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The employability of the youth attending the Technical and Vocational Education and Training in South Africa

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The Thesis is presented in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Management (in the field of Management & Governance) to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative	**ASGISA**
Council on Higher Education	**CHE**
Department of Higher Education and Training	**DHET**
Department of Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation	**DPME**
Further Education and Training	**FET**
General Academic Education	**GAE**
Growth, Employment, and Redistribution Policy	**GEAR**
Historically Black Institutions	**HBIs**
Historically White Institutions	**HWIs**
National Development Plan	**NDP**
National Planning Commission	**NPC**
National Certificate: Vocational	**NCV**
National Student Financial Aid Scheme	**NSFAS**
National Youth Policy	**NYP**
Not in Employment, Education, or Training	**NEET**
Quarterly Labour Force Survey	**QLFS**
Quality Council for Trade and Occupations	**QCTO**
Reconstruction and Development Programme	**RDP**
Sector Education and Training Authorities	**SETAs**
Technical and Vocational Education and Training	**TVET**
Vocational Education and Training	**VET**
Work-integrated Learning	**WIL**

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Lastly, I would like to sincerely thank the participants who took part in the in-depth interviews, as their perspectives and insightful comments greatly enhanced the research findings. This thesis would not have been feasible without their assistance.

DECLARATION

I, Vuyane Masiza, declare that this is my independent work. It is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master's of Management by me to the Faculty of Commerce, Law, and Management, at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. It has never been submitted for a degree at this institution or any other university.

Name: **Vuyane Masiza**

Signature: 

Date: **15 April 2025**

ABSTRACT

In South Africa, the issue of youth unemployment poses a major challenge, as a large proportion of young people struggle to find jobs. Subsequently, graduate unemployment in South Africa is a significant issue, with rates often exceeding the national average unemployment rate. It's a known issue that many TVET graduates find themselves in jobs that do not match their qualifications. This study aims to add to existing literature on youth unemployment, particularly on TVET graduate unemployment in South Africa. A primary objective of the study is to examine the alignment between the curricula offered at a selected TVET institution in Tshwane and the skills demanded by the labour market in that city, highlighting the challenges posed by a skills mismatch.

The study employed a qualitative method rooted in a thematic analysis approach to provide insights into how TVET Colleges can enhance their programs and better prepare students for the workforce. Key informant in-depth interviews, and document analysis were used to collect data. The location of industries determines employability; in Tshwane, the majority of TVET graduates hold employment in the public sector and participate in WIL practicals in both the public and private sectors. The study identified key factors influencing employability, such as practical training opportunities, industry partnerships, and the relevance of the technical programs. The study discovered that industry-college collaboration and partnerships are insufficient and should be improved, and focus on improving continuous processes to collect feedback from companies on the performance of TVET graduates during their WBL experience. It is recommended that there must be active and regular engagements of employers in the training process to work on inputs on program design and training content. The DHET, SETAs, and TVETs must continue working together on strengthening collaboration, so the industry needs to match the present demands.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Education is mostly seen as a powerful tool contributing to poverty alleviation in South Africa through income generation and skill development. In agreement, education is commonly viewed as a critical policy instrument to fight against poverty. It can assist people in obtaining better employment that enhances their labour wages and thus contributes to improving their lives (Cuza et al., 2012). The South African education system is being pushed to become a more equal force in the labour market and in general (Branson et al., 2012). It is commonly believed that to guarantee that graduates have the abilities and information required to succeed in their employment, both education and the labour market are essential. This is why educational institutions should better assess the ever-changing skills needs of industries to keep their curricula relevant.

There are several problems facing South Africa's education sector, including unemployed youth TVET graduates, skills gaps among the youth, and the employability of the same generation (Mseleku, 2022; Habiyaremye et al., 2022). It is believed that boosting the self-esteem of students will contribute to many positive outcomes and benefits that will change the status of TVETs and their graduates, the skills they acquire, their prospects, and ultimately their employability (Tyatya, 2023). The importance of skills development in South Africa is often undervalued (Akoojee et al., 2005). However, if more students acquired practical and vocational skills through trade-based training, they would be better positioned to establish their businesses, therefore contributing meaningfully to economic growth and job creation. Through the creation of creative and adaptable technical and vocational curricula and skills programmes, the National Development Plan (NDP 2030) views the South African public Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system as a major contributor to fostering youth employment, entrepreneurship, and job-creation opportunities (Makole, 2023).

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) reported in 2024 that the unemployment rate of youth aged between 15-34 was recorded at 45%–46% (Stats SA, 2024). In addition to that, about 3.5 million to 3.8 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 not in education, employment, or training—a 34%–37% NEET rate for this group—South Africa's NEET rate (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) is still critical in 2025 (United Nations Development Programmeme,

2023). *Table 4* (p. 93) shows the Broad Unemployment Rate by Field of Study from 2015:Q1 to 2023:Q1 (p. 92), comparing the youth unemployment rates from the previous years, while *Table 5* (p. 93) shows that a great percentage of unemployed graduates are from TVET Colleges compared to traditional universities between 2015, 2019, and 2023. There is a constant increase in the recorded youth unemployment rates. Furthermore, unemployment is one of the biggest unsolved problems that developing countries like South Africa face. The primary cause of South Africa's high unemployment rate is a lack of information and skills required for the labour market (Matyana & Thusi, 2023). Recently, between Q1 and Q2, 2024, the official unemployment rate in South Africa increased by 0.6 percentage points, to 33.5%.

The above data indicates a worsening problem in South Africa, and the patterns over last few years cannot be addressed without mentioning the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic (Aborode et al. 2020; Davy et al. 2021). Movement restrictions imposed during COVID-19 lockdowns reduced economic activities, exacerbating South Africa's already severe graduate unemployment challenges (Davy et al. 2021). COVID-19 impacted almost every economic sector in one way or another. For example, the education and skills sector was severely hit by movement restrictions, forcing unemployed graduates to face challenges of job hunting disruptions, lack of opportunities for internships, work experience, and shifts to remote work, and forcing many industries to close. South Africa continued to struggle with the economic consequences of COVID-19, and as a result, unemployment is still increasing (Posel et al., 2021). And the ongoing impact and aftermath of COVID-19 is being experienced worldwide (Rule et al., 2025).

