialised region of South Africa, faces one of the highest prevalence rates of youth unemployment. EPWP participants in this province were interviewed in order to investigate the usefulness of EPWP training and work experience in enhancing their chances of getting jobs elsewhere in the labour market post EPWP participation.

1.4 Significance of the study

There are numerous reasons why this study is important. Firstly, there is a need to evaluate the usefulness of EPWP employment in providing experiential skills and training to participants. It is important to answer the question whether the skills and experience acquired from the EPWP are the kind which can enable the poor and low skilled people to acquire jobs in the macro economy. Secondly, there is a need for fact-based validation for Government's continuous expenditure on public works programmes, as other programmes compete for Government expenditure. It is also important to continually investigate ways that can improve public works and, thereby, contribute

towards confronting South Africa's critically-urgent challenges of high unemployment and inequality rates.

1.5 The research question

How useful is the training provided in the infrastructure sector of Government's EPWP in addressing youth unemployment in the Gauteng province?

The following ancillary questions also guided the current study.

a) What is the type and duration of training provided in the EPWPs?
b) What are the participants' perceptions of the usefulness of training provided in the EPWPs?
c) What is the type of work performed by participants of the EPWP?
d) Does this kind of work impart experience that could enable participants to enter the labour market post-programme participation?
e) How many young people have benefitted from work opportunities created by the EPWP?

1.6 Design and limitations of the study

A qualitative approach was adopted in this study. This approach entailed: (a) a review of literature on unemployment and public works programmes in South Africa and beyond to contextualise the study and understand the rationale for the establishment and implementation of the EPWPs in South Africa; and (b) semi-structured interviews with EPWP participants as well as contractors to obtain information regarding the nature of training provided in these projects and their perceptions about the usefulness of this training. The fact that the Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development (the Department responsible for the implementation of EPWP infrastructure projects in the province) does not keep track of participants who have exited the programme, and that in the current Charlotte Maxeke project, EPWP participants had not yet completed their involvement at the time of conducting interviews, meant that fewer participants who have exited the programme were interviewed than those still participating.

1.7 Outline of the study

Chapter Two unpacks, in detail, the rationale for the establishment of the EPWP, the conditions under which the EPWPs offer employment, the type and usefulness of training provided by these programmes as well as the number of jobs created for young people. It interrogates two streams of literature on EPWPs in South Africa, i.e., that which argues that EPWPs, if correctly designed, can be an important and effective intervention to South Africa's poverty and unemployment situation (see, for example, Thwala,2011) and that which argues that EPWPs are a palliative solution to what is in essence a structural problem (see, for example, Moyo, 2013).

Chapter Three outlines the methods employed in this research, which aimed to investigate the usefulness of EPWP training and work experience in so far as enabling participants to gain entry into and establish a foothold in the formal labour market is concerned.

Chapter Four presents the findings from interviews with 15 current and former EPWP participants; the views of officials from the Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development, as well as the Charlottle Maxeke Hospital project contractors. The chapter, therefore, presents key findings of the research

Chapter Five analyses the data presented in chapter four. The analysis in this chapter links with the literature review of the study and addresses the research question posed in chapter one. In addition to the key insights gleaned from the existing literature, emergent themes such as gender disparity were also presented and analysed in this chapter.

Chapter Six provides a summary, recommendations and conclusion of the main findings. Some policy recommendations include improving the quality of education offered by South Africa's schooling system; introducing entrepreneurship at high school level to foster a culture of entrepreneurship early and to avert over dependence on formal employment. A recommendation is also made on how to ensure that women are better incorporated into the EPWPs, particularly the infrastructure sector, so that they too can get the same experience as their male counterparts from the programme.

2 CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the history of the application of public works programmes in African countries in general and in South Africa in particular. It will be argued that there already exists a corpus of data on the application of labour intensive projects to deal with systematic shocks such as climate change and its impact on food security, and to provide the much-needed infrastructure such as roads and irrigation (Thwala, 2006). In South Africa, this chapter indicates that public works were historically implemented to deal with cyclical unemployment and to address the question of infrastructure development. The chapter then zooms on the implementation of the EPWPs in Gauteng, the province where empirical data were collected for this study.

2.2 Background to public works programmes – Africa vs South Africa

Industrialised countries have for a long time used public works programmes as "an economic policy tool" (Thwala, 2011:6012). Such programmes have often been used as a "fiscal measure to expand or contract public spending in periods of unbalanced domestic demand as well as a short-term measure to alleviate unemployment" (Thwala, 2011:6012). For public works programmes to alleviate poverty through employment creation, they often use labour-intensive methods of production for the construction and maintenance of infrastructure projects (Thwala, 2011:6012). Bentall et al. (1999) cited in Thwala (2011:6012) define a labour-intensive approach as an approach where labour is the dominant resource for carrying out works, and where the share of the total project cost spent on labour is high (typically 25 to 60%).

The use of labour-intensive public works programmes to create employment and alleviate poverty is not unique to South Africa. During the 1960s, three North African countries, namely: Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, experimented with public works programmes (Thwala:6012). Although initially introduced, particularly in the countryside, as emergency relief works programmes, the Moroccan public works programme slowly assumed a development orientation. The programme, dubbed the National Promotion, was launched in June 1961. Thwala (2011) states that "the importance of this programme was confirmed by its mention in the constitution of 7 December 1972 and subsequently by the creation, in 1975, of the High Council of National Promotion Plan" (Thwala, 2011:6012). This programme, according to one estimate, created work opportunities for

85 000 workers on a monthly basis during its peak season (Jara,1971), cited in (Thwala, 2011: 6012).

Thwala (2011: 6012) also argues that, in an effort to curtail rural urban migration and to ensure people's retention on the land, a few countries have tried to create 'functional economic areas' in the farmlands. Mali is one of the few countries which attempted to create such an area with the establishment of the Djoliba Pilot Project where a rural village was converted into an agro-urban community, which called for several layers of investment in infrastructure. This project was to test the feasibility of establishing some 150 rural centres that would service Mali's more than 10 000 villages (ibid:6012).

In Ghana, the Volta River Settlement Programme involving the creation of a network of rural towns and access roads, is another example of a public works programme implemented in Africa. According to Thwala (2011) "three times as many workers were employed in these resettlement preparations than were involved in building the Volta Dam" Thwala (2011:6012) exhibiting the employment-generating potential of labour-intensive infrastructural investment. This project was accompanied by several skills development opportunities for youth who were employed which included bricklaying; site foremen; shuttering and formwork; plumbing, painting and carpentry. Indicative of the beneficial impact of participating in this programme, many of the youth who worked under the different programmes were self-employed upon completion of the various programmes (ibid:6012).

Validating the beneficial impact of public works, Thwala (2011) argues that public works can be used to construct and maintain the much-needed physical infrastructure while simultaneously creating employment and skills for the poor and building the institutional capacities of the implementing agencies.

McCord and Slater (2009:2) concur with Thwala's observation and argue that public works programmes are a critical tool used by African governments to provide social protection and 'safety nets'. These authors further posit that public works programmes are often used as a means to offer temporary relief during emergencies such as labour market disruption due to several factors which include environmental disasters. Public works are more popular as components of social protection 'systems' in countries facing chronic poverty and unemployment (del Ninno et al., 2009, cited in McCord & Slater, 2009:2). However, McCord (2004b) highlights that while public works programmes have been effective in addressing transitional unemployment often encountered in developed countries, "as a short-term policy instrument", the EPWP is not an

appropriate response to South Africa's "chronic labour market crisis" (McCord, 2004b:8). This study will also confirm McCord's findings that owing to the structural nature of South Africa's unemployment challenge, EPWP is not useful in addressing the challenge.

2.3 South Africa's EPWP

The history of the application of public works in South Africa is a well-trodden academic terrain and will not be repeated here (see, for example, Abedian & Standish, 1985, 1986, Moyo, 2013; Mthombeni, 1996; Thwala, 2006). However, it is imperative to note that the public works in South Africa were implemented as far back as in the 1920s and 30s as a response to the "Poor White Problem" following widespread disgruntlement by Afrikaner whites with suffering due to poverty and unemployment (Moyo, 2013). Post 1994, the Government of National Unity (GNU) implemented the National Public Works Programmes (NPWPs) in order to increase training and capacity building in the provision of much required infrastructure especially in the former Bantustan areas (Moyo, 2013:40, *my emphasis added*). Over the years the NPWP morphed into long-term structured labour-intensive programme arising from a social compact between government, labour, the construction industry and the civic sector on the criticality of maximising labour-intensive methods of construction within the public works (Moyo, 2013:40). Further structural reforms to avert fiscal problems that could arise from controlled expenditure in infrastructural projects (Dagut, 2003:22), resulted in the coalition of the National Special Public Works Programmes and other smaller schemes into the Expanded Public Works Programme.

In its attempt to address rampant poverty and unemployment, which had, in 1999, been identified as the most paramount threat to South Africa's new democracy (EPWP Five-Year Report, 2004/05-2008/09:4) states that at its 2002 policy conference, the African National Congress committed to expanding the use of labour-intense construction methods to hit two birds of unemployment and infrastructure backlogs in previously-disadvantaged areas with one stone. Subsequently, at the Government's Growth and Development Summit of June 2003, Government resolved to creating the EPWP, which earmarked R100 billion towards employment-intensive programmes (EPWP Five-Year Report, 2004/05-2008/09:4). In the 2003 State of the Nation address, Mbeki announced that: "… the government has decided that we should launch an Expanded Public Works Programme. This will ensure that we draw significant numbers of the unemployed into productive work, and that these workers gain skills while they work, and thus take an important step to get out of the pool of those who are marginalised…"

As discussed in Chapter One, Mbeki conceived the EPWP as a panacea that plagued South Africa's dualistic economy, i.e., a "two economy" solution. The analytical masterstroke of the "Two Economies" theorem is that the South African economy is a dichotomy that comprises two economies that are "structurally disconnected." The first (or formal) economy is the modern industrial, mining, agricultural, financial and services sector of our economy, "that every day, becomes integrated in the global economy" while the "second economy" is "mainly informal, marginalised, unskilled economy, populated by the unemployed and those unemployable in the formal economy" which is caught in a poverty trap, unable to accumulate resources to break the shells of this entrapment, and thus in need of state intervention (Isobel, 2007:163). In Thabo Mbeki's formulation, the poor people are poor because they are trapped in a parallel, "structurally disconnected" second economic realm. To solve their poverty would entail a process in which resources from the first economy are transferred to the second economy sector to "enable it to outgrow its third world nature." In his 2004 State of the Nation Address Mbeki summed up this theorem, thus:

> Encouraging the growth and development of the first economy, increasing its possibility to create jobs; implementing our programme to address the challenges of the second economy; and, building a social security net to meet the objective of poverty alleviation (Mbeki, 2004c: 3).

However, this theorem has been criticized for being unable to adequately account for the real dynamics of economic marginalization. Firstly, it has been argued that it perpetuates some problematic misapprehension about the supposed relationship between "margins" and the "centre" in South Africa. Du Toit and Neves (2006) argued that analysis needs to explore the "actual ways in which particular people are caught up in the networks and circuits of a singly internally differentiated and segmented economy" not a dichotomous economy as this schema wants to suggest. "To search for the second economy", du Toit and Neves (2007:130) contended, "…is to look for something that is not there and to miss much of what is." Isobel has roundly refuted the existence of a structural disconnect and suggests that the "two-economy" imagination is a "conjuror's sleight of hand." The economic dualism thesis, the argument continues, does not provide a sufficient analytical lens to break the dynamics that "continue to bind people in poverty" (Isobel, 2007:167). The poverty of the poor, Isobel continues, does not flow from the structural disconnection from the first economy, but is rather a by-product of the normal workings of the capitalist economy. Marais, (2011:196) concurs that the condition and privation of those trapped in the putative second economy is a product of their "incorporation into the dominant system of accumulation, not their exclusion."

Other scholars challenge Isobel's (2007) rebuttal of the two-economy thesis. Du Toit and Neves (2006) contend that Isobel's dismissal of this metaphor is misplaced. "Insofar as the need to interpret", they argue, "and make sweeping sense of reality, policies arguably have a metaphorical dimension" (Du Toit and Neves, 2006:130). On whether the "two-economy" theorem is a useful metaphor in the way it orients analysis on poverty and responses to it, du Toit and Neves argue that the use of the image of exclusion in the metaphor powerfully captures the way large-scale unemployment seems to prevent people from partaking in the benefits of economic growth. The "two-economy" thesis, they contend, is one of the useful intellectual resources for understanding and exploring poverty and inequality in South Africa for it allows, they posit, labour scholarship to depart from the "pre-determined teleological meta-narratives of either neo-liberal or Marxist determinism" (Du Toit and Neves, 2006:130). Despite its shortfalls, the "two Economies" continues to hold an axiomatic status and to serve as a mould for the ANC's thinking about post-apartheid development (Marais, 2011:193). The EPWPs as they continue to be implemented should be understood in the context of this theoretical framework.

The objectives of South Africa's EPWP, according to Phillips (2004:7), were "to utilise public sector budgets to alleviate unemployment by creating temporary productive employment opportunities coupled with training". The Programme would, therefore, attract the unemployed, in their large numbers, into productive work, that would also ensure that the workers gain skills while employed, and as a result increase their capacity to earn an income in future (Ibid:7). However, the findings of this study will reveal that the training component of the EPWP has failed to achieve its desired outcome of, as Phillips puts it "ensuring that the workers gain skills while employed, and as a result increase their capacity to earn an income in future" (Ibid:7).

Evidently, the EPWPs have been assigned a plurality of objectives, and are associated with high social protection expectations (McCord, 2004b). The multiple objectives (that include not only job creation, poverty reduction, and infrastructure redevelopment but also job training and community capacity building), argues McCord (2004b), have invited Adato and Haddad to conclude that the "PWPs in South Africa are among the most innovative in the world" (Adato and Haddad, 2002: 30). Subbarao et al. (1997) cited by Adato and Haddad (2002:5) suggest that the multiple objectives of South African public works programmes are without precedent elsewhere in the world. While this is commendable, Subbarao et al. (1997) warn that these multiple objectives complicate the more standard evaluation of public works programmes. This is so because it is unlikely that projects can do well in all evaluative domains. A project can do well in the poverty alleviation domain but fail in respect of infrastructure or community capacity building.