According to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Macroeconomic Statistics Bulletin, in 2020, SADC regional GDP growth fell to 4.8%, down from 2.1% in 2019. While other SADC member nations saw contractions, Malawi and Tanzania were exceptions and experienced growth rates of no more than 5%. South Africa's GDP growth rate also fell to 2.0% in 2022, from 4.9% in 2021. Over the past 15 years, SADC's global trade share has been decreasing. However, the reduction implies low economic development (Behar & Edwards, 2011). Throughout the last ten years, the South African economy has experienced unimpressive growth rates (The World Bank 2022a). The year 2013 saw a 2.5% increase in the nation's GDP at real prices increase to 2.5%, up from 2.4% in 2012. The GDP subsequently decreased from 1.4% in 2014 to 0.7% in 2016. Economic growth dropped to -6.3% in 2020 before bouncing back to 4.9% in 2021 (The World Bank 2022a). Unemployment among recent graduates is also seen as a sign of underlying economic matter. In South Africa, most working individuals have

completed or have some level of secondary education (MacGinty, 2024), and approximately 10% of the workforce has a degree (Khuluvhe & Ganyaupfu, 2022). Despite substantial growth in graduate unemployment and the lack of skills required for the labour market, it is worth noting that the government, private sector, and civil society are among the stakeholders who have paid attention to graduate unemployment (Gwala et al., 2023). Graduate unemployment is a constituent of both general unemployment and youth unemployment.

A mismatch of skills in the labour market can stem from both the demand and supply sides. On the demand side, industries may have unique skill requirements that are not met by available job searchers, resulting in job vacancies going unfilled and difficulty in locating suitable candidates, and on the supply side, graduates may lack the required skills or training to fulfil the demands of the job market, resulting in unemployment. This study will assess the phenomenon of scarce skills from both sides of the labour market. Addressing the issue of mismatch of skills requires collaboration between TVET colleges, industries, and government and its agencies to ensure that skills development programmes align with the industry needs and job opportunities.

The lack of industry partnerships with TVET colleges has been argued to be one of the leading challenges to the whole system (Makgato & Moila, 2019). What is happening with unemployed graduates seems to be the opposite of the purpose of the Skills Development Act, of 1998, which is said to expand the knowledge and competencies of the labour force to improve productivity and employment. How practical is the Skills Development Act in Tshwane TVET Colleges, could be the question. Meanwhile, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) are at the forefront of South Africa's skills debate (Balwanz & Ngcwangu, 2016).

Overwhelmingly, more students are interested in enrolling in South African universities than in TVET colleges because they perceive them as more desirable post-secondary education options (Makola et al., 2023). However, efforts being made to address these challenges and improve the overall quality of the TVET education system in South Africa may not be good enough. Throughout the industry, there are significant obstacles that the 50 public TVET colleges in South Africa must overcome as management structures (Sithole et al., 2022). This research study evaluated how best TVET graduates can meet the employment needs of the industries through their skills.

A large number of studies have been conducted that focused on the role of TVET colleges in South Africa, complexities in the TVET system, curriculum challenges, TVET performance

challenges, TVET comparative studies, and factors that affect teaching and learning. Aspects that have little research are on TVET skill sets, overall challenges, employability of TVET graduates, and prospects of the TVET College graduates in South Africa, and this study will be focusing specifically on ONE (1) TVET College in Tshwane.

The TVET College sector is amongst the sectors that have so much potential to contribute to the economy of the country by producing a skilled workforce that meets the demands of various industries. TVET graduates need to acquire a combination of core and transferable abilities to get a competitive edge over workers who are already employed in the business and to adapt to the ongoing changes in the labour market.

1.2 Problem statement

In South Africa, a growing percentage of young people without jobs are graduates of universities and colleges. Across all of the BRICS, South Africa continues to have the highest rates of youth unemployment and prolonged unemployment rates compared to its BRICS counterparts - Brazil, Russia, India, and China (Mncayi, 2016). *Table 5* (p. 94) consecutively shows that a great percentage of unemployed graduates is from TVET Colleges compared to traditional universities between 2015, 2019, and 2023. Given that graduate unemployment is one of South Africa's growing concern, it is important to recognise the different aspects of these challenges. First, to gain a better knowledge of its nature; second, to determine how well existing policies can handle the issue; and lastly, as a foundation for the creation of evidence-based graduate employment regulations. A great deal of work has been done to concentrate TVET Colleges in South Africa (SA) on challenges, curricula, and the system overall. Unfortunately, not much research has been conducted on the problems with scarce skills, graduate employability, difficulties, and opportunities in Tshwane TVET colleges, particularly in recent years. This includes how and where students are put, how they are prepared (job-ready), how often they are monitored, and whether or not they are eventually placed in employment (Raphotle, 2023).

Like many other nations worldwide, South Africa struggles with the issue of youth unemployment. Statistics SA shows the latest stats of 32,9% of the unemployment rate, indicating almost half of the youth is unemployed (Stats SA, 2024). This research study aims to explore youth employability in South Africa, where the scarce skills, challenges, and prospects of TVET graduates will be evaluated, focusing on one TVET college in Tshwane. As a result, the findings that will be presented in the research report will contribute to the possible solutions

to matters around TVET graduate employability, which will also assist key industry players in areas to look at to match the industry needs to TVET graduate skills.

Despite South Africa's significant investment in TVET Colleges as a solution to combat youth unemployment, graduate employability outcomes have remained consistently low. Existing research highlights South Africa's high youth unemployment rate; nevertheless, there is limited empirical attention on how skills mismatches and weak industrial linkages affect the employability of TVET graduates. While TVET institutions are intended to provide young people with job-ready skills, studies show that many graduates have qualifications that do not meet contemporary labour market demands, resulting in a mismatch between training outcomes and employer expectations. Furthermore, limited collaboration between TVET Colleges and industry partners reduces the potential to affect employability.

1.3 Justification of the study

The youth of South Africa are most negatively affected by the country's exceptionally high unemployment rates (MacGinty, 2024). Despite the generally favourable economic prospects for persons with higher education, TVET graduate unemployment seems to be on the rise. The purpose of this study is to explore youth employability in South Africa, where the scarce skills, challenges, and prospects of the TVET graduates will be evaluated, focusing on one TVET college in the city of Tshwane. Looking at the unemployment rate by field of study in *Table 3 (p. 91)* and the scarce skills list/occupations in high demand, it is quite evident that there is a correlation. The unemployment rate by field of study shows that (a). Hospitality and Tourism, (b). Technology and (c). Administration are amongst the top fields with the highest unemployment rate. On the other hand, taking a look at the scarce skills list/occupations in high demand. Unemployment rates have sharply increased in the majority of study fields, with the least affected being the health and education sectors.

Many TVET College graduates have reportedly had difficulty finding employment. This research study focuses mainly on TVET college in the City of Tshwane on challenges about scarce skills, graduate employability, challenges, and prospects. The high incidence of unemployment among TVET graduates in Tshwane, a city home to numerous companies and industries, is what influenced the conceptualisation of this research study. The number of young people enrolled in tertiary education, that is, traditional universities and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVETs) has significantly increased in recent years, and this trend is predicted to continue (Graham et al., 2019).

When these problems arise, society looks to the government to take the lead (Hartley and Zhang, 2017). This highlights graduate unemployment from a societal standpoint. Policy is defined as the organisation's declared standing point on internal or external matters. It serves as a written foundation for an organisation's activities and informs laws, rules, and the document that governs the organisation (Republic of South Africa 2020). As expected, different national government policies on youth and graduate unemployment exist in several African nations (Gwala et al., 2023). There is evidence, meanwhile, that these policies are ineffective at bridging the gaps between the number of desired jobs and the number of available jobs, especially for youth (International Labour Organization, 2020). The study seeks to assess if there is a discrepancy between the skills industries are looking for, the type of training TVETs are offering to students, and the challenges, including employability as well as prospects.

Understanding the employability of TVET graduates is crucial to promoting economic progress in South Africa. By identifying the skills in demand in the labour market, this research can help policymakers and TVET Colleges better align training programmes with industry demands, resulting in a more skilled workforce that can fuel economic growth. This study will shed light on the current skill gaps between what TVET programmes provide and what businesses want. This knowledge is critical for enhancing curriculum design and ensuring that graduates have the skills needed to excel in their respective fields. Given South Africa's high young unemployment rate, analysing the employability of TVET graduates can reveal significant guidelines for lowering unemployment. This study could assist graduates in finding jobs by identifying employment challenges and recommending improvement measures.

Most significantly, the results of this study have the potential to impact South African educational reform and policy. Policymakers seeking to enhance vocational education and training systems can use this report as a reference by showcasing successful workforce transitions and best practices for TVET graduates. The significance of lifelong learning and ongoing professional development for TVET graduates can also be emphasised by this study. Addressing this element will eventually improve employability by promoting an upskilling culture that fits changing industry demands. To guarantee that underrepresented groups have equal access to high-quality training and employment prospects, this study can promote more inclusive and equitable policies within TVET programmes. To advance social justice and economic equality in South Africa, this is crucial. Finally, this study can add to the global conversation on vocational education by concentrating on the unique environment of South Africa's TVET industry. Sharing

insights and best practices could benefit other regions facing similar challenges and enhance international collaboration in vocational training initiatives.

1.4 Research objectives

While the purpose of this research study is to explore and evaluate the TVET graduates' employability skills and the skills demanded by industries in Tshwane, as well as to zoom into the challenges and prospects, this research study further seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the current technical and vocational education demanded by industries in Tshwane,
2. To assess how effective training programmes are at Tshwane TVET College,
3. To evaluate the challenges faced by TVET graduates in securing and maintaining employment,
4. To explore how industries perceive the skills and competencies of TVET graduates compared to graduates from other higher learning institutions,
5. To provide plausible recommendations for policy change on skills development, integrated career development, and promoting the employment of TVET graduates.

1.5 Research question

The primary research question is, how does Tshwane TVET College and its related industries in Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality influence the employability of TVET graduates?

Below are the sub-questions:

1. What are the current employability skills demanded by industries?

2. How effective are the TVET programmes in preparing students for employment in their respective fields?

3. How do industries perceive the skills and competencies and prospects of TVET graduates compared to graduates from other higher learning institutions?

4. What are the challenges and prospects for career advancement and professional growth for TVET graduates in the current and future job market?

5. What plausible recommendations can be made for policy change?

1.6 Structural outline of the thesis

The research report study is organised as follows;

Chapter 1: Introduction – This chapter presents the background, problem statement, justification, and significance of the study, research objectives, research questions, structural outline of the thesis will be discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature review – this chapter covers relevant literature of the phenomenon being investigated including global data on unemployment as well as from an African context and South Africa in particular. The chapter also addresses the importance of aligning TVET college curricula with labour market needs and factors that influence graduate employability.

Chapter 3: Research methodology – This chapter outlines the research methodology of the study in which the research paradigm, research design, population, sampling technique, data collection, and analysis are discussed.

Chapter 4: Presentation of results, analysis, and discussion – This chapter presents the research findings using thematic data analysis to highlight important insights from the collected data.

Chapter 5: Summary, conclusion, and recommendations – This chapter outlines the conclusion of the research, where the findings of the study are summarised to generate conclusions to the research objectives of study including discussing the recommendations of the study.

1.7 Chapter Summary

The next chapter will present the literature review and theoretical framework that serve as the foundation for this research. It will begin by providing an overview of youth unemployment in the global context, African and South African context, the labour market, curriculum relevance, and introducing the TVET graduate employability in South Africa before moving on to the factors that influence the employability of TVET Graduates.