Concurring with Subbarao et al.'s position, McCord (2004a, 2004b) argues that the discourse of public works remains unclear, somewhat amorphous and often contradictory (ibid,2004a:25). According to this scholar, there are microeconomic and institutional challenges to the realisation of public works objectives. These are couched in the language of employment creation; wage level; targeting; rationing; microfinance; assets; accountability; and management information. This view is echoed by a growing range of critical commentators, who using various case studies on the impact of labour-based projects; argue that PWPs are not an appropriate escape route from poverty and unemployment.

To sum up our discussion in this section, it is imperative to highlight that, in South Africa, the EPWP are implemented by all spheres of government as well as state-owned entities. It is positioned as a cross-cutting Government programme that extends beyond the Department of Public Works, the department through which it is coordinated nationally (Thwala, 2011:6018).

2.4 EPWP in the Gauteng Province

In the Gauteng Province, where data for this study was collected, the provincial Department of Infrastructure Development (DID) is the lead department for the implementation of EPWPs. In a study conducted for the Gauteng Province, Kitchin (2012:17) states that "the Department provides support to all sectors regarding participation in EPWP. Gauteng municipalities and metros lead as implementers and partners on all EPWP project implementation".

In implementing the EPWP, Kitchin (2012) states that, in line with the national programme's objective of developing the skills of EPWP participants, Gauteng's focus is also on skills development through labour-intensive large-scale Community Works Programme to provide poor households in 50 poor regions of the Gauteng Province with jobs for at least 100 days a year.

However, Kitchin (2012:18) states that during the implementation of the EPWP's second phase from 2009 to 2014, the Programme shifted its focus from insisting that EPWP participants receive training to putting measures in place to enable the unemployed, in particular the youth; women and the physically-challenged individuals, to start cooperatives and small businesses. Kitchin (2012) argues that "during the first phase of the Programme's implementation (2004-2009), training was regarded as important, and work opportunities could not be reported without proof of training provided" (Kitchin 2012:18). However, Kitchin states that this condition appeared to have been lenient during the implementation of the second phase (2009-2014), where the Province

appeared to focus, solely, on the primary objective of the EPWP, which is to provide work opportunities to alleviate poverty. Contrary to Kitchin's claims of the EPWP shifting its focus from training to putting measures in place to enable participants to start their small businesses, this study found that no such measures were put in place. In fact, some of the participants interviewed expressed an aspiration to acquire information on how to start their own small businesses to reduce their dependence on waged employment post EPWP participation.

2.5 EPWP and Training

Training was intended to be a crucial component of the EPWP when the Programme was initially conceptualised and subsequently rolled-out in 2004. In fact, the Code of Good Conduct of PWPs, agreed upon by the Government, trade unions and the public sector allowed the payment of lower than minimum wages for PWP workers provided that the lower wages were offset for by training (Meth, 2011).

With regards to training in the infrastructure sector of the EPWP, Kitchin (2012) states that training in this sector varies and is informed by the requirements of a specific project. In describing the process followed when appointing a training service provider, (Kitchin, 2012) writes "…the DID puts out a tender then appoints and manages the service providers who conduct the actual training" (Kitchin, 2012:37). DID then assumes the role of the overseer. Kitchin (2012) also reveals that the DID supervises training on a weekly basis and that training accredited includes both technical and soft skills.

According to a DID official interviewed by Kitchin (2012:37), "training is successful. People are trained to be employed in the project and given experiential learning. However, there has been no formal assessment of this". This statement contradicts the DID official interviewed in this study which indicate lack of communication and collaboration between DID officials.

According to Kitchin (2012), "there are several areas of success regarding training. In some cases, EPWP participants are skilled but they do not have proof of their skills. The training associated with the EPWP gives them that. The training, therefore, augments past experience with a piece of paper, which improves their chances of earning an income from that skill. In other cases, beneficiaries have no basic skills, but, after training, are in a position to become a contractor in townships" (Kitchin, 2012:38). In Chapters four and five of this study, a direct contradiction to this claim will be found.

The importance of training and skills development within the EPWP has also been highlighted by several critics. For example, McCord (2005:570) reveals that in each of the four EPWP sectors training is recognised as central, as clearly stated in the EPWP Social Sector Plan, as "one way of viewing the EPWP as a bridge between the two economies as the unskilled and poor are equipped with skills purportedly to participate in the formal economy. As such, the EPWP is exempt from much of the requirements for human capital capacitation as contemplated in the current labour legislation. In return for this exemption, the EPWPs are obliged to provide a higher level of training than participants would normally get in any other place of work. Training is, therefore, the backbone of the EPWP Code of Good Practice. Developing the capacity to deliver on this commitment is critical to the success of the programme (EPWP Social Sector Plan, 2004) cited in (McCord, 2005:570-571, *emphasis added*). Emphasising the criticality of the training component in the EPWPs, McCord (2004a:10) writes that:

> it was … agreed that minimum wages for EPWPs would be reduced, but that the employment would be short-term and workers would be given training as compensation. The training component, and the assumption that it will enable workers to find employment after the end of the EPWP are central to the casting of the EPWP as a mechanism to reduce unemployment (McCord, 2004a:10).

Kitchin (2012:4) concurs that in addition to providing poverty relief through income generating work opportunities, the objective of South Africa's EPWP was to offer some elementary training and on-the-job experience that would enable its participants to "earn a living on an on-going basis". The objective of training, the argument continues, is to "… build skills and provide on-the-job training and formal accreditation to prepare EPWP participants for longer-term jobs" (Ibid:5). This view was earlier advanced by Meth (2011:16) who argued that training formed the heartbeat of the EPWP as articulated in this programme's founding document which points out that "the central objective of the EPWP is to alleviate poverty through training of poor unemployed people" (DPW, 2005a:31). Meth (2011:17) further reveals that the legal document laying down the Code of Good Practice for special public works (DoL, 2002: 8) dictates that in addition to the compulsory on-the-job training, EPWP participants must be given two day's formal training for every 22 days worked (Section 15.2). According to Meth (2011:17), the training criteria is as follows:

- Ensure sustainable training through certification. It is proposed that minimum of 30% of the training provided should be accredited;
- Balance quality of life, functional and entrepreneurship training;
- Balance formal training with structured work place learning;

- Equip workers with skills that can be used to secure other employment opportunities; and
- Identify possible career paths available to workers exiting the SPWP (DoL, 2002:8).

2.6 Analysis of the usefulness of training provided in enabling participants to obtain jobs post EPWP participation

The preceding section has shown that training forms the central focus of EPWP employment. However, the claim that skills acquired from the EPWP training will allow project participants to transition from the low or unskilled sector of the labour market to the intermediate and high skills sectors where an unmet demand for labour exist has been heavily contested. Several critics argue that the stated objectives of the EPWP skills development strategy are not in sync with the challenges they are aimed at addressing (McCord, 2005, Marais, 2011, and IDASA, 2005 cited in Moyo, 2013:27). Critics argue that the EPWP involves limited training, which is not aligned with the skills required by the labour market. They also argue that the limited skills offered are not adequate to enable the programme's participants to gain meaningful employment in future (Moyo, 2013:27). According to McCord (2005b:569) "this is in spite of the fact that the EPWP training is premised on the assumption of a positive relationship between incremental skills acquisition and post-programme labour market attachment among the un/low-skilled, as repeatedly expressed in the EPWP documentation".

The principal objectives of EPWP is to offer short-term employment and training on the premise that supply-side interventions are an appropriate and effective response to transitional unemployment-a policy approach that is consistent with the use of PWPs in the context of ephemeral economic dislocation (World Bank, 2004). However, Meth (2011:17) argues that given that 90 per cent of the jobs provided in the Programme's Phase One were in the Infrastructure and Environmental sectors, and in light of the relatively simple nature of the tasks that were performed on projects in these sectors (DPW, 2004:2-3), the training provided for ordinary participants (excluding consultants, contractors, supervisors and other specialist staff) was not the kind which could transfer marketable skills to workers.

In his study, Meth (2011:17-18) also states that "because job opportunities in infrastructure projects last between four and six months, with the result that participants are entitled only to 8-12 days of paid formal training, a period in which not much can be accomplished, the EPWP team

struck an agreement with the Department of Labour to create a generic 10-14 day training course". The training course would consist of accredited unit standards on:

- General Life skills,
- Awareness of HIV and AIDS
- Labour markets and the world of work.

In accord with Meth's argument, this study also found that training provided to participants interviewed in this study was not useful in enabling them to get jobs outside the EPWP.

In addition to Meth's criticism of the type and duration of training provided by the EPWP, there are also several studies that analyse not only the types of jobs offered by the EPWP, but also the effectiveness of the skills training offered by the programme. According to Samson (2007:246), to date, the most powerful critique of the EPWP have been developed by McCord in a chain of publications based on extensive empirical evidence and documentary examination (2004a, 2004b, 2005).

McCord (2005:568–572) argues that while there is a need for intermediate and high-level skills in the South African economy, the EPWPs do not provide workers with these kinds of skills. This is because learnerships remain the preserve of contractors and only accessible to a small segment of EPWP participants (Moyo, 2013). This scholar further argues that the eight days of formal training planned for most EPWP participants focuses primarily on life skills. McCord's (2005) study shows that workers from projects surveyed in the 2000s were not clear whether they had or had not received training. For McCord (2005), the rhetoric and aims of the EPWPs are incongruent to the context in which they are being implemented. In other words, there is a fundamental mismatch between the nature of the labour-market crisis (unemployment) and the policy formulations deployed to address it (McCord 2005:568–572).

It is also argued that skills training offered in public works projects is insufficient and not likely to have a positive impact. In fact, (McCord, 2004) states that while public works do present some work opportunities and some salary for poor households and may even provide some training, the training offered is not sufficient to set apart those who participated in public works projects from other people in the jobs market who did not have training as this study will also confirm.

In addition to the short duration as well as the generic nature of the accredited training provided by the EPWP, McCord (2005:576) also argues that due to the structural nature of South Africa's unemployment, very few workers have, in fact, succeeded in securing other employment after

exiting the EPWPs, and that some EPWPs such as Working for Water and Working for Wetlands keep workers on for multiple years rather than returning them to unemployment. McCord (2004b:12) cited in (Samson, 2007:246) concludes that as the training component of the EPWP is so limited, wages so low, and employment so brief, while EPWP employment may temporarily decrease the depths of poverty experienced, it will have little impact on the number of people living below the poverty line, unemployment or future labour market participation.

This critique strikes at the core of the hypothetical foundation of the job-creation discourse which is the two-economy analysis. It forces us to revisit the relevance of the two economies metaphor which places skills-development as a certificate of entry into the world of formal employment.

McCord (2007:570) concluded that the limited success of the EPWP programme in improving labour market performance should be attributed to the limited demand for low-skilled and unskilled labour, and the fact that the training offered under the auspices of the EPWP is not sufficient to improve the employability of participants, or to differentiate them from other low-skilled or unskilled work seekers, once they have exited the programme.

Brynard (2011:74) concurs with McCord (2004, 2005) and Meth's (2011) observation that the EPWP has not succeeded in offering training that equip workers with skills that would enable them to take advantage of meaningful employment opportunities in future. Moyo (2013) agrees with this author and posits that this "is because the learnerships through which vocational training is provided to EPWP workers remain a preserve of contractors and is accessible only to a tiny segment of workers; that many workers surveyed in some EPWPs were not clear about whether they had received training and its beneficial impact; and that this training focuses primarily on generic life skills and labour market information which are unlikely to translate into improved labour market performance for participants given the structural nature of unemployment" Moyo (2013:28).

Another study conducted by McCord (2004) examines the impact of PWPs on the labour market outcomes of programme participants. It is based on a 2003 survey of some 700 households that contain current and recent participants in two different PWPs. The impact of the programmes was limited because they failed to take the majority of households even temporarily out of poverty. Even with their PWP income, 99% of the households in one case and 87% in the other still fell below the poverty line: participation merely reduced the depth of poverty. Moreover, the evidence suggests that programme participants tend normally to return to unemployment. Contrary to

McCord's finding, this study found that the EPWP site visited paid more than minimum wages as outlined in Chapters four and five.

In addition to the criticism that the EPWP has received for what some have referred to as a dismal failure to provide meaningful training for its participants to have better prospects of succeeding in the labour market post EPWP participation, it is also often argued that public works employment adds to the serious existing challenge of extreme casualisation of employment (Moyo, 2013:23).

Samson (2007) states "that given that workers are usually employed in the projects in which employment agreements limited employment security, labour rights, wages and benefits, participation in these projects created second economy conditions of vulnerability thereby contradicting the rhetoric surrounding the contribution of public works in eradicating poverty and shifting people into employment in the perceived first economy". Since EPWP workers have little or no rights, minimum wages and no benefits, their power to organise themselves and negotiate salary increases and better working conditions is restricted (Moyo, 2013:20).

To validate this claim, between 2002 and 2003, Samson conducted research on the restructuring of waste management. The programmes she assessed were to provide street cleaning services in some areas of Galeshewe Township in Sol Plaatje and Soweto Township in Johannesburg. Based on her research, Samson (2007:249) argues that dynamics of manipulation and unstable employment were present in these two groups of workers. In both of these projects, Samson found that employees were remunerated much lower salaries than their colleagues. Infact, in the Sol Plaatje project, lower salaries were justified by arguing that the EPWP were projects aimed at alleviating poverty on a short-term basis and providing skills training that would, in the long run, help project workers develop their human capital in order to be more successful in the labour market.

In the Zivuseni Poverty Alleviation Project in Soweto, the same manipulative working conditions were discovered. Moyo (2013:25) states that aimed at reducing poverty through the provision of short-term employment opportunities for the unemployed poor and promoting self-reliance, the Zivuseni Project was established by the Gauteng Provincial Government in April 2002. One of the Zivuseni projects focused on the provision of street cleaning services in Soweto, which is why it was incorporated into the work of the Pickitup depot in the township.