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This review is based on the human capital theory. According to the human capital theory, which was initiated by Becker (1962) and Rosen (1976), asserts that each worker has a certain set of skills or abilities that they may develop or add to through education and training. This theory highlights the value of investing in education and training in order to improve skills, knowledge, and abilities. Human capital theory suggests that graduates with higher levels of human capital, such as advanced education, specialised skills, and relevant work experience, are more likely to succeed in the labour market, and the idea behind human capital theory is that education is like an investment (Leoni, 2023). There is a concerning problem of graduate unemployment in developing nations like South Africa, where the unemployment rate is among the highest in the world (Ngulube, 2020; Ndlovu & Ndebele, 2019). This chapter will examine the relevant research and literature that has already been written about the socioeconomic dilemma of youth unemployment, labour market, curriculum relevance, and TVET graduate employability, factors that influence TVET graduate empployability in South Africa as well as policy frameworks and interventions to address graduate employability.

2.2 Overview of youth unemployment in the global context

Since many young people in Pakistan start working at a young age, the country's economy is unable to absorb most of them, and the youth unemployment rate remains high (Gulzar, et al., 2024). As the population increases, there are fewer employment opportunities available (Asif, et al., 2023). According to Green and Henseke (2016), the sharp increase in graduate unemployment in recent years has led to more graduates taking non-graduate occupations. Graduates with improved abilities and skills obtain more preference in employment markets, assuming all other criteria remain unchanged (Mwita, 2018). Youth unemployment was on the rise even before the COVID-19 pandemic, but it has already reached an unprecedented level in comparison to any preceding financial crises before the pandemic (ILO, 2021).

Youth represent a substantial share of the global population (ILO, 2021). This issue is regarded as an underutilisation of human capital. One of the main worries is that more and more graduates would be placed in non-graduate positions (Suleman et al., 2024), and in support of the statement, Vedder et al. (2013) indicated that university graduates occupy half of the non-

graduate positions in the United States of America (USA). Meanwhile, the literature highlights the difficulties faced by Spanish graduates, where only 30% of them are employed in positions for which they are more qualified (Marzo et al., 2007). In the G20 countries, the youth unemployment rate increased in affluent nations including the United Kingdom (11.2%), Spain (30.6%), India (22.9%), and Brazil (13.2%) in 2020–2021, while South Africa's youth unemployment rate is an alarming 58.5% (ILO, 2025).

The International Labour Organisation (2021) also emphasised there is a noticeable widening disparity between the number of young graduates and the jobs that are accessible to them, with the former growing while the latter does not. Using China and India as examples, two BRICS nations that are seen as being in their emerging economies' developing stage, prior research indicates that South Africa is not the only country facing graduate unemployment. Each BRICS country has its unique labour market dynamics that affect graduate unemployment. For instance, Unemployment was widespread in Brazil, particularly among recent graduates. This problem was exacerbated by changes in the economy and a mismatch between the demands of the labour market and academic curricula. Although India's economy is expanding quickly, the country still faces graduate unemployment as a result of a high number of graduates and a lack of jobs in industries that can employ them. Additionally, the most important are skill development and educational quality. In developing nations like China and India, graduate unemployment has also been observed, it affects both highly skilled and low-skilled young graduates more often than adult graduates (Schneider & Pilz, 2024).

The low employment rate in India, despite training programme completion has raised concerns about the TVET system for a long time (Mathur et al., 2022). The reason could be that these low employment rate ratios are fuelled by a curriculum that is not in alignment with the industry's needs, for instance (Choudhuri, 2021). Over the past few years, several Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) have upgraded their current infrastructure and entered agreements with major industrial houses to match skills with jobs (Choudhuri, 2021). The main drivers of these industry partnerships were the need to ensure that trainers receive proper training and establish a curriculum that better meets industry demands. With the economy and job demands evolving, employment possibilities and labour market involvement are crucial components of contemporary society (Sharma, 2023).

Scholars from China reported that significant criticism is directed at the fact that the training provided does not align with the demands of the labour market (Shi, 2024). However, to promote

engagement and involvement rather than passive listening, the Yunnan Province of China revised the curriculum to incorporate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and made the modules student-centric (Mathur, 2022). Additionally, the Chinese government has implemented several programmes in recent years to enhance its vocational education system to create a contemporary system (Chen et al., 2024). According to Krishnasamy (2024), the comprehensive structure of the school education system, which includes preschool, primary, secondary, and higher education, forms the essential base of China's educational system. Indeed, these phases are essential to the general growth and development of both individuals and society as a whole. Additionally, China's government gave employers two main ways to participate in TVET. One was to use organisations of stakeholders, including businesses, industry associations, the government, and vocational schools and colleges, to promote and run vocational education (Chen et al., 2024). TVET's collective operation can easily coordinate the partners' relationships and utilise the resources available to the various parties. In agreement with (Tomlinson, 2012) students are now expected to learn more than just skills and knowledge - that is, how to handle various matters, such as labour market dynamics, due to shifting patterns in the global education industry. To create cooperative efforts in vocational education and training strategies and policies at the national and local levels, the sector should be able to cooperate with governmental entities efficiently. Institutions of higher learning can also gain from forming partnerships and collaborations with businesses (Krishnasamy, 2024).

The excellent vocational education and training (VET) system in Germany is well known (Solga et al., 2014). Many nations in Europe, including Germany, presently use dual vocational education and training systems. The German VET system's two main components are (a) school-based training programmes combined with firm-based training programmes and (b) theoretical knowledge in their training occupation (Solga et al., 2014). Due to Germany's exceptionally low youth unemployment rates as compared to the majority of other European nations, the German vocational education and training system (VET) attracted significant worldwide attention during the most recent economic crisis (Haasler, 2020). Haasler (2020) highlighted that the German dual apprenticeship training was credited with this, as it has been related to low rates of youth unemployment and a seamless transition from school to the workforce. Hassler (2020) further added that the German vocational training system, on the other hand, has multiple training pathways, each of which is tailored to a certain labour market demand, training philosophy, and social inclusion reasoning.

2.3 Overview of youth unemployment in the African context

Youth unemployment in Africa remains a significant challenge, with millions of young people struggling to secure stable and meaningful employment. Youth unemployment is a problem in Africa, with young people facing approximately twice the unemployment rate as adults (Mwakalila, 2022). South Africa is expected to have Africa's highest unemployment rate in 2024, with more than 30% of the labour force unemployed. Djibouti and Eswatini followed, with unemployment rates of around 28% and 25%, respectively. In contrast, Niger and Burundi had Africa's lowest unemployment rates (Statista, 2024). International development institutions, such as the African Development Bank, World Bank, and United Nations, have focused on Africa's high young unemployment rate. According to the African Development Bank (2016), just 3 million formal jobs are created in Africa each year, even though 10–12 million young people join the labour force there. In line with the Organisation for International Labor (ILO, 2023), over 72 million young people in Africa do not have access to training, work, or education (ILO, 2023). Although intra-African migration is typically viewed as a possible catalyst for economic progress and integration, it can also lead to youth unemployment.

Youth who relocate within the continent in pursuit of better employment possibilities frequently encounter obstacles such as language difficulties, cultural differences, and difficulty having their skills recognised, which can limit their employability. Numerous studies on youth unemployment in Africa fail to take into account the impact of intra-African mobility, which is rising as a result of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) (Aliyu et al., 2024). According to Donkor (2021), the majority of young people in Africa work informally, and many are underemployed, despite the continent having the lowest unemployment rate among youth aged 15 to 24 worldwide (10.6 percent in 2021, according to the ILO, 2023). The World Bank estimates that 60% of Africa's unemployed people are young people. In North Africa, the regional youth unemployment rate is 25%; in nations like Botswana, the Republic of Congo, Senegal, and South Africa, it is considerably higher. Slow growth, high inflation, and restricted job creation are some of the challenges that many African economies confront, and these challenges have an impact on the total number of job prospects available to young people.

2.4 Overview of youth unemployment in the South African context

South Africa's youth face significant unemployment rates in rural and urban areas (Roach & Sauermann, 2024). Defining youth unemployment in the South African context is important. In South Africa, the notion of youth employment can be either restrictive or broad. The narrow meaning relates to when a young person is actively looking for work but is unemployed, while the broad term includes those who have given up looking for work or are not actively involved in the search (Kingdon & Knight, 2001). Before the COVID-19 outbreak, South Africa's unemployment rate was already rising rapidly; safety measures including lockdowns caused it to peak during the pandemic (Ranchhod & Daniels, 2021). According to Statistics SA (2024) from 32.9% in Q1 of 2024 to 33.5% in Q2 of 2024, the official unemployment rate increased to its highest level in two years. The South African unemployment rate by province and metropolitan area is shown in the following tables.

Table 1A: Provincial unemployment rate: Official vs Expanded Q1:2024

Province	Official	Expanded
Eastern Cape	42.4%	49.1%
North West	40.5%	53.6%
Free State	38.0%	45.1%
Mpumalanga	36.2%	47.0%
Gauteng	34.2%	38.9%
Limpopo	32.7%	47.8%
KwaZulu-Natal	29.9%	43.7%
Northern Cape	28.3%	41.7%
Western Cape	21.4%	26.1%

Source: Stats SA Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Q2:2024

Table 1B: The unemployment rate by metropolitan area

Metropole	Unemployment rate (lowest to highest)
Mangaung	23.0%
eThekwini	26.0%
Cape Town	27.6%
Buffalo City	32.6%
Ekurhuleni	33.1%
Tshwane	35.8%
City of Johannesburg	37.3%
Nelson Mandela Bay (EC)	39.8%

Source: Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative Council (ECSECC) 2021 & Stats SA 2024)

Based on *Table 1B* above, Tshwane is one of the top three metropolitan areas with the highest unemployment rate. In their 2024 and early 2025 reports, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) stated that the country's youth, who are classified as those between the ages of 15 and 34, make up roughly 33.1% of the overall population (Stats SA, 2024). It reflects a significant portion of the population. Youth in South Africa are defined as those between the ages of 15 and 35, who comprise a proportion share of the country's population (Barnes, 2021). The recent research studies in South Africa (Dunga & Maloma, 2024; Buthelezi, Nxumalo, & Ngema, 2024; MacGinty, 2024; Khan et al., 2024; Mtotywa & Motaung, 2024) indicate that there is a serious issue of unemployment amongst youth in South Africa, and it cuts across all qualifications. According to these studies, today's youth are increasingly uncertain about future work prospects. For a country currently recovering and growing from the legacy of South Africa's past, which was marked by racialised social and economic injustice, this is a major source of concern (Mbekeni & Phiri, 2020).

Over the past ten years, South Africa's unemployment rate has been rising, rising from 21.1% in the years leading up to the global financial crisis in 2007 to 29.6% at the end of 2019, right before the COVID-19 epidemic began (Dadam & Viegi, 2024). The unemployment rate among youth in South Africa is 64.4%, only 11% among graduates (StatsSA, 2021). Lack of resources, a shortage of trained labour, a lack of job possibilities, and low levels of education and literacy are some of the causes of unemployment (Penniston, 2021). The National Planning Commission (NPC) affirms that unemployment has frustrated youth graduates, so it is seen as a national emergency. Additionally, prior research indicates that youth from historically underprivileged

communities, those living in rural and township regions, and youth who are primarily Black are disproportionately affected by unemployment (Mbekeni & Phiri, 2020). Black African females continue to have a greater unemployment rate than the national average and other demographic groupings, at 39,2% (Stats SA, 2024). *Table 1C* below shows the official unemployment rate by population group and gender, Q1:2024.