The Zivuseni Project provided employment to approximately 255 community members who were in turn supervised by Pickitup employees. Similar to other projects, the Zivuseni project employees were also manipulated. These workers were acutely aware of the exploitation in the

form of lower wages and lack of benefits compared to municipal pickitup workers performing the same duties but they, nevertheless, accepted the jobs owing to the severe challenge of structural unemployment.

Samson (2007) also argues that:

> rather than forging a pathway from the second into the supposed distinct first economy, the public works projects minimised the need for the generation of new jobs within the formal waste management sector, and created new, inferior jobs which bear characteristics associated with the so-called second economy sector. Public works, therefore, led to the reproduction of the very problem they were meant to overcome (Samson, 2007:245).

Mthombeni (2003) cited in Moyo (2013:25) emphasizes this argument. He states that whereas the pronounced intentions of the Zivuseni project were to assist the unemployed poor break the cycle of poverty by enabling them to acquire skills through training, which justified lower wages, only 19.2% of Zivuseni project workers received training while the waste management project at Pickitup involved no skills training.

In addition to the above, Ndoto and Macun (2005:31) also surveyed the participants in the Working for Wetlands programme and found that the programme's training initiatives was not sufficient in equipping its participants with useful skills and concluded that the programme did improve people's incomes while they remained employed by the projects and removed some restrictions in accessing education and better nutrition but did not succeed in improving the workers skills.

The programme provided technical skills in construction and life skills such as First Aid, Health and Safety, among others, but most participants in this programme did not feel that the skills obtained would improve their prospects of getting a job in future. As McCord (2005b) puts it,

> …rather than moving up the hierarchy of the labour market, once they have their foot on the employment ladder as pronounced by the Department of Public Works in 2004, evidence from Gundo Lashu and Working for Wetlands projects suggests that, in fact, workers returned to the same labour market rung from whence they came into the programme (McCord, 2005b:580).

Samson's, Mthombeni, Ndoto and Macun research, therefore, demonstrates not only the casualisation of employment but also exploitation that the workers employed on some of the EPWP projects have had to contend with. Samson's research also demonstrates that the argued reason for low wages, training, was infact nothing more than a guise used to manipulate workers

into accepting low wages with no benefits. While this study does not dispute that training offered by the EPWP is not sufficient to enable participants to obtain jobs in the labour market post programme participation, it does dispute Samson's exploitative working conditions as discussed in Chapter five.

2.7 The Age Debate – work opportunities created and the number of young benefitting

In May 2008, the Minister of Public Works announced that the 1 million part-time job creation goal of the EPWP had been achieved, a year earlier than anticipated. According to the EPWP Report (2016:20), of the 1 million jobs created, 750 000 were created in the infrastructure sector and the remaining 250 000 jobs were created in the social, environmental and Non-state sectors. The EPWP Report (2016) states that:

> outputs for the first phase of the programme also produced the Vuk'uphile contractor learnership focused on building capacity of knowledgeable contractors and supervisors in the construction industry…492 contracting companies for labour intensive work were developed across the country. SMMEs created across the country totals to 984 and 4466 beneficiaries of the National Youth Services (NYS) were recruited EPWP Report, 2016:39).

However, McCutcheon et al. (2011) cited in Mogagabe (2016:22) argue that 750 000 jobs created by the infrastructure sector were not enough considering the fact that R42 billion instead of the anticipated R15 billion was allocated to the sector. McCutcheon & Parkins (2012) cited in Mogagabe (2016:22) also contend that the infrastructure sector did not succeed in producing enough jobs in relation to the allocated budget for it.

However, Kitchin (2012:11) states that for the second phase of the EPWP, a national target of 4.5 million work opportunities over the next five years was set, the equivalent of two million full-time (55% for women, 40% for youth, and 2% for people with disabilities). Kitchin's (2012) report concludes that phase two exceeded its targets in all sectors apart from the infrastructure and environmental sectors where 81% and 69% of the annual target of the 10/11 financial year was achieved.

Kitchin, (2011:19) also states that gender targets were on track at 39%, youth targets were exceeded by 40% (70% against 30%), disability was exceeded by 3% (5% against 2%) and 82% of training occurred on the job. Kitchin's (2012) study concluded that the EPWP projects are contributing to job creation, especially for women and youth, and that most jobs are located close to beneficiaries. Overall, Kitchin (2012:24) states that, the percentage youth involved in provincial

departments' EPWP projects increased from 30% in 2009/10 to 70% in 2010/11 and remained close to that in the first six months of 2011/12 at 68%.

As far as youth employment is concerned, documents shared by the National Department of Public Works suggest that since its inception in 2004, the EPWP has created 9 898, 066 work opportunities through its three phases. Of the total number of work opportunities created, the infrastructure sector has created the majority with 4058, 122 opportunities thereby increasing the youth's rate of participation from 41% during the first phase to 50% during the second phase and 46% in the third phase. While the study does not dispute that the EPWP has, mostly, succeeded in achieving its gender and youth targets, it will in chapters four and five of this study, show that these statistics hide certain dynamics such as disparities in the nature of skills acquired by EPWP participants due to their gender.

At the time of writing her Report, Kitchin (2012:59) states that "the average wage of an EPWP worker in EPWP projects across the Gauteng province had increased from R71 per day in 2009/10 to R82 by September 2011". This study will show that the average wage of an EPWP participant has since increased significantly, with their earnings far exceeding the average minimum wage of R20 per hour. The current study will also argue that while South Africa's EPWP has contributed towards employment creation, it has not succeeded in equipping participants with meaningful skills that would enable them to obtain jobs in the labour market post EPWP participation or to become entrepreneurs.

2.8 A social security net

As indicated earlier, the EPWP has been criticised for involving useless activities such as "digging holes and filling them again" (Phillips, 2004:2). In this regard, an alternative way of viewing the EPWP has been brought to the fore. Those advocating for the alternative view, regard the EPWP not as a long-term solution to solve unemployment but rather as Government's means of transferring cash to the poor, thereby, integrating them into the markets as economically active participants. In India, for instance, following the failure of micro credit schemes that were introduced as a way of relieving poverty among India's desperately poor citizens, the Government introduced a 'grant' on condition that the beneficiaries carried out hard physical work at the country's EPWPs (Hanlon et al, cited in Gosh, 2011:852). In India, the EPWP was, therefore, used as Government's means to transfer cash to the poor.

Phillips (2004:2) also provides another alternative way of measuring the EPWP success. He states that the success of this programme should not only be viewed from the employment creation perspective but also from the service delivery angle as the projects, particularly within the infrastructure sector, have provided infrastructure such as roads and bridges in previously-disadvantaged communities. According to Philips (2004) “public works programmes can, therefore, be used to provide public services; temporarily increase incomes; increase dignity and give people valuable experience of the workplace while making a modest contribution to increasing skills levels” (Philips,2004:2).

Furthermore, some scholars use a different approach to the theoretical and empirical critique of EPWPs enunciated above, namely: the theory-based approach (Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, 2004). The fundamental argument of the theory-based approach is that social programmes are predicated on theories (Pawson, 2003: 471). These theories relate to decision making in terms of the objectives that underscore a project, the activities and inputs that are devoted to realising the objectives and the indicators to be used to measure desired change. In other words, the theory-based approach interrogates how and why social programmes work, rather than evaluating why they work or fail to work (Rossi et al., 2004: 146, *my emphasis added*). The theory-based approach, therefore, offers an alternative view at the problem addressed by the programme. It does so because it examines programme design and proffers alternative ways in which the programme could have been designed for maximum impact. As such, the theory-based approach involves reconstructing a programme theory. This entails understanding the rationale behind a programme, explaining the modalities through which it will bring about the projected change (Lipsey & Pollard, 1989 cited by Heradien, 2013: 25).

Heradien (2013) is one of the scholars who has applied a theory-based approach to evaluating the EPWPs in South Africa. This writer used a qualitative approach which focused on meanings and thought processes that were invested in the assumptions underlying the EPWP. Using Rossi et al. (2004) framework or questions for theory-based evaluation, Heradien (2013), for instance, argues that the objective of South Africa’s EPWPs of “creating temporary employment and income for at least one million unemployed South Africans” (Department of Public Works, 2005) is clearly defined. However, this writer posits that the ambiguity in this objective is that there is lack of clarity of how this objective is to be achieved. Space precludes a thorough elucidation of the verdicts that Heradien passes in her evaluation of South Africa’s EPWP following Rossi et al.’s (2004) framework of programme evaluation. Suffice to say that Heradien’s theory-based approach arrives at findings akin to those made by scholars who have used institutional and empirical

critiques of the EPWP such as McCord (204, 2005). For instance, Heradien repeats McCord's (2005b) finding that even though EPWPs result in meeting basic needs for the poor during the employment period, they fail in relation to its long-term goals because they do not help the participants to gain a foothold in the formal labour market post programme participation. As scholars such as Moyo (2013) and McCord (2005b) argue multiple-short term employment in EPWP projects serve to churn the unemployed replacing one cohort of the unemployed with another.

In this chapter, I have explored the history of the application of public works in Africa in general and in South Africa and the Gauteng province in particular. The rationale for the establishment of the EPWPs in South Africa has been established and a critique has been offered on the effectiveness of training offered in these programmes. This study augments the view that even though the work opportunities offered in the EPWP provide some work and some income for poor households, they are not part of the job-creation strategy in any true sense. This is because there is a fundamental mismatch between the nature of the labour-market crisis (unemployment) and the assumptions that undergird the EPWP as an intervention to address this problem.

3 CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the methods employed in the current study, which aimed to investigate the usefulness of training provided by, and the skills acquired from, the infrastructure sector of Government's Expanded Public Works Programme in terms of addressing youth unemployment in the Gauteng province. The approach adopted for investigating the usefulness of the training provided and the skills acquired entailed an interrogation of the type and duration of training provided in the EPWPs; the participants' perceptions of the usefulness of training provided in the EPWPs; and the type of work performed by participants of the EPWP. In respect of the last investigative domain, the objective was to assess the nature of work that was performed by participants and to make a determination about whether such work was the kind from which people could derive the experience that could enhance their employability post-programme participation.

It is important to clarify at this juncture what study design was used in the current study. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999: 29), a study design is a strategic framework that provides a plan that elucidates on how the research is carried out to answer the questions posed by the research. The way the study is designed to answer the questions asked forms the basis upon which the validity of the study is determined. To achieve the objectives stated in the foregoing, this study employed a qualitative study. Babbie and Mouton (2001: 279) write that a qualitative research design places primacy on studying human action in a natural context and on providing "thick" descriptions and understanding of phenomena within given settings. Ezemenari, et al., (1997:15) write that "whereas in quantitative methods the precision with which the key variables of interest are defined and collected, and the sample size is determined, influence the degree of validity and reliability, the validity and reliability of qualitative data depend on the methodological skills, sensitivity and training of the qualitative evaluator. Qualitative research calls for the evaluator's observational skills because every face-to-face interview also involves observation Qualitative methods are less reliant on statistical precision to ensure validity because often, the sample size will not allow for statistical tests". Thus, a qualitative study was utilised because it enabled the researcher to interview participants in an environment they were comfortable in, which is their work place; it also enabled the researcher to make regular visits on site, this to 'befriend' EPWP participants, observe their behavior onsite and ask them questions and by so

doing gained what Babbie and Mouton (2001:279) describe as “thick” descriptions and understanding of phenomena within given settings. This in turn, provided the researcher with data required to investigate the EPWPs success in achieving one of its intended objectives, which is to provide its participants with training that would enable them to be successful in getting other jobs in the labour market post EPWP participation.

This study used a combination of documentary review, desktop review, and semi-structured interviews with current and former EPWP participants, Department of Infrastructure Development officials as well as the contractors responsible for the implementation and management of the construction processes. Observations were used as a supplementary, but not the central method for collecting empirical evidence. The documents reviewed were obtained from South Africa’s National Department of Public Works website; and through the researcher’s personal communication with officials from the National Department of Public Works and the Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development. Documents reviewed were also obtained from the contractors and project manager of the public works programme from which participants for the current study were drawn. The documents provided invaluable information about the projects in terms of the objectives; the nature of work that was performed by participants in the project; and the nature, and modality (including duration) of training that was offered to the participants. As indicated earlier, the participants of this study were drawn from the following EPWPs implemented in the Gauteng province, namely: the current Charlotte Maxeke Acute Mental Ward, the 2012 Nelson Mandela Childrens’ Hospital and the 2014 Charlotte Maxeke Hospital Renovation EPWPs.

The current study uses both the theoretical and empirical perspectives to evaluate the ability or usefulness of training and work experience offered under the EPWP to promote employment in South Africa in general and in Gauteng in particular. Unlike Heradien’s theory-based approach (2013), the study adopted the method used by scholars such as McCord (2005b) who first make a detailed labour market analysis and secondly, the assumptions that underlie the EPWP intervention. Based on this approach, it then makes a verdict about whether the training offered at, and experience acquired, from the EPWPs could contribute to addressing youth unemployment in the Gauteng Province. While scholars such as Lipsey (in Louw, 1998: 263) and Mark, Henry and Julnes (2000) emphasise on the merits of a quantitative approach to evaluation because it produces data that can be measured and analysed, the present study used a qualitative approach because the focus was on the geographical context, and social and economic environment within which the chosen projects were implemented. On the advice of scholars like Patton (2002) and Yuksel (2010: 79), the researcher’s approach in the present study

involved spending time on project sites to observe changes and to conduct interviews or to analyse documentation.

3.2 Methods of data collection

3.2.1 **Documentation Review**

As part of the qualitative research method, the study reviewed existing EPWP documentation, which were accessed from the internet, the Department of Public Works website as well as documents sourced from the key informants or officials from the National Department of Public Works and the Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development through personal communication. The documents that were obtained included EPWP performance monitoring reports as well as Gauteng Provincial EPWP plans and other related reports. Information gleaned from these documents provided the context of the EPWP and the assumptions that informed it.

In addition to document review, the researcher conducted desktop research in order to explore the dominant strands in the literature on unemployment and public works programmes. The literature reviewed included grey literature as well as peer-reviewed journal articles that examine the utility of public works programmes in addressing poverty and unemployment globally and in South Africa. In South Africa, the literature reviewed included the works of such scholars as McCord (2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b), Samson (2007), and Thwala (2011). These scholars provide important insights on the dominant thinking about public works in South Africa especially in so far as they form part of the South African government's strategies to address unemployment and poverty. The literature reviewed also provided context, background and clarity of what Government sought to achieve by introducing the EPWP in the South African context.