Table 1C: Official unemployment rate by ethnic group and gender

Ethnic group	**Unemployment rate**	
	Female	**Male**
African	39,2%	34,9%
Coloured	23,5%	22,5%
Indian/Asian	19%	9,0%
White	9,7%	8,7%

Source: Stats SA Q1:2024

South Africa has implemented various acts, policies, and programmes to combat unemployment in South Africa, especially among the youth (Yanta, 2022). Some of the policies include the National Development Plan (NDP), which was launched in 2012 and aimed at eliminating poverty and reducing inequality. NDP focused mainly on creating jobs through economic growth, promoting entrepreneurship, and enhancing skills development. SA created strategies to combat unemployment through economic growth, redistribution, employment creation, and skill development to aid in the fight against youth unemployment. The policies of the South African government contribute to the comparatively high rate of youth unemployment (Penniston, 2021). Policymakers in South Africa are motivated by employment-related ideas, such as increased minimum pay and significant legal protection against termination. These ideas are unfortunately inappropriate for the problems facing young people without jobs today (Penniston, 2021)

According to South African labour market policy, the minimum wage is the first entry point for many unskilled workers into the labour market, and its implementation has hampered the creation of new jobs (Maziya, 1999). And there are a lot of recent graduates (15–35 years old) in this situation who are young people (Penniston, 2021). The minimum wage, labour market policy, and the status of unskilled workers in South Africa are all related topics that represent the potential problems facing the nation's economy. These factors frequently lead to firms reducing labour, particularly that of less experienced and skilled workers, which ultimately deters

employers from employing new workers, particularly the most vulnerable young people (Mare, 2018).

2.5 TVET Graduate unemployment and the South African labour market

The TVET graduates play a vital role in addressing skills shortages in various sectors of the South African labour market. However, despite their training, many TVET graduates face significant challenges in securing employment. Due to South Africa's rising youth unemployment rate, many graduates have felt pessimistic about finding work for the previous ten years (Mseleku, 2022). Vocational training programmes are an essential option for young individuals looking to enter the South African labour market (Chauke, 2023). According to Nkosi (2017), a third of South African technical and vocational education and training (TVET) college graduates are unemployed.

The National Development Plan states that the TVET industry has the potential to significantly contribute to South Africa's growth and unemployment alleviation. But the reality is that TVET college graduates have difficulty finding work after graduation, despite their practical experience (SASSETA, 2018). TVET graduates enter the workforce slowly because some students drop out even before receiving their qualifications (Garraway et al., 2015). Skills that do not match the employee’s expectations and the supply of skills are the reasons behind the rise in unemployment among TVET college graduates (Mkize, 2022). TVET college graduates in South Africa find it challenging to engage in the economy since they lack the practical experience and technical abilities that employers demand (James, 2022). Like other industries like tourism, South Africa's TVET college curriculum has not developed as quickly, which has led to an increase in the unemployment rate among TVET college graduates (Tripney & Hombrados, 2013).

Mabunda and Frick (2020) argue that the private sector is unable to hire graduates of TVET colleges because of a lack of awareness regarding the credentials these institutions supply their students. Graduates of TVET colleges who lack the technical skills needed by the industry due to inadequate equipment for practical training find it more difficult to obtain employment (Papier, 2017). Furthermore, regardless of a graduate’s educational background and the institutions they attend, youth unemployment in South Africa is complex and troublesome (Matabane, 2022). TVET college curricula in underdeveloped countries lack initiative in equipping students with industry-required skills, as claimed by Singh and Tolessa (2019), which corresponds to a higher unemployment rate among graduates of TVET colleges. In addition to their qualifications, to

engage in labour-intensive employment, graduates need to possess specialised work skills like interpersonal, communication, and soft skills. TVET college graduates are not absorbed in labour skills because they lack the work abilities that the labour market requires (Ayonmike & Okeke, 2016).

Legg-Jack (2018) notes that since they lack the tools necessary for their students to receive hands-on training and workshops, TVET college graduates lack technical expertise. As a result, prospective companies are hesitant to offer TVET college graduates training and mentorship, increasing the likelihood that they will be unemployed. Nazronet al., (2017) claimed that the lack of methods for TVET institutions to collaborate with companies leads to higher unemployment among TVET college graduates. During their studies, TVET college students are unaware of employment options that align with their potential qualifications, which leads to their graduation without a job (Khambule, 2019). To solve graduate unemployment, young people need to be informed about their career possibilities so they may make wise professional decisions (Mncayi & Dunga, 2016; Nkambule & Ngubane, 2023). This is because graduates of TVET colleges are less employable as the technical expertise offered in these schools is not keeping up with economic progress. Home institutions determine a graduate's employability; graduates from wealthy and well-connected families have a higher chance of landing a job, while graduates from low-income households struggle because they lack a family member who can influence the hiring process (Yasin et al., 2019)

2.6 The importance of TVET College curriculum relevance and the labour market

Curriculum encompasses the intended, implemented, and actual program results as well as the institution's and lecturers' methods of teaching and learning, as well as the experiences of students and employers. When thinking about curriculum responsiveness, all of these factors must be taken into consideration. It is believed that the curriculum serves as the primary means of facilitating responsiveness (Wedekind, 2012). To satisfy the needs of the fourth industrial revolution, the TVET college curriculum must be updated (Chauke, 2023). For the youth to be able to participate in social development, the curriculum content must meet certain conditions (Phokontsi, 2021). It is advised that the curriculum for higher education should include soft skills including teamwork, communication, time management, and organisational abilities. Additionally, Johnstone (2021) maintains that to achieve this, the curriculum must be flexible enough to adjust to shifts in employer demands, student needs, and the state of the economy.

If it does not, graduates will remain unemployed long after as the curriculum would be outdated. The government, employers, and higher education institutions must work together to update social science curricula to meet the job market's needs and reduce unemployment (Madubye, 2022). This would suggest that, based on the calibre of the curriculum, the graduates are still viewed as incompetent and lacking in the required abilities. To guarantee that the programmes are relevant to the current labour trend, it is necessary to evaluate the appropriateness of employment with the field of study (Kipli & Khairani, 2020).

TVET college curriculum relevance and labour market are important for the following reasons: skills development, employment opportunities, economic growth, lifelong learning, and overall student motivation and satisfaction. A higher unemployment rate among TVET college graduates is correlated with developing countries' TVET college curricula's lack of effort in equipping students with the skills that industry demands (Singh & Tolessa, 2019). TVET programmes must be evaluated immediately, and industry participation in TVET development must take place (Kipli & Khairani, 2020). Alternatively, Puckett et al., (2012) from The Boston Consulting Group (BCG) conducted research emphasising the Four Essential Success Factors for a Successful TVET system through extensive worldwide educational research; a) the presence of a coordinated ecosystem in which all stakeholders, including a central agency with clear oversight of the TVET ecosystem, actively cooperate; b) performance-based government funding and support; c) parity between general academic education (GAE) and TVET and a straightforward means for students to transition between the two tracks; d) sustained, collaborative efforts from the industry. The authors concluded that an enhanced TVET system will improve public perception, which will raise employability and demand for TVET graduates, leading to a rise in TVET enrolment.

In opposition, Tse, Esposito, and Chatzimarkakis (2013) claim the problems of a lack of skills are overshadowed by outdated jobs, a skills mismatch, a strict workforce, and cultural and belief factors. The authors believe that the idea that education is the primary tool for employment is no longer applicable because the emergence of new technologies leads to incremental approaches to development by establishing previously unattainable professions; as a result, by the time graduates graduate, the skills they learned in school are no longer required in the workplace. Therefore, the emphasis should shift to a stronger policy, astute collaboration, and sustained competitiveness through productivity and innovation.

Another framework by The World Bank, (2013) suggests a diagnostic tool with three functional dimensions that are intended to record and evaluate policy and other elements influencing the educational system as follows; a) Strategic Framework, which describes the practice of cooperation, coordination, and advocacy about the goal of matching national development priorities with workforce development in crucial areas; b) System Oversight, which refers to the agreements governing funding, quality control, and learning paths that mold the incentives and information signals influencing the decisions of people, employers, training providers, and other stakeholders; and c) Service delivery is the term used to describe the variety, coordination, and administration of state and non-state training programmes that help people gain skills that are relevant to the market and their jobs (The World Bank, 2013).

While examining TVET trends, the authors demonstrate the need for TVET institutions to evaluate themselves in terms of achieving their aims, but in a skeletal manner. A more thorough structure is quite important to aid TVET institutions in dynamically evaluating their programmes. Nonetheless, the authors express the same message: there is an urgent need to identify and meet the demands of stakeholders, particularly the industry, to holistically improve TVET curricula. As a result, the most appropriate programme assessment tool that incorporates the industry perspective into decision-making must be identified (Kipli & Khairani, 2020).

2.7 TVET Graduate employability

Nelson Mandela, the late president of South Africa, once stated that "education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world" (Hizwan & Keat, 2019). Thus, education continues to be a vital resource that people may use to support their livelihoods and contribute to a country's economic progress. In South Africa, a developing country, unemployment is a major policy concern. While national and youth unemployment rates are extremely high, graduate unemployment remains comparatively low, albeit increasing (Mseleku, 2024). Graduate employability is the ability of graduates to secure employment in their field of study after completing their education. Graduate employability capacities are the abilities and qualities that a higher education institution produces that demonstrate the calibre of graduates' intellectual and personal development as well as the value they add to the job (Coetzee, 2012; Steur et al., 2012). Graduate employability capacities, which are regarded as the most crucial skills in the current global labour market, refer to those traits that drive adaptation in revolutionary conditions. However, the crucial question is whether education is sufficient to assure graduate employability.

The importance of higher education in South Africa is acknowledged. However, there is a heated debate about the importance of higher education in the transition of youth to the labour market (Mseleku, 2024). While the relationship between higher education and employment appears obvious, it has been subject to criticism in South Africa. Given the increasing graduate unemployment, South Africa's education system is blamed for creating graduates who are not work-ready and hence become victims of unemployment (Pitan & Muller, 2020). It is also evident in the literature that some graduates are unable to get a job due to skills mismatch, a problem ascribed to poor education curricula (Ndlovu & Ndebele, 2019). Internship programmes have a significant impact on employability, especially in South Africa, where the job market can be quite competitive. In an era of persistently high youth unemployment and rising graduate unemployment, internships are becoming increasingly popular.

Internships are widely regarded as a means for helping graduates transition from higher education institutions to the work market. In South Africa, where graduate unemployment is a concern, internships are recognised as crucial establishments to minimise unemployment (Mseleku, 2024). It is believed that internships can reduce youth unemployment in South Africa (Ubisi, 2023). Internships are becoming increasingly popular as graduates struggle to obtain employment due to a lack of relevant work experience, among other factors (Mabiza et al., 2017). While internships are primarily aimed at providing work experience to graduates, a study done among South African public institutions discovered that internships supplied graduates with skills (Mabeba, 2019), however, in the same study, graduates critiqued the internship programmes for their low stipend and the irrelevancy of the work they undertake, which makes internship skills and experience valueless.

Because of the growth in graduate unemployment, higher education institutions are under pressure to improve graduates' employability. Since then, these institutions have made significant investments in higher education internships (Mseleku, 2024). This is done through the introduction of learning programmes that emphasise experiential or work-based learning. Work-based learning is utilised in vocational education and training to create fundamental work habits, occupational identity, and specific competencies (Sweet, 2013). Graduate qualities go beyond employability and are relevant to every part of a student's experience at a HEI (Higher Education Institution), including linkages like curriculum renewal, work-related learning, and personal development planning (McCabe, 2010).

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is a pedagogical strategy used in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutes to promote student employability. WIL programmes are another type of opportunity in which students can build relationships with employers for future job opportunities after graduation. According to Govender and Wait (2017), Work-integrated learning (WIL) attempts to deliberately inspire students to embrace prospective future occupations, contributing to economic innovation and growth. However, Billet (2016) describes WIL as networking which often gives trainees within their industry a chance to meet professionals who can lead to job offers or referrals. Building a strong professional network is important in South Africa, where “who you know” can significantly impact job prospects. According to DHET, TVET colleges' primary goal is to give young people who have dropped out of school the abilities, information, and mindset needed to find work in the labour market (DHET, 2021). In South Africa, networking, WIL programmes, and internships all have a significant impact on graduates' employability. They assist students in developing important networks that can have a big impact on their future paths, in addition to providing them with experiences and necessary skills. The following section will be discussion the factors that influences graduate employability.