3.2.2 **Semi structured interviews**

This study used semi-structured in-depth interviews to generate empirical data. Wagner et al. (2012) define an interview as a "two-way conversation with a purpose of interacting with the participant, asking questions in order to collect data on their ideas, beliefs, experiences behaviours and opinions". Curtis and Curtis (2011:29-32) define an in-depth interview as a "case-centric" approach in which the framing is fluid thereby enabling the obtainment of rich or thick data to be gathered with detailed descriptions. The "fluid" nature of the in-depth interview frame derives from the fact that there is room for revision of the variables (i.e. to add themes or questions) as

the research progresses. Curtis and Curtis (2011) write that in-depth interviews are useful for obtaining detailed information from respondents and encourage respondents to be open and express their views, feelings and perspectives. Hence in-depth interviews are useful in building rapport with one's research subjects. This is so because the dialogic nature of in-depth interviews makes respondents to feel at home to talk freely and discuss personal material. Since, the interviews are a conversation, the researcher has room to pose probing questions to pursue interesting personal material and follow up on interesting points, including the material that the respondent may bring up that the researcher had not anticipated.

In the light of the foregoing, the use of semi structured interviews as part of the qualitative research methods enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth insights from the current and former EPWP participants who shared their knowledge and experiences of participating in the programme. To obtain varying insights, and possibly different experiences, the researcher interviewed 15 participants (both men and women) from three different infrastructure projects, namely: the Charlotte Maxeke Hospital Project where an Acute Mental Patients Ward was being constructed at the time of conducting interviews; the 2012 Nelson Mandela Children hospital EPWP as well as participants who took part in the 2014 Charlotte Maxeke Hospital Renovation Project.

Semi structured interviews were also conducted with project contractors who were responsible for the implementation and management of the construction processes at the time of this research as well as officials from the Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development (DID). Two contractors were interviewed while two interviews were conducted with the key informants from DID in Gauteng. The DID officials were interviewed in order to unpack the objectives of the project, its successes and failures, as well as challenges encountered and lessons learned during implementation. Initially, the researcher intended to conduct three to five interviews with public works officials but only two interviews were conducted. Attempts to obtain the desired number of interviews were not successful owing to the DID's Head not granting permission to conduct interviews with other colleagues that the researcher felt could have answered some of the training-related questions she had.

The interviews with participants of the current project were arranged by the DID officials, while details of former participants were obtained from current EPWP participants who had worked in previous EPWP projects and kept contacts of their former colleagues. Current EPWP workers who had also worked in previous EPWPs were interviewed to learn about their experiences during their participation in the EPWPs. Once participants had been identified and their contact details

obtained, the researcher contacted them and explained the purpose of the research and sought their consent to participate in the study.

Once appointments were scheduled and confirmed, the researcher met the respondents, read through the consent form, gave them the ethics form and informed them of their rights not to answer certain questions or to withdraw from participation at any stage of the interview if they so wished. The respondents were informed of the duration of the interview before the interviews commenced.

The interviews with EPWP participants were conducted using a thematised semi-structured interview guide. The principal themes in the semi-structured schedule included the following: personal data of respondents including age to investigate the average age of the EPWP worker in line with the main research question of whether or not EPWP training contributes towards addressing youth unemployment in the long run; hours worked each day, types of duties performed on site; remuneration; type of training received prior to commencing work on site; working conditions; onsite experience; type of skills being transferred from contractors to EPWP participants; participants perceptions about whether the training offered; and work experience acquired from EPWP would enhance their future labour market performance; participants experience of how participating in previous EPWP helped and/or did not help them get other jobs in the labour market after they discontinued work in these project. Each theme was explored by means of specific questions all of which were open-ended so as to not “pigeon-hole” the interview process, to use Bryman (2012)’s phraseology, but to capture the stories of the researcher’s participants in detail using a guided framework.

In short, the interviews with the EPWP participants enabled the researcher to obtain data on the number of youths employed in the projects, the duration of their participation, the duration of stay without employment after the completion of a specific project they worked on in the past, the number of people who received some sort of training, the number of those who obtained or did not obtain certificates, and the number of people who were able to gain employment as a result of having participated in the previous EPWPs.

3.2.3 **Sampling**

A purposive sampling procedure was used for selecting the study participants. A purposive sampling procedure known as maximum variation sampling which “consists of determining in advance some criteria that differentiate the sites or participants, and then selecting sites or participants that are quite different on the criteria” was used (Cresswell, 2011:156-157). By

maximizing differences in terms of the calibre of EPWP interviewed, the objective was to elicit different perspectives - an ideal in qualitative research (Ibid.).

Fifteen current and former participants of Charlotte Maxeke and Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital EPWPs were interviewed for, at least, forty minutes each due to time constraints on their part, particularly current EPWP participants who had to go back to performing their duties on site.

Most of the respondents were interviewed at the project site (at Charlotte Maxeke Hospital) on days arranged and agreed upon by the DID official and the managing contractor (project manager). Most interviews were conducted in isiZulu, a language most respondents were comfortable with, three in isiXhosa and one was in English. Many of the responds with the exception of one, who lived in Observatory, were from Yeoville.

In summary, through the process of semi-structured, in-depth interviews, documents analysis, desktop review and observation, this study sought to provide insight on the extent to which EPWP training and work experience enable participants to get jobs in the labour market post EPWP participation. This methodology also enabled the researcher to discover the following additional issues, namely: the subtle gender disparity between EPWP male and female participants and incoherent messages (concerning youth participation in EPWPs), emanating from EPWP officials indicating lack of collaboration and communication.

3.3 Ethical considerations when collecting data

Wagner et al (2012) states that the researcher should reflect on and be aware of ethical issues. Christians (2005) cited in Wagner *et al*. (2012) highlight that codes of ethics should be followed and these include obtaining informed consent from one's research subjects, maintaining privacy and confidentiality of the participants, and being accurate and avoiding deception with regards to the scope of one's research and the implications for participating in it. In line with the above, while carrying out this study, the researcher declared who she was, and explained the purpose of the study and its intended use. The researcher also provided participants with information on their rights to withdraw from participating in the study and assured them that their participation will be kept private and confidential (Cresswell, 2011; Wicks & Whiteford (2006).

The in-depth interview approach entailed that this study "invaded" the respondents' beliefs, their backgrounds, and that their behaviours were scrutinised through observation. In other words, this

approach unearthed finer or intimate details about participants' lives. For instance, seeking their perceptions about the usefulness of the training and work experience acquired from the EPWP involved being privileged as a researcher to obtain such sensitive information some of which could diminish the future prospects of the study subjects in being employed in some of these projects. Thus, the opportunity to listen to participants' views, beliefs and perceptions warranted serious consideration about the need to keep their responses confidential and their identity anonymous. Neuman (2011) defines confidentiality as "[t]he ethical protection for those who are studied by holding research data in confidence or keeping them secret from the public; not releasing information in a way that permits linking specific individuals to specific responses…" while anonymity is defined as "[t]he ethical protection that participants remain nameless; their identity is protected from disclosure and remains unknown" (Neuman, 2011:139). Confidentiality and anonymity have been maintained by way of using pseudonyms and presenting data in an aggregate format so that no responses can be traced to particular interviewees. In circumstances where anonymity is not possible, confidentiality has been protected.

3.4 Data processing and analysis

The first step the researcher undertook when analysing the data was rereading and transcribing the interviews, she had conducted to pick up common trends, which were subsequently developed into themes and sub-themes. Taylor and Bogdan, (1989) define themes as conversation topics derived from patterns. The researcher then backed up choices of themes with literature. Some of the themes that emerged from the interviews were the same as those that were obtained from the literature review in Chapter two of this study. New themes that emerged and on which very little has been written are that of gender disparity between men and women working at the infrastructure EPWPs studied as well as the seeming lack of collaboration and communications between public works representatives.

3.5 Limitations to the study

Time constraints: Intense interviews into individual public works participants were limited because the participants who were employed at the time of conducting the interviews had to go back to work. To overcome the time constraint challenge, the researcher resorted to making three site visitations so as to continuously engage EPWP participants. The researcher also resorted to

spending time on site observing the work conducted by participants as a way of supplementing data collected through interviews and documentation review.

Inability to interview more EPWP officials: owing to the DID Head's not granting permission to conduct further interviews with his colleagues, only two interviews with DID officials were conducted. To ensure that the researcher was well-versed in EPWP and its training initiatives, the researcher requested that DID officials who agreed to be interviewed and the National Department of Public Works officials share EPWP documentation not available on the worldwide web.

The fact that two EPWPs were completed several years ago means that interviews were conducted only with participants still present in the area and for this reason, only a handful of the former participants of both the Charlotte Maxeke Renovation and Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital were located. The inability to access all the former workers in these EPWPs makes it difficult for this study to authoritatively affirm whether or not the majority of former participants of both the 2012 Nelson Mandela Childrens' Hospital and the 2014 Charlotte Maxeke Renovation Hospital EPWPs managed to find jobs post participating in these projects.

This section has outlined the methods employed in executing this study, whose aim was to investigate the extent to which training provided by the infrastructure sector of Government's EPWP contributes towards moving its participants to more secure jobs in the labour market post EPWP participation. As part of investigating the usefulness of training provided, the study also explored the type and duration of training provided as well as the number of young people benefitting from the programme, in line with the research question.

4 CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings from the interviews conducted with 15 current and former EPWP participants, and officials from the Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development, as well as the Charlottle Maxeke Hospital project contractors. The chapter, therefore, presents key findings of the research. Research ancillary questions presented in Chapter one of this study, including : EPWP and training, and the number of young people who have benefitted from EPWP, among others, are explored further to determine whether or not, EPWP training contributes towards long-term job security for its participants, particularly the youth. Emerging themes such as gender disparity, are also discussed.

In the Gauteng Province, where data for this study was collected, the Department of Infrastructure Development (DID) is the custodian and overseeing agent of all infrastructure projects under the Expanded Public Works Programme banner.

Once a 'client' department, for example the Department of Health, decides to build a new hospital in Soweto for instance, the 'client' department commissions the DID to manage and oversee the implementation of that project.

Once commissioned to implement the project, the DID issues a tender inviting suitable contractors to submit tender documents. This is subsequently followed by the appointment of the contractor that is chosen in accordance with the requirements of a specific project. The appointed contractor takes responsibility for the physical implementation of the project and the DID becomes the project overseer.

For this study, the researcher visited a construction site at the Charlotte Maxeke Hospital, in Parktown, Johannesburg. At this site, an acute mental patients ward, designed to accommodate at least 25 mental patients, was being built. Among the approximately 50 workers on site, including plumbers, painters, and electricians were ten EPWP participants most of whom came from the neighbouring Yeoville area, which is referred to as Ward 67. Ward 67 falls under the Democratic Alliance's control. In addition to interviewing current EPWP project participants, the researcher interviewed past EPWP participants. Some of the current project workers have also worked on past EPWP projects namely the 2012 Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital and 2014

Charlottle Maxeke Hospital Renovation, and the researcher interviewed them as both current and past EPWP participants.

4.2 The process of getting an EPWP work opportunity/targeting

All current and former EPWP participants interviewed in this study reported that EPWP work opportunities are typically discussed at regular community meetings arranged by the Ward Councillor. All participants interviewed also suggested that EPWP work opportunities are almost always a preserve for those who attend and participate in community politics and meetings arranged by the office of the Ward Councillor as one participant reported:

> *I was previously unemployed and not that politically-active… and often I'd suddenly see previously-unemployed people wearing EPWP uniforms…eventually, I asked how they got involved in EPWP and they told me they attended ward meetings, regularly and that's where they got to hear about EPWP work opportunities…I then also started attending these meetings and I managed to get this one* (work opportunity at the Charlotte Maxeke hospital project). (Bonolo, 27 years, woman, 11/10/2018)

Some participants interviewed viewed EPWP work opportunities as vehicles used by ward councillors to garner votes, while one claimed that he had to 'fight' to get work opportunities that would have otherwise been reserved for card-carrying members of the Democratic Alliance, the political party in charge of Ward 67.

When asked to explain the selection criteria used when hiring EPWP participants, the managing contractor said that after the company he worked for was appointed to carry out the project, it was mandated to incorporate ten EPWP participants onto the project, which he described as a norm when implementing most state-led infrastructure projects.

> *…so, after being awarded a tender, we advertised the available work opportunities in various platforms including the City of Johannesburg and also forwarded it (the advertisement) to Ward 67 Councillor's office, which circulated it around the Yeoville area. Applicants then had to submit their curriculum vitae (CVs) to the office of the Ward Councillor, which in turn checked to verify that the applicant resides in the area and that s/he is in the voters roll…* (Contractor, 11/10/2018)

The contractor's view above was validated by projects participants who said that after they had submitted their CVs and had met the criteria of residing in the area and participating in Ward politics, they were then selected to participate in the project and enrolled to attend a two-week training course that would 'prepare' them for the work they would perform on site.

4.3 EPWPs and Training

The ten participants who were chosen to work at the current Charlottle Maxeke Acute Mental Patients Ward EPWP, in May 2018, were sent on a two-week training programme which offered training in two trades, namely: bricklaying and plumbing. Five of the ten were trained as bricklayers while the other five received training in plumbing. Asked what determined the type of training offered to participants one contractor reported that the participants were made to 'play' something almost similar to a 'raffle', placing their names inside a 'hat' and subsequently getting randomly selected in accordance with either bricklaying or plumbing. The two-weeks training received comprised of one week of theory and one week of practice.

The majority (six out of 10) participants who were selected from the project that was being implemented at the time of empirical data collection did not consider the two weeks training they received prior to joining the project as adequate in terms of getting them employment in future. However, they acknowledged that it was better than receiving no training at all. Describing the type of training they received, all of the participants said they were given training manuals, which they studied for one week, and after being assessed on the manual got to practice what they had learned for another week

For many participants, the training received was very basic as reported by one respondent: "…*it was very basic training… but I guess I've now learned how to lay a brick on top of another…a skill I hope would help me get a job of some sort in future*…" (Zama, 21 years, male 11/10/2018)

Another participant who was trained as a bricklayer said "*we learned how to lay bricks and we learned how to measure accurately so that we don't waste building material... (*Amanda, 23 years, female 11/10/2018)

When asked why EPWP project participants were trained in bricklaying when they were working with dry walls, the contractor managing the project said:

> *… this is a highly-specialised ward with features such as a 24-hour security and data system as well as vinlyn flooring and specialised plumbing and electrification…and given the mental state of the patients who would be admitted here, it was of paramount importance that EPWP participants who worked on this project received some sort of training that would equip them with specialised skills that would enable them to, for instance, electrify the ward in a way that would not pose a risk or enable mental health patients to hurt themselves, each other or the hospital employees……but we couldn't find specialists to provide such sophisticated skills …the training service provider we*

> *procured only provides training in brick laying and plumbing…hence the mismatch*…(Contractor, 11/10/2018)

Most, at least seven out of ten, current project participants interviewed were somehow disappointed that they underwent training in May but were, during the time of interviews in October and November, yet to receive certificates proving their participation in the training programme. Some felt that they would stand a better chance of getting a job with a certificate in hand instead of merely claiming that they took part in a training programme offered as part of the EPWP work opportunity.

One participant who received training in plumbing said she felt that the whole idea of getting trained in plumbing while she did not do any plumbing onsite was senseless.

> *… I trained as a plumber during the two-week training programme but I am not working with plumbers. I am constantly sitting and waiting to sweep floors and to clear the construction rubble and even on the rare days that I find myself assisting the contractors … I find myself working with painters and dry wall specialist…so what was the point of being trained as a plumber*…? (Fiki, 38, female 11/10/2018)

Of the ten participants who were selected from the project that was being constructed at the time of empirical data collection, four had previously worked on other EPWP infrastructure projects. Two of the four, one a woman and the other a man, worked at the construction of the Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital in 2012. The third, a man, had worked in two past EPWP infrastructure projects including the 2014 renovation of the Charlotte Maxeke hospital as well as the Johannesburg Roads Agency's M1 expansion project. The fourth also formed part of the EPWP participants who took part in the 2014 renovation of the hospital and battled to find employment elsewhere until she was 'rescued' from four years of unemployment by the current mental patients ward project.

The two who worked at the construction of the Nelson Mandela Children Hospital claimed that they did receive training in scaffolding, brick laying and plastering but the woman reported that her onsite duties then were not dissimilar to her current onsite duties (limited to keeping the site tidy and occasionally 'helping' the contractors by handing them tools, etc). The other woman who worked at the 2014 Charlotte Maxeke Hospital renovation project reported the same – highlighting similarities of the roles women played and continue to play in these two different project sites.

Of the two women, one reported that she had stayed at home unemployed for four years after completing the project until she was 'rescued' by the current Charlotte Maxeke acute mental patients ward project. The other had also spent two years being unemployed after the construction of the Nelson Mandela Children's hospital was completed. The men on the other hand, seemed to not have battled with unemployment to the same extent as their women counterparts. However, the man who had worked in two other EPWP projects cautioned that the reason he had been able to get jobs, within and outside the EPWP was not because of the training he had received from the EPWP but was because of the construction training and experience he had obtained elsewhere as he explained in the following vignette.

> *I get jobs not necessarily owing to any training I have received in EPWP… the training provided here is in fact very basic. I get jobs because of other construction training courses I have attended and other job experiences I've acquired from elsewhere ...* (Tshepo, 36, Male 11/10/2018)

Almost the same applied to the other man who worked at the construction of the Nelson Mandela Children's hospital. He reported that he too was able to move to another EPWP project in the Environmental Sector, for three months in 2015, unlike his female counterparts who had to wait to be 'saved' by the current EPWP project. After working at the two EPWP projects, the second male was further advantaged by the EPWP bursary he was awarded to complete a one-year course in occupational health and safety for which he received a certificate. Not only did he believe that this put him at an advantage over others at the site where he worked, but he also believed that the one-year training would help him get jobs in the health and safety area post programme participation.

> *I am the safety representative on site responsible for, among other things, conducting induction every morning, ensuring that all workers keep their safety gear (helmet, gloves, etc) on throughout the day on site and also ensuring that the site is equipped with all the necessary emergency kits such as a fire extinguisher in an unlikely event that a fire has to be put out and that there is no water on the floor so people don't trip and fall* (Mongezi , 23, Male 11/10/2018)

This participant also felt that he stood a better chance of obtaining a job in a construction site as a health and safety officer because of the duration of the 'proper' training he received in occupational health and safety and because of the certificate he received after completing his one-year training.

> *…so, I will not look for plumbing or bricklaying jobs after this project comes to an end…I will, rather, look in the occupational health and safety sector… this onsite*

> *experience will help me get a foot in the occupational health and safety area…* (Mongezi, 23, Male 11/10/2018)

Other previous EPWP participants who also worked at other EPWP projects including the 2012 Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital, and were not employed at the mental patients ward project, reported that, similar to their colleagues who reported being unemployed for two and four years after being employed at previous EPWP projects, working on EPWP project had not helped them get similar jobs elsewhere in the labour market. One of them said, *"I am now employed in the retail sector, I had to take the job I could find…the EPWP experience did not set me apart from other people who are looking for construction jobs out there* (Xoli, 23, Female 11/2018)

Another previous project participant also reported that it would have been even more useful to receive training on how to start and manage their own construction companies. They viewed this knowledge as critical for their ability to bid for future EPWP projects instead of waiting for another contractor to hire them. This sentiment was shared by one current project participant who said:

> *they should also teach us budget skills, how and where to search for employment opportunities after the project has ended, also they need to teach us how to really start our own businesses and succeed…they must teach us entrepreneurship skills so we can start our own businesses*... (Mpho, 28, Male 11/10/2018)

The DID representative interviewed in this study admitted that training previously offered by the programme was not well conceptualised. As a result, this training, he said, did not yield the desired outcomes of enabling former project participants to get work elsewhere or to become employable once they exited the programme. As a result, the Department was looking at gradually phasing out training so that EPWP focusses primarily on providing short-term work opportunities aimed at eradicating poverty.

Longer-term training programmes, outside the EPWP, such as the Accelerated Artisan Programme have been developed to offer one-to two-year long training programmes that would enable participants to gain meaningful qualifications which could enhance their future employability post programme participation (instead of incorporating short-term training into EPWP).

4.4 The Gender Disparity Undertones

Of the ten current Charlotte Maxeke EPWP participants, four were women and six were men. Some project participants, particularly women, reported that the bricklaying and plumbing they

were taught during training was useless to them because their day to day duties included keeping the project area clean, and helping the sub-contractors (by fetching tools, etc.). They also argued that the training in brick laying in particular was useless because they were not building the hospital from the ground. Instead, they used dry walls to convert an existing structure into an acute mental health ward.

Two of the four women felt that nobody had their best interest at heart including the project's community liaison officer about whom they expressed disappointment for failing to represent their interests at the project site. One female participant said that:

> *I have been accused of being the one with a bad attitude and have been called names by one of the male supervisors because I stand up for my rights…I have been treated very badly and I could not report him to anybody…who could I report him to, he's the boss's Brother…this community liaison officer really doesn't have our best interest at heart.* (Fiki, 38, female 11/10/2018

The women interviewed also reported that there was no formal on the job training offered on site. However, during her three time visitation to the project site, the current researcher observed what appeared to be an unspoken rule that men working on site were to perform technical duties while women performed lighter duties almost similar to the duties that a 'girl child' would typically perform at home, such as sweeping and keeping the work area tidy by disposing of construction rubble, among other lighter duties. During the researcher's first site visit, she had sat in one makeshift office to which participants were called one by one. During conversations some women (three out of four) mentioned that they were not using the 'skills' they received during the two-weeks training. They said this was because there was a mismatch between the skills they had been offered during the two-weeks training and the roles and responsibilities they had to perform at the project site such as cutting dry walls, etc.

During the second visit, the claims that were made by women of waiting around for men to perform technical duties so they could clear the rubble were confirmed when the researcher found a small group of them gathered at the community liaison officer's office chit chatting. A similar situation was observed on the third site visit, confirming that men and women's onsite experiences were indeed different. Another observation made is that women were not banned or prohibited from being proactive and pushing to work and learn with men, but there was an element of self-exclusion that one could argue was a result of the influence of patriarchal values in the South African society. Patriarchal beliefs in South Africa are deeply entrenched that even women accept that their duties are automatically 'domestic like' in comparison to the duties that were performed

by men. It seems that these women had accepted roles that society prescribed for them to perform without even realising it.

On the other hand, most men interviewed told a story different to the experience of women cited above. They reported a story of learning on site and, therefore, complementing the skills they had received during the two-weeks formal training. Most men interviewed said that even though on the job training was not compulsory, they were indeed learning a lot from the contractors on site. They said they learned more from contractors on site than from the two-weeks formal training they received. In fact, while a woman would come in the morning and hang around waiting for work (of clearing construction rubble) a man would come in, choose a contractor to 'shadow' or work with for the day, ranging from plumbers to dry-wall specialists or electricians, and they would spend the whole day or week with that person and learn on site. They also claimed that they often tried a trade and based on whether they liked it, chose to either continue or try another one.

One participant who trained as a bricklayer claimed that: *"I can now perform basic electrician duties…"* (Sandile, 28 years, male, 23/11 2018) while another said *"I also trained as a brick layer but I can now do plumbing, the contractors on site have taught me a lot of plumbing related tasks… I can even replace copper pipes now…"* (Karabo, 23, 23/11/2018)

It appears as though there was a form of 'brotherhood' among men and contractors, and that there was an unspoken 'rule' or expectation that men performed the technical duties while women kept the site tidy – evidence of patriarchal beliefs about gender roles that the researcher had not anticipated to find at any EPWP site.

4.5 The Age Debate – work opportunities created and the number of young people employed

From the interviews conducted with DID officials in Johannesburg, inconsistent messages emerged (signalling lack of communication and collaboration between the officials). There was for instance, a perception from one public works official that young people - described as those under the age of 35 - perceived EPWP projects as inferior and did not want to work on them because they (young people) are, as one official perceived, not that desperate to work. This official based his assumptions that young people from households where someone received social grants were less motivated to seek for work. This perception aligns with the assumption of the so-

called “taste for employment” hypothesis which argues that financial comfort discourages job searching among young people.

It was argued that it is only once the young people have children of their own and move out of their parents or guardians’ homes that they, reluctantly, accept EPWP jobs to earn an income. In other words, responsibility was the motivator for participating in the EPWP by youth. This explains, according to one official, why older youth were typically found working on EPWP construction sites compared to younger ones.

This view was rebutted by some officials who argued that the contractors responsible for employing EPWP employees were given a specific mandate to prioritise young people, the physically disabled, and women when selecting EPWP participants. So, there appears to be contradicting statements coming from the authorities (signalling lack of communication/collaboration between the them).

Seven of the ten EPWP project participants interviewed at Charlotte Maxeke hospital were under the age 35 (qualifying them as youth). In addition, the former EPWP project participants, one currently unemployed and the other currently working in the retail space also fell within the under 35 age cohort. This contradicts one DID official’s claim that young people neither wanted to work on nor to be associated with the EPWP projects. In terms, of the level of education of the participants, two out of all the current and former EPWP workers interviewed had Grade 12 certificates. Most respondents appreciated the work opportunities provided by the programme given the level of education and the fact that they had been unemployed prior to joining the programme.

4.6 Remuneration

Irrespective of the level of education, all project participants reported that they earned R27.50 per hour more than an average minimum wage of R20 an hour, which adds up to R4 400 a month for a typical eight hour, twenty days a month work. All project participants also reported that they received an R80 a day stipend while on a two-week training programme.

Most project participants (eight out of ten) expressed being satisfied with their wages given the level of their education and the reasonable hours they worked. They also mentioned that they occasionally worked overtime for which they were also fairly remunerated. Even though most of

them expressed satisfaction with their remuneration, some bemoaned that salary levels differed. They claimed that in some EPWP sites, some participants were paid R288 a day making their basic salaries R5600 a month compared to those who were paid R4 400 a month. They attributed what they defined as "good" salaries to the intervention by the community liaison officer without whom they would have earned about R150 per day, an equivalent of R18.75 per hour, the scales that had been initially proposed by the contractor. Commending this intervention by the community liaison officer, one participant said: "…*negotiating a better rate per hour was in fact the only time that the community liaison officer was useful to us*…" (Fiki, 38, female 11/10/2018)

Not being able to move with the same contractor to the next project was also a concern raised by most participants.

> *it's like they give us a taste of a life we could live (when employed) and then six months or a year down the line they take it (the job) away and you are forced to go back to being unemployed because the project has been completed*. *These contractors must find ways of integrating us on other projects they work on instead of letting us go back to poverty*. (Mpho, 28, Male 11/10/2018)

In this chapter, I have outlined the findings from interviews conducted with 15 current and former EPWP participants, views of officials from the Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development, as well as the Charlottle Maxeke Hospital project contractors. The chapter, therefore, presented key findings of the research. Research sub questions presented in Chapter one of this study including EPWP and training and age of the participants, among others, were explored further to determine whether or not, EPWP training contributes towards long-term job security for its participants, in particular the youth. Emerging new themes such as gender disparity were also discussed.

The main conclusion drawn in this chapter is that the training received by participants in the EPWPs was, due to the fact that it was short-term in nature and that the skills gained in performing tasks in the projects were limited, not useful in enabling project participants to get jobs in the labour market post EPWP participation. This explains why the EPWPs continuously reemploy past participants rather than letting them go back to unemployment and poverty.

The study also found that there are gender disparities in respect of the extent to which men and women benefitted from the skills gained in performing tasks in the EPWPs. It was found that men performed meaningful tasks such as installing pipes along with the professional plumbers on site while women routinely kept the construction site tidy. According to some women interviewed in

the current study, these types of tasks were not the kind of which could impart experience that could enhance their employability post project participation.

As per the policy expectation that the EPWPs should provide a quota for the employment of people defined as youth by the National Youth Policy, this study found that the EPWPs in Gauteng do target youth. This is a positive thing given that youth in this province and as in the whole country in general, are disproportionately affected by unemployment. Finally, the researcher found that most current EPWP participants were satisfied with their remuneration.

5 CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

In this Chapter, the researcher analyses the findings derived from interviews with 15 current and former EPWP participants, and interviews with the Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development officials as well as the current Charlottle Maxeke Hospital EPWP contractors. The researcher set out to explore the usefulness of the training and skills provided by the infrastructure sector of the EPWP in enabling its participants, particularly the youth, to get jobs elsewhere in the labour market post programme participation. The notion of usefulness was measured in terms of whether the duration of training and the type of skills acquired tallied with the nature of youth unemployment and its main drivers in Gauteng and indeed the whole of South Africa.

In analysing the research findings, this chapter also compares and contrasts this study's findings with research outcomes of prominent scholars who have made extensive contributions to existing literature on the Expanded Public Works Programme. This chapter, therefore, analyses, compares and contrasts this study's key findings with the works of numerous scholars such as McCord (2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b); Samson (2007) and Thwala (2011) who have written extensively on public works programmes in South Africa and beyond. It is thus useful to remind the reader of the approaches that have been used by the existing literature and how the current study locates itself in this literature.

Two perspectives dominate the scholarship that evaluates the efficacy of public works programmes as a response to labour market failure in South Africa, namely: the theoretical and empirical positions. Scholars such as McCord (2004, 2005, 2007), Phillips (2004) and Moyo (2013) critique the public works from both a theoretical and empirical basis. In terms of the theoretical perspective, they begin by a detailed analysis of South Africa's labour market and the assumptions that underscore the EPWP intervention. For example, McCord (2005b) analyses the EPWP documentation and the assumptions upon which the EPWP intervention is predicated and reveals that the major assumption in the EPWP is that skills acquisition and work experience will improve labour market performance. McCord (2005b) interrogates the key vectors through which EPWPs have the potential to influence labour market performance and identifies two factors, namely: (a) experience and (b) on the job training and formal training.

Based on her theoretical analysis of the South African labour market and the nature of training and work experience acquired by EPWP participants, McCord (2005b) concludes that there is a mismatch between the nature of the problem and the assumptions that underlie the intervention (EPWP) designed to address this problem. She says that the EPWPs are most relevant in countries where the nature of unemployment is "frictional". Frictional unemployment occurs when people move between jobs or when they are temporarily unemployed because they are in the process of acquiring new skills required by the changing labour market (McCord, 2005b: 584; HSRC, 2007). South Africa's unemployment is "structural", meaning that it is caused by deep seated changes in the macro economy which have given genesis to a decreased demand for semi-or low skilled labour and an increased demand for labour with intermediate and high skills. The incongruity, therefore, arises from a situation where the skills and training offered in the EPWP are not the kinds of which can enable the unemployed to obtain jobs availed by the macro economy. Moreover, McCord (2005b) contends, the changes in the macro economy have reduced the job creation capacity of South Africa's economy leading to an increasing scarcity of jobs. So, the assumption of a one-on-one mapping of EPWP acquired skills to labour market performance is problematic. Put differently, there is no axiomatic correlation between some incremental labour market benefits and incremental skills acquisition (McCord, 2005b: 569). This view is echoed by several scholars. Based on an analysis of the roles and responsibilities that were performed by participants of the Modimola EPWP in the North West province, Moyo (2013) echoes Phillips (2004) and McCord's (2004, 2005) position that the work performed by EPWP participants is not the kind of which can transfer marketable work experience and skills.

Some scholars use a different approach to the theoretical and empirical critique of EPWPs enunciated above, namely: the theory-based approach (Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, 2004). The fundamental argument of the theory-based approach is that social programmes are predicated on theories (Pawson, 2003: 471). These theories relate to decision making in terms of the objectives that underscore a project, the activities and inputs that are devoted to realising the objectives and the indicators to be used to measure desired change. In other words, the theory-based approach interrogates how and why social programmes work, rather than evaluating why they work or fail to work (Rossi et al., 2004: 146, *my emphasis added*). The theory-based approach, therefore, offers an alternative view at the problem addressed by the programme. It does so because it examines programme design and proffers alternative ways in which the programme could have been designed for maximum impact. As such, the theory-based approach involves reconstructing a programme theory. This entails understanding the rationale behind a

programme, explaining the modalities through which it will bring about the projected change (Lipsey & Pollard, 1989 cited by Heradien, 2013: 25).

Heradien (2013) is one of the scholars who has applied a theory-based approach to evaluating the EPWPs in South Africa. This writer used a qualitative approach which focused on meanings and thought processes that were invested in the assumptions underlying the EPWP. Using Rossi et al. (2004) framework or questions for theory-based evaluation, Heradien (2013), for instance, argues that the objective of South Africa's EPWPs of "creating temporary employment and income for at least one million unemployed South Africans" (Department of Public Works, 2005) is clearly defined. However, this writer posits that the ambiguity in this objective is that there is lack of clarity of how this objective is to be achieved. Space precludes a thorough elucidation of the verdicts that Heradien passes in his evaluation of South Africa's EPWP following Rossi et al.'s (2004) framework of programme evaluation. Suffice to say that Heradien's theory-based approach arrives at findings akin to those made by scholars who have used institutional and empirical critiques of the EPWP such as McCord (2004, 2005). For instance, Heradien repeats McCord's (2005b) finding that even though EPWPs result in meeting basic needs for the poor during the employment period, they fail in relation to its long-term goals because they do not help the participants to gain a foothold in the formal labour market post programme participation. As scholars such as Moyo (2013) and McCord (2005b) argue multiple-short term employment in EPWP projects serve to churn the unemployed replacing one cohort of the unemployed with another.

The current study uses both the theoretical and empirical perspectives to evaluate the ability or usefulness of training and work experience offered under the EPWP to promote employment in South Africa in general and in Gauteng in particular. Unlike Heradien's theory-based approach (2013), the study adopted the method used by scholars such as McCord (2005b) who first make a detailed labour market analysis and secondly, the assumptions that underlie the EPWP intervention. Based on this approach, it then makes a verdict about whether the training offered at, and experience acquired, from the EPWPs could contribute to addressing youth unemployment in the Gauteng Province. While scholars such as Lipsey (in Louw, 1998: 263) and Mark, Henry and Julnes (2000) emphasise on the merits of a quantitative approach to evaluation because it produces data that can be measured and analysed, the present study used a qualitative approach because the focus was on the geographical context, and social and economic environment within which the chosen projects were implemented. On the advice of scholars like Patton (2002) and Yuksel (2010: 79), the researcher's approach in the present study

involved spending time on project sites to observe changes and to conduct interviews or to analyse documentation.

Based on some of the literature reviewed as well as this study's key findings, which include that training offered by the EPWP is short in duration and that on the job training is not compulsory and benefits only those who show the 'willingness to learn' or those who take proactive steps to make sure they are taught, the researcher has found answers to the main research question posed in Chapter One, which is: What is the usefulness of training provided by the infrastructure sector of Government's EPWP in addressing youth unemployment in the Gauteng province? The researcher concludes that the infrastructure sector does, indeed, help in addressing the youth unemployment challenge in the Gauteng Province in the short term. However, owing to the short duration and the limited type of skills training provided by the infrastructure sector of the EPWP, this sector is not useful in enabling its participants to get jobs elsewhere in the labour market post EPWP participation.

5.2 Exploring Public Works Programmes in Africa in Comparison to South Africa's EPWP

Thwala (2011:6012) reveals that public works have long been used in Africa as governments' policy tool to create employment and eradicate poverty. In Ghana for instance, the Volta River Settlement Programme involving the creation of a network of rural towns and access roads employed "three times as many workers than were involved in building the Volta Dam" Thwala (2011:6012) exhibiting the employment-generating potential of labour-intensive infrastructural programmes. Thwala (2011) also states that the youth who worked in this project acquired a wide range of skills.

> several skills development opportunities ranging from site supervisor; bricklaying; site foremen; shuttering and formwork; plumbers; painters; carpenters; and tillers were also made available to the youth employed by the project. Many of the youth who worked under the different programmes were self-employed upon completion of the various programmes (Thwala, 2011:6012).

The same cannot be said however of the impact of EPWP on youth skills acquisition and employment in South Africa. Irrefutably, the EPWP has since its inception in 2004 created millions of job opportunities for youth aged under 35 years. However, the current study finds that the

EPWP in South Africa has not succeeded in achieving the same outcomes of providing meaningful training resulting in the creation of entrepreneurs capable of taking advantage of opportunities presented in the construction sector of South Africa's economy.

Although this study's sample of former EPWP participants is not large enough to enable the researcher to assert authoritatively that EPWP in South Africa has not been able to create entrepreneurs, evidence gleaned in this study shows that it fails in this front. None of the respondents in this study who had been previously employed in EPWPs and were employed in the project that was operating at the time of this research could start their own income generating projects. This suggests that these individuals did not acquire any entrepreneurship skills to help them start their own construction companies or any other income generating business after exiting the programme. So, while works programmes might have created entrepreneurs in other African countries that implemented them, this has not been the case in South Africa. McCord (2005b: 580) is saying that,

> … rather than moving up the hierarchy of the labour market, once they have their foot on the employment ladder as pronounced by the Department of Public Works in 2004… evidence…suggests that, in fact, workers returned to the same labour market rung from whence they came into the programme (McCord, 2005b: 580).

The research finds that training on entrepreneurship in not strong in the EPWP, a position augmented by respondent in this study as a respondent from the current Charlotte Maxeke EPWP put it:

> *they should also teach us budget skills, how and where to search for employment opportunities after the project has ended, also they need to teach us how to really start our own businesses and succeed…they must teach us entrepreneurship skills so we can start our own businesses...* (Mpho, 28, male, 11/10/2018)

The quote above also dispute claims by DID officials interviewed by Kitchin (2012:18) that during the implementation of the EPWP's second phase from 2009 to 2014, the Programme shifted its focus from insisting that EPWP participants receive training to putting measures in place to enable the unemployed, in particular young people, women and the physically-challenged individuals, to start cooperatives and small businesses.

5.3 Training as a means to justify unsatisfactory conditions under which the EPWP provides jobs

In addition to being criticised for having dismally failed to provide meaningful training to participants so as to enhance their subsequent employability post-programme participation, scholars have also argued that public works employment adds to the serious existing challenge of extreme casualisation of employment (Moyo, 2013:23) and that EPWP participants are subject to exploitative work conditions.

To validate these claims, between 2002 and 2003, Samson conducted research on the restructuring of waste management. The programmes she assessed were to provide street cleaning services in some areas of Galeshewe Township in Sol Plaatje and Soweto Township in Johannesburg. Based on her research, Samson (2007:249) found dynamics of manipulation and unstable employment in these two groups of workers. In both projects, Samson found that employees were remunerated much lower salaries than their colleagues. In fact, in the Sol Plaatje project, lower salaries were justified by arguing that the EPWP was aimed at alleviating poverty on a short-term basis and providing skills training that would, in the long run, help project workers develop their human capital in order to be more successful in the labour market.

In the Zivuseni Poverty Alleviation Project in Soweto, the same exploitative working conditions were discovered. The project provided employment to approximately 255 community members who were in turn supervised by Pickitup employees. Similar to other projects, the Zivuseni project employees were also exploited. Despite being aware that they were exploited especially with regards to the fact that they were not given any benefits and that they were paid salaries lower than those of their counterparts (the municipal pikitup employees) who performed the same duties as them, the Zivuseni participants continued working. They did so because of the severe challenge of structural unemployment, Samson (2007) reports. As Samson (2007:245) argues,

> rather than forging a pathway from the second into the supposed distinct first economy, the public works projects minimised the need for the generation of new jobs within the formal waste management sector, and created new, inferior jobs which bear characteristics associated with the so-called second economy sector. Public works, therefore, led to the reproduction of the very problem they were meant to overcome (Samson, 2007:245).

This study did not find exploitative working conditions in the current Charlotte Maxeke project where ten EPWP participants were employed. Nor was exploitation reported in the working conditions and wages of respondents who were employed in the 2014 renovation of the

Charlotte Maxeke hospital and the 2012 Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital EPWPs. Despite that the majority (two out of 10) had attained a Grade 12 education, all of them earned R27.50 per hour, which adds up to R4 400 a month for a typical eight-hour day, and twenty days a week work schedule, which is more than the average R20 per hour minimum wage. All project participants also reported that they received an R80 a day stipend while on a two-week training programme signalling an improvement from pay rates reported by both McCord and Kitchin (2012:59) who stated that "the average wage of an EPWP worker … across the province has increased from R71 per day in 2009/10 to R82 by September 2011".

Furthermore, most project participants said that they were satisfied with their wages and with the reasonable hours they worked. They also mentioned that they occasionally worked overtime for which they were fairly remunerated. This contradicts McCord's finding in a study of 700 households in 2003 on the basis of which this scholar concluded as follows:

> the impact of the programmes was limited because they failed to take the majority of households even temporarily out of poverty. Even with their PWP income, 99% of the households in one case and 87% in the other still fell below the poverty line: participation merely reduced the depth of poverty (McCord, 2004:)

This study's findings also dispute Samson's (2007) findings of exploitative working conditions discussed above. Arguably, the improved working conditions in the EPWP may be a result of the improvements that have been made to the project arising from experiences of its implementation over the years. So, analysis of the improved wages and working conditions should be placed in this context as well as developments in labour legislations in South Africa which resulted in improvements for vulnerable workers.

5.4 The Age Debate – work opportunities created and the number of young people benefitting

From the interviews conducted with DID officials in the Gauteng Province, inconsistent messages emerged, signalling a lack of communication and collaboration between the officials. There was for instance, a perception from one DID official that young people - under the age of 35 – have a disdain for EPWP work because it is stigmatised as inferior, and that some of them are not motivated to work because of the financial support rendered to them by members (especially those who receive social grants) of their households.

The findings of this study do not support these perceptions. The current study found that seven of the ten EPWP project participants interviewed at Charlotte Maxeke hospital were under the age 35 (qualifying them as youth). In addition, the former EPWP participants who were unemployed and working in the retail sector were also under 35 years. This finding is consonant with Kitchin's finding that EPWP projects were contributing to job creation, especially for women and youth, and that EPWP youth participation targets were exceeded. Kitchin writes that "…gender targets were on track at 39%, youth targets were exceeded by 40% (70% against 30%), disability was exceeded by 3% (5% against 2%) …" Overall, Kitchin (2012:24) states that, the percentage of youth involved in the Gauteng provincial departments' EPWP projects increased from 30% in 2009/10 to 70% in 2010/11 and remained close to that in the first six months of 2011/12 at 68%.

The documents shared by the national Department of Public Works also affirm that young people indeed benefitted from work opportunities created by the EPWP. Since its inception in 2004, the EPWP has created 9 898, 066 work opportunities through its three phases. Of the total number of work opportunities created, the infrastructure sector has created the majority with 4058, 122 opportunities created, with an increase in youth participation rate from 41% during the first phase to 50% during the second phase, and 46% in the third phase. Even though the EPWP seem to be meeting its gender and youth targets, these achievements are superficial as they conceal certain dynamics related to gender disparity as will be discussed in the next section.

It must be argued however, that even though the reticence to work in the EPWP might not have been the reason why youth participation was low, at least in the view of the officials cited above, studies have shown a general rejection of the EPWPs not only by the youth but by people across South Africa's social strata, especially the poor. For example, Moyo (2015) reveals that some youth working in the EPWP in the Royal Bafokeng Nation (RBN) had left their job because this kind of work was stigmatised as "*ey wena popayi*". When asked to explain, Moyo (2015: 23) reports that these youth said they disliked working in the EPWPs because participants of this programme "spend three months without being paid and the pay is R700 per month". So, the RBN youth equated working in the EPWPs to not being taken seriously by the state, it was being treated like a doll (a *popayi*, as they put it). This is an important finding given that the EPWP is the largest and best-funded public sector programme to employ the unemployed, targeted at marginalized groups such as young people, the disabled, and people in rural areas (Altman & Henson, 2007 cited by Moyo, 2013: 23).

In terms, of the level of education of the participants, two out of all the current and former EPWP workers interviewed had Grade 12 certificates. Most respondents appreciated the work opportunities provided by the programme given the level of education and the fact that they had been unemployed prior to joining the programme.

5.5 Gender disparity undertones

There is no existing literature investigating the gender disparity and varying experiences between men and women in the infrastructure sector of the EPWPs. This study makes a unique contribution to the literature on the infrastructure sector of the EPWP.

There is no belabouring the point that gender disparities are prevalent in the South African workplace. The World Economic Forum's (WEF) (2017) Global Gender Report cited in (Mokoetle, 2018) revealed that South Africa is 200 years behind her peers in terms of gender parity. South Africa is ranked 19th in the global index report on gender inequality, with men still earning 27% more than women. Grant Thornton's 2016 *Women in Business* report, cited in (Madlala, 2017) also reveals that, in South Africa, women hold less than a quarter of senior management positions. In fact, the report stated that the percentage of women in leadership roles decreased from 27% in 2015 to 23% in 2016. Furthermore, the report found that 39% of the businesses surveyed had no women in senior management positions. Against this backdrop, the researcher found it imperative to explore the experiences of EPWP participants through a gendered lens.

Of the ten respondents interviewed at the Charlotte Maxeke EPWP, four were women and six were men. Some project participants, particularly women, argued that the bricklaying and plumbing they were taught during training was useless to them because their day to day duties primarily involved keeping the project area clean, helping the sub-contractors (by fetching tools, etc). They also argued that brick laying, in particular, was useless because they were not building the hospital from the ground. Instead, they erected dry walls to convert an existing structure into an acute mental health ward. Some women felt that nobody cared about their wellbeing including the project's community liaison officer whom they had expected to represent their interests on site. One female participant says:

> *I have been accused of having a bad attitude and have been called names by one male supervisor for no reason…I have been treated very badly and I could not report him to anybody…who could I report him to, he's the boss's brother…* (Fiki, 38, woman, 11/10/2018)

The women interviewed also reported that there was no formal on the job training provided on site. The researcher's observation, however, was that there seemed to be an unspoken rule that men working on site performed technical duties while women undertook the duties almost similar to the chores socially arrogated to the 'girl child' in South Africa's African households such as washing plates and cleaning the house. In the construction sites, women's responsibilities included keeping the work area tidy by disposing of construction rubble, among other lighter duties. During the researcher's first site visit, she set in an office where she interviewed her respondents. The recurring complaint among most respondents interviewed was that they were not using the 'skills' they received during the two-weeks training they received. They said there was a mismatch between the skills provided and the jobs they had to perform onsite. They lamented that the jobs they performed on site were not technical and thus, not the kinds of which could enhance one's labour market performance post EPWP employment.

During the second visit, the claims they made of waiting around for men to perform technical duties so they could clear the rubble were confirmed when the researcher found a small group of women gathered at the community liaison officer's office chit chatting. A similar set up was observed on the third site visit, confirming that men and women's onsite experiences were, indeed different. Another observation made is that even though women were not banned or prohibited from being proactive and insisting on working and learning with men, there was an element of self-exclusion which can be attributed to the different ways in which men and women are socialised in African communities. Due to socialisation and the deeply entrenched patriarchal values women tend to accept the view that their duties are automatically 'domestic like'. This socialisation came to bear in the experiences and behaviours of female participants in the EPWPs studied in the current study.

On the other hand, most men interviewed told a story completely different to the experience of women cited above. They reported a story of learning on site and, therefore, complementing the skills they had received during the two-weeks formal training. Most men interviewed said that even though on-the-job training was not compulsory, they were indeed learning a lot from the contractors on site. They said they learned more from contractors on site than from the two-weeks training they received. In fact, while a woman would come in the morning and hang around waiting for work (of clearing construction rubble) a man would come in, choose a contractor to 'shadow' or work with for the day, ranging from plumbers to dry-wall specialists or electricians, and they would spend the whole day or week with that person and learn on site. They also claimed that they often tried a trade and based on whether they liked it, chose to either continue or try another

one. One participant who trained as a bricklayer said *"I can now perform basic electrician duties…"* (Sandile, 28 years, male, 23/11/2018) while another said*, "I also trained as a bricklayer but I can now do plumbing, the contractors on site have taught me a lot of plumbing related tasks… I can even replace copper pipes now*…" (Karabo, 23, male, 23/11/2018)

It appears as though there was a form of 'brotherhood' among men and contractors, and that there was an unspoken 'rule' or expectation that men performed the technical duties while women kept the site tidy – a form of patriarchy that the researcher had not expected to find at any EPWP site. It is imperative to highlight in this discussion of gender disparity that of the ten current EPWP participants, four had previously worked on other EPWP infrastructure projects. Two of the four, one a woman and the other a man worked at the construction of the Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital, in 2012. The third a man had worked in two past EPWP infrastructure projects including the 2014 renovation of the Charlotte Maxeke hospital as well as the Johannesburg Roads Agency's M1 expansion project. The fourth, a woman, also formed part of the EPWP participants who took part in the 2014 renovation of the hospital and had battled to find employment elsewhere until she was 'rescued' from four years of unemployment by the current Charlotte Maxeke hospital project.

The two who worked at the construction of the Nelson Mandela Children Hospital claimed that they received training in scaffolding, brick laying and plastering but the woman reported that her onsite duties then were not dissimilar to her current onsite duties (limited to keeping the site tidy and occasionally 'helping' the contractors by handing them tools). The other woman who worked at the 2014 Charlotte Maxeke Hospital renovation project reported the same – highlighting similarities of the roles women played and continued to play in these two different project sites.

Of the two women, one of them reported that she had stayed at home, unemployed, for four years after completing the project until she was 'rescued' by the Charlotte Maxeke project which was operating as at the time of this research. The other also had been unemployed for two years after the construction of the Nelson Mandela Children's hospital was completed. Seemingly, men did not battle to find employment as women cited in the foregoing did. Almost the same applied to the other man who worked at the construction of the Nelson Mandela Children's hospital. He too was able to move to another EPWP project in the Environmental Sector for three months in 2015 unlike his women counterparts who had to wait to be 'saved' by the current EPWP project. After working at the two EPWP projects, the second male was further advantaged by the EPWP bursary

he was awarded to complete a one-year course in occupational health and safety for which he received a certificate.

In short, the EPWP, as stated above, ensures that women and the youth are prioritised in employment. In the Gauteng, as well as at a National level, the programme has succeeded and, in some instances, exceeded its women and youth targets as Kitchin's (2012) study found. However, having observed different experiences of women and men onsite, one wonders if the EPWP should boast prioritising women light of the fact that the women who work on these infrastructure projects are not fully-integrated into the team and do not get the same learning experience as men. One also wonders what chance these women have of getting a similar job elsewhere in the labour market after they exit the EPWP if their skills are not being enhanced by participating in the projects. Rudimentary tasks such as removing rubble from the project sites are not the kinds that can transfer marketable skills needed in South Africa's mainstream economy.

5.6 EPWP and Training

Training was intended to be a crucial component of the EPWP when this programme was initially conceptualised and subsequently rolled-out in 2004. As scholars have found, the skills training offered in public works projects is insufficient and not likely to have a positive impact in so far as improving the employability of participants is concerned. McCord (2004) argues that while public works present some work opportunities and some salary for poor households and may even provide some training, the training offered is not sufficient to set apart those who participated in public works projects from other people in the labour market who did not receive this training.

Brynard (2011:74) also argues that the EPWP has not succeeded in offering training that can equip workers with skills that would enable them to take advantage of meaningful employment opportunities in future. Meth (2011:17) writes that "because job opportunities in infrastructure projects last between four and six months, with the result that participants are entitled only to 8-12 days of paid formal training, a period in which not much can be accomplished, the EPWP team struck an agreement with the Department of Labour to create a generic 10-14 day training course. The training course would consist of accredited unit standards on:

- General Life skills,

- Awareness of HIV and AIDS
- Labour markets and the world of work." (DPW, 2004:9).

At the current Charlottle Maxeke EPWP, the ten EPWP participants were, in May 2018, sent on a two-week training programme which offered training in two trades, namely: bricklaying and plumbing. Five of the ten were trained as bricklayers while the other five received training in plumbing. The two-weeks training comprised of one week of theory and one week of practice. The respondents who were interviewed from the project that was operating (referred to as 'current project' throughout this report) at the time of this research, did not consider the two weeks formal training they had received prior to joining the project as adequate. They measured the usefulness of this training in respect of its value in enhancing their future employability.

It is apparent that formal training in the EPWP is short-term in nature, a finding made by several scholars such as McCord (2005b). While scholars such as McCord (2005b) and Meth (2011) found EPWP formal training to be generic, the current study found that current EPWP participants and former participants who received training, received construction-related training, not generic life skills.

Most current project participants interviewed were disappointed that they underwent training in May but were, during the time of interviews in October and November 2018, yet to receive certification for the training. Some of them felt that they would stand a better chance of getting a job with a certificate in hand instead of merely claiming that they took part in a training programme offered as part of the EPWP work opportunity. This is a direct contradiction to what a DID official interviewed by Kitchin's (2012) claimed:

> …there are several areas of success regarding training. In some cases, beneficiaries are skilled but they do not have proof of their skills. The training associated with the EPWP gives them that. The training therefore augments past experience with a piece of paper… (Kitchin, 2012:38)

Another contradiction worth mentioning is that the DID representative interviewed in this study admits that training previously offered by the programme was not well conceptualised and did not yield the desired outcomes of enabling former project participants to get work elsewhere or to become employable once they exited the programme. As a result, the Department of Public Works was looking at gradually phasing out training so that EPWP focusses primarily on providing short-term work opportunities aimed at eradicating poverty.

This is a contradiction to what was said by the official interviewed by Kitchin (2012) who claimed that training had been successful, signalling a lack of collaboration and communication among the public works authorities.

Longer-term training programmes, outside the projects, such as the Accelerated Artisan Programme have been developed to offer one to two-year long training programmes. The objective of such programmes is to impart the skills that would enable participants to gain meaningful qualifications that would enhance their employability. This programme is a confirmation that the training currently offered by the EPWP has not yielded desired outcome of enabling participants to get jobs elsewhere in the labour market once they exit the programme.

5.7 Analysis of the uselessness of training provided by the infrastructure sector in enabling participants to get jobs in the future - Does EPWP have an impact on youth unemployment in the Gauteng Province?

Contrary to the expectations attached to the EPWP policy rhetoric, the former EPWP participants interviewed in the study argued that the experience they gained while working on past EPWP projects did not enable them to get jobs elsewhere in the labour market after exiting the programme. This explains why some of them had to wait to be reemployed by the EPWP. One participant claimed she had stayed at home for four years after working on the previous Charlotte Maxeke hospital renovations in 2014 before getting the current (Charlotte Maxeke Hospital) work opportunity. These claims and this study's findings, therefore, confirm both McCord (2005b) and Samson's (2007) findings about the inability of participants to find jobs after they exit the programme. Another important finding of the current study is that EPWP employment tends to "recycle" unemployed poor people. This makes the reporting on the work opportunities created by EPWPs problematic. In fact, some of the figures cited consist of people who are repeatedly employed, a problem identified by Moyo (2013) in the Modimola EPWP. Employment figures in the EPWP tend to count people employed more than once in these projects.

McCord (2005b:576) argues that due to the structural nature of South Africa's unemployment, very few workers have, in fact, succeeded in securing other employment after exiting the EPWP's, and that some EPWPs such as Working for Water and Working for Wetlands keep

workers on for multiple years rather than returning them to unemployment. McCord (2004b:12) cited in Samson (2007:246) concludes that:

> as the training component of the EPWP is so limited, wages so low, and employment so brief, while EPWP employment may temporarily decrease the depths of poverty experienced, it will have little impact on the number of people living below the poverty line, unemployment or future labour market participation (McCord, 2004b:12).

Ndoto and Macun (2005:31) surveyed the participants in the Working for Wetlands programme and found that the programme's training initiative was not sufficient in equipping its participants with useful skills. They concluded that the programme did improve people's incomes while they remained employed by the projects and removed some restrictions in accessing education and better nutrition but did not succeed in improving the workers skills.

Other previous EPWP participants who also worked at other EPWP projects including the Nelson Mandela Children's hospital and were not employed at the current Charlotte Maxeke mental patients ward project reported that working on EPWP project did not help them get similar jobs elsewhere in the labour market. Their view aligned to that of their colleagues who reported being unemployed for two and four years after being employed at previous EPWP projects. One former participant reported:

> *I am now employed in the retail sector, I had to take the job I could find…the EPWP experience did not set me apart from other people who are looking for construction jobs out there…* (Precious, 29 years, woman 23/11/2018)

Based on studies conducted by McCord (2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b), Samson (2007), Ndoto and Macun (2005), among other scholars, and based on the empirical data collected for this study, the researcher concludes as follows. First, even though the infrastructure sector of the EPWP strives and contributes towards making work opportunities available for the youth in the Gauteng Province, the duration of training and the limited skills provided by the programme do not transfer marketable skills to them. Second, womens' experiences in the infrastructure sector will continue to differ significantly if the status quo persists, (i.e., women are not given responsibilities through which they can gain technical skills in the EPWPs as was the case in the Charlotte Maxeke project).

Lastly, as per the researcher's investigation there is a disconnect between the training provided in the EPWP and the skills needed in the macro economy in Gauteng and in South Africa. Since the 1970s, there have been structural shifts in South Africa's economy. These shifts have resulted in an increase in the demand for people with intermediate or advanced skills and a concomitant decrease in the demand for people with low or no skills. This has resulted in what scholars call a

“skills deficit” or a “skills gap”, a factor that has been identified as the major culprit for South Africa’s staggering levels of youth unemployment by neo-liberal scholars. So, if the recipe of training given to participants of the EPWPs includes short courses on plumbing and bricklaying this means that there is a dissonance between this kind of training and the nature of the problem addressed.

In this chapter, I have analysed research findings derived from a survey of 15 current and former EPWP participants, interviews with Department of Infrastructure Development officials, as well as the Charlottle Maxeke Hospital project contractors. In its analytical approach this chapter has compared and contrasted this study’s findings with findings by prominent scholars who have made extensive contributions to existing literature on the Expanded Public Works Programme.

6 CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents conclusions of this study. The objective of this study was to explore the usefulness of training provided by the infrastructure sector of Government's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in enabling its participants, particularly the youth, to succeed in gaining employment in the labour market post EPWP participation. The study explored and discussed the duration of both formal and on-the-job training, the type of skills provided by the training and the experience acquired from being employed in these projects. The duration and type of skills provided were, therefore, applied as criteria to examine the usefulness of training provided in enabling EPWP participants to succeed in establishing foothold in the labour market post programme participation.

The conclusions presented combine the findings of the literature reviewed and the empirical findings of the current study which were derived through in-depth interviews with current and former EPWP participants, representatives from the Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Department (which is the custodian of the EPWP in the Gauteng Province), and the contractors responsible for the implementation of the current Charlotte Maxeke Mental Patients Ward project.

Contrary to political rhetoric, documented policy expectations and some existing EPWP conceptual frameworks which claim that EPWP employment will improve participants' skills and thus improve their subsequent employability in the labour market, this study found that training provided by the infrastructure sector of the EPWP is not useful in enabling EPWP participants to get employment in the labour market post programme participation. This is because the training offered is not effective in terms of the number of days and quality. Hence, it is unlikely to have a positive impact on the labour market performance of participants post programme participation. As McCord (2005b: 573) puts it,

> …the training given to the mass of workers participating in the EPWP – and specifically in the infrastructure sector – will not be sufficient for workers to acquire the skills in demand in the South African labour market, or specifically to become citizens (McCord, 2005b:573).

McCord is correct in her observation. The two days allocated for training for each month worked is insufficient to produce qualified artisans. Artisanal training apprenticeship takes five years in South Africa. The current study concurs with Thwala's (2011) view that the EPWPs have the potential to create short term employment opportunities, especially for the youth, but this employment does little to enhance their long-term labour market prospects. Despite having gone through the experiential and training components of the public works, EPWP graduates struggle

to find employment post programme participation. Some stay for a long time looking for jobs while others end up rejoining other EPWPs.

This chapter is divided into three components: a brief summary of key findings of the study, recommendations and opportunities for further inquiry into gender disparity within the infrastructure sector of the EPWP in the Gauteng Province.

6.1 A brief summary of findings

In line with the literature review which presents various critiques of the usefulness of training provided by the EPWP in improving the subsequent employability of participants once they exit these programmes. This study confirms the finding by several scholars (see, for example, McCord, 2005; Moyo, 2013) that EPWP training does not differentiate EPWP participants from other job seekers in the labour market who did not receive any training.

6.1.1 EPWP and Training

The key finding of this study is that both the formal two-weeks and on-the-job training provided by the infrastructure sector of the EPWP in the Gauteng Province does not necessarily enable young people previously employed by the programme to gain employment outside the EPWP once they exit the programme. Therefore, the study concludes that even though the EPWP contributes to poverty alleviation by providing millions of poor and low or unskilled opportunities to an earn an income, as currently designed, the training provided will not help equip the poor with the skills to find work in the formal labour market. This could be the reason why the EPWPs reemploy former participants to avoid sending them back to unemployment and poverty.

6.1.2 The Age Debate – work opportunities created and the number of young people benefitting

Another key finding of this study is that youth are indeed prioritised in recruitment of labour for infrastructure projects in the Gauteng Province. This is exemplified by the increasing number of youth participation from 41%, during the first phase (2004-2009) to 50% during the second phase (2009 – 2014) and 46% during the third phase (2014-2019) according to National Department of Public Works data. The EPWP does, therefore, make a concerted effort to address poverty and youth unemployment in the Gauteng province.

The study also found that youth employed in the EPWPs do not possess a grade 12 certificate. This validates Banerjee et al.'s (2008) view that the major driver of youth unemployment, particularly in the Gauteng Province, is South Africa's large structural unemployment, with the available jobs largely benefiting skilled workers.

6.1.3 **Gender Disparity Undertones**

This study found that men and women employed at the current Charlotte Maxeke EPWP reported varying experiences in working on the same project. Men benefited more, as far as skills transfer is concerned, from the project than their women counterparts. Men reported that they learned new skills on site and that the skills acquired complemented those they received during two weeks of formal training. Conversely, women reported performing 'household-like' chores such as cleaning rubble on site. They reported that the tasks and responsibilities they performed did not transfer marketable skills to them.

As mentioned in Chapter one, low levels of education is one of the main contributors to high rates of unemployment among young people in South Africa and need to be tackled at a national level. This justifies the recommendation made below about the need to address dynamics at a macro level. Although the gender disparity challenge is also macro in nature, the intervention can start at an individual level and at a project level. The recommendations made below are, therefore, both macro and micro in nature.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 **Youth participation in EPWP, training and education**

The literature reviewed in the present study indicates that some of the main drivers of youth unemployment include low education attainment and the decreased demand for low/unskilled workers in the labour market. While the EPWPs, especially the infrastructure sector, create millions of job opportunities for the poor and unskilled, they cannot sustain employment creation in the long term. At some point the infrastructure backlog, that has enabled the infrastructure sector to create jobs will be closed and with solid infrastructure in place, this sector will cease to be the main contributor to employment creation within the EPWP. Moreover, South Africa does

not exist in a vacuum. Technological advances that are being experienced elsewhere in the world will also continue to have an impact on the number of jobs the economy produces. The fact that South Africa's economic sectors such as mining and manufacturing have, over the recent years, replaced a large pool of semi-skilled workers with machines proves that mechanisation is already having a negative impact on the quantity of jobs available in the macro economy.

On the back of the inevitable infrastructure sector's diminishing ability to create jobs and the looming fourth industrial revolution, it is recommended that the South African government should start fixing its education system. It can do so by providing affordable quality education that will produce educated young people capable of taking advantage of opportunities that would be provided by the fourth industrial revolution. A reliance on short-term employment provided by the EPWP cannot guarantee a bright future for South Africa's youth in a rapidly changing world.

In addition to improving the quality of education, entrepreneurship should be introduced as a subject in schools. Entrepreneurship should also be encouraged and made available as a course for those who study at technical and vocational education training colleges. The target should be particularly the youth who vocalise a desire to start their own business instead of waiting to be absorbed by the labour market upon completing their artisanal trades. The duration of training currently provided by EPWP should be increased and the course content enhanced and accredited to better enable EPWP participants to be more successful in the labour market.

In conclusion, EPWP works as a short-term poverty reduction initiative but it will not solve South Africa's high youth unemployment rates in future. In fact, labour intensive methods of construction cannot be relied upon as an employment creation mechanism in a world which is rapidly gravitating towards a digital plane.

6.2.2 **Gender Disparity Undertones**

The challenge of gender disparity undertones found in project sites is one that is not easy to overcome since gender stereotypes and the role that women are expected to play in society are deeply entrenched. Women suffer from an element of self-exclusion and self-denigration. Nevertheless, women can be encouraged, at a project level, to take the lead and 'put themselves out there' the same way that their male counterparts do. Women who take part in infrastructure sector EPWP should also challenge themselves on site, every day, and instead of keeping the

site tidy, push themselves to perform technical duties and, thus learn on site by performing the roles and responsibilities allocated to men and/or that men allocate to themselves.

6.3 Conclusions and recommendations – Opportunities for further enquiry

This study presents other opportunities for further enquiry into the EPWP. Experiences on the infrastructure sector of EPWPs in South Africa differ according to one's gender. Since women participants in the current Charlotte Maxeke Maxeke Hospital EPWP and former EPWP participants reported varying onsite experiences from their male counterparts, it stands to reason that if both the current and former female participants reported similar experiences from different infrastructure sector EPWPs as far as gender disparity is concerned then there is a need to conduct more studies with a sole focus on female participants' experiences of working in infrastructure sector EPWPs.

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8 APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet: Case Study of the Expanded Public Works Infrastructure Project in Gauteng

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Auralia Madlala, a Masters student in Development Studies at Wits University in Johannesburg. I am, as part of my studies, conducting research on the impact of the Expanded Public Works Programme, particularly the infrastructure sector, on youth unemployment in Gauteng.

As part of this project I would like to invite you to take part in an interview. The interview will discuss your past and or current participation and experience on the project. The interview will take about 45 minutes of your time and will be conducted in a location chosen by you. Please also note that I may come back to you after the interview to clarify information. With your permission, I would also like to record the interview using a digital device.

You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question that you might not be comfortable with. The interview will be confidential and anonymous. I will, therefore, not be asking for your name or any identifying information, and the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will use a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation, in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort during the interview, we will stop the interview or resume at another time that is convenient for you.

If you have any questions before or after this study, please feel free to contact me on the details listed below. If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact my supervisor, his details are provided below.

Yours sincerely,

Auralia Madlala
071 470 7145

Supervisor, Dr Rajohane Matshedisho
rajohane.matshedisho@wits.ac.za
Tel: 011 717 4434

8.2 Appendix 2: Informed consent letter to participants

Date: _____

I, _____ hereby confirm that I have been briefed to my full satisfaction about the proposed study and all questions that I have asked have been answered fully and satisfactorily. This letter serves as my consent to participate in this study and I have been informed that I may cancel my participation in this study at any stage.

I consent that the research findings produced from this study may be distributed or made available to the public in whatever form deemed appropriate, provided that none of my personal details are included.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. My contact details are:

Tel number: 0714707145, and

Email address: 1561135@students.wits.ac.za

Thank you for taking your time to consider this request.

_____ _____

Participant / Authorised representative Date

_____ _____

Researcher: Auralia Madlala Date

8.3 Appendix 3: Guideline questions for DID officials

1. The EPWP came into being in 2004 as a means to eradicate poverty by creating one million labour intensive jobs – would you say you have been successful in achieving this?
2. Are one million jobs enough considering the amount of capital (R100 billion) injected into the EPWP
3. Another objective of the EPWP was to provide its participants with training that would make them employable in future. Would you say the programme has delivered on this?
4. Of the one million programme participants, how many received training. Is there a record on file?
5. Let's now focus on the infrastructure sector, which created most jobs (750 000) and which received a substantial portion of the capital (R45 billion) allocated for the programme – would you say 750 000 jobs were enough considering that R45 billion was invested in this sector?
6. In Gauteng, how many infrastructure projects were created? Where?
7. Is there a record of the number of young people (those 35 years and younger) employed by the project?
8. How were the project participants chosen?
9. Is there a record of the number of people who managed to get employment as a result of having participated and acquired skills from the project?
10. It has been argued that the EPWP were created as Government's way of transferring cash to the poorest of the poor and to make sure that the poor do not revolt. What are your views on this?
11. Are community works programme an extension of EPWP?

8.4 Appendix 3: Guideline questions for contractors

1. Please give me some background of the project
2. What does the project entail?
3. When did it start?
4. When will it end?
5. How many people work here?
6. Are there targets given by DID in terns of who to hire?
7. What are the targets?
8. Do you adhere to them?
9. Stats of men, women and young people who work there
10. What is the selection criteria used?
11. Have you been involved in other EPWP projects, which ones, when?
12. Who is responsible for giving training?
13. Who gets trained?
14. Why do people get trained?
15. How does it work, when do people attend it, who does their jobs while they are in training?
16. What sort of training is given?
17. How long is the training? Is it adequate?
18. Do people get certificate after attending training

Appendix 4: Guideline questions for EPWP participants

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Where are you from?
4. Where do you live?
5. What is your highest level of education?
6. When were you employed by the EPWP?
7. By how long were you employed?
8. Were you employed prior to joining the project?
9. How and by whom were you employed?
10. What were your day to day duties at work?
11. How much were you remunerated?
12. Do you feel that was sufficient? Why? Why not?
13. When and how did you hear about the EPWP? In which EPWP were you employed?
14. Did you receive any training while you were on the job?
15. What sort of training did you receive?
16. Were you promised training? Did you want it?
17. How did receiving training benefit you?
18. Are you currently employed? By whom? Do you believe your current employment has anything to do with you having worked in the EPWP?

19. Did the training you receive help get your current work?
20. Do you believe that the training or skills you received while working on the project will help you get another job?
21. Do you believe the training you've received as a result of having worked in the EPWP set you apart from those who did not receive training in the labour market?
22. Do you have a certificate?
23. Is there anything else you'd like to add?