2.8 Factors influencing graduate employability

In today's extremely competitive employment market, graduate employability is becoming a key concern for educational institutions, policymakers, and students. The journey from academia to the workforce is typically riddled with hurdles, making it vital to grasp the various elements that influence graduates’ employability upon graduation. Employability includes not only academic credentials but also a combination of skills, experiences, and other characteristics that allow graduates to successfully acquire and maintain employment in their chosen industries. This section will look at the factors that influence graduate employability.

2.8.1 Skill mismatch

A skills mismatch is a common challenge in TVET college graduates and industries. Among the several factors that affect graduate employability in the labour market, is the rising gap between the labour market in terms of what employers need and the availability of particular skills given by graduates (Khan et al., 2024; Ahmed, 2024; Albert et al., 2023; Rathelot et al., 2023; Salahuddin et al., 2023; Chuang et al., 2022; Mohd et al., 2020). Graduate employability skills are critical to graduate students' employability (Ngulube, 2020). Employability skills relate to the transferable talents or core competencies that industries expect graduate students to have

(Khan et al., 2024: Ahmed, 2024; Albert et al., 2023; Ngulube, 2020; Ndlovu & Ndebele, 2019). Skill mismatch can come in different ways including but not limited to overqualification, underqualification, field-specific mismatch, and geographical mismatch.

Some of the crucial basic skills that graduates are expected to have mastered in tertiary institutions include: competency in the English language (i.e., oral presentation abilities), computer proficiency, and the capacity to research and apply information on their own (Khan et al., 2024; Albert et al., 2023; Ngulube, 2020; Ndlovu & Ndebele, 2019; Wildschut et al., 2019). Wildschut et al. (2018) insist that industries are looking for graduates who can demonstrate soft qualities including intellectual capacity, teamwork, honesty, communication skills, and analytical and problem-solving abilities. There are, however, high rates of graduate unemployment due to a gap between employers' expectations of graduates and the abilities they believe grads should have in the workplace, according to Ngulube (2020) and Baldry (2016) studies. Additionally, this finding is supported by Graham and De Lannoy (2017), who claim that some unemployed graduates struggle to obtain work because they do not match the workplace abilities that companies are looking for (skill mismatch).

Equivalently, according to Reddy, Bhorat, Powell, Visser & Arends (2016) and Walker (2015), Employers prefer graduates who are adequately trained or already productive, this is graduates who can perform tasks without a lot of supervision, over graduates who are only equipped with theory and still require training to be productive, which is the cause of the growing unemployment problem faced by recent graduates. Meanwhile (Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen, 2012) argue that those from the humanities and arts are characterised as a group that struggles the most to obtain employment compared to those from other disciplines of study due to a skill gap. [*Table 3*] (p. 91) as per the latest data, indicates that the unemployment rate by field of study shows that (a). Hospitality and Tourism, (b). Technology and (c). Administration is amongst the top fields with the highest unemployment rate. Moreover, Mncayi (2016) and Moleke (2015) stated that the frequency of unemployment among graduates, particularly black graduates, is the majority, and they furthered their studies in a field that is not in demand, such as Humanities and Arts because they could only qualify for those fields.

This graduate unemployment problem reflects a bigger skills gap in the South African economy. South Africa is a net importer and exporter of skills. Due to skills shortages, qualified immigrant engineers, surgeons, craftspeople, and accountants fill tasks that native graduates are unable or unable to take on. According to research (Botha & Rasool, 2014), talented immigrants drive

growth and create job opportunities, rather than displacing local labor. South Africa continues to lose talented professionals through emigration. By 2005, 40% of white professionals aged 25-34 had considered leaving the nation, up from 18% in 2000 (Bisseker, 2005). The ongoing "brain drain" worsens skills shortages, increases reliance on foreign knowledge, and hinders human capital development.

Lastly, as we look into the causes of the skills mismatch in the South African context, according to Rasool & Botha (2011), there are many causes of skills mismatch, including but not limited to failure of the national education and training system in providing the economy with much-needed skills. This goes back to the curriculum problems, labour market demands, rapid technological change, and migration.

2.8.2 Lack of work-related experience

In a study by MacGinty (2024) and Mseleku & Nyawo (2024) unemployment among graduates in South Africa is linked to a lack of actual workplace experience. Ngubane et al., (2024) argues that graduates struggle to find work because employers believe they lack the necessary experience and abilities. Employers want graduate students who are prepared for the job, meaning they are recent graduates who can transition from theory to practice (i.e., apply theory) (Griesel & Paker, 2009). A study by Bhat & Gupta (2024) and Mokgohloa (2006) reveals that employers are becoming more interested in hiring recent college graduates who are prepared for the workforce. Training inexperienced graduates is perceived as expensive and time-consuming, and they are considered a dangerous investment. As a result, employers are reluctant to hire them (Cloete, 2015; Walker, 2015).

Youth graduate unemployment is made worse by the dearth of chances for internships, leadership positions, volunteer work, and other ways for graduates to obtain work experience (ILO, 2005). According to Wildschut et al. (2019), the inability to develop a comprehensive approach to problem-solving, the capacity to organise, initiate, and complete projects and tasks both individually and collaboratively, the capacity to conduct research and select pertinent data to address real-world workplace challenges, and the capacity to adjust to the constantly shifting dynamics of the workplace are all examples of the lack of workplace readiness. In this instance, universities are being questioned about their ability to effectively teach these abilities to their students (Wildschut et al., 2019; Walker, 2015) and TVET colleges (Beyene 2022; Mseleku & Nyawo, 2024). Mutembei (2024); David (2023) and Wildschut et al (2019) in this instance,

highlighted that higher education institutions have been questioned about their ability to effectively teach their students skills such as teamwork skills, practical communication skills, problem-solving skills, and interpersonal skills such as decision making and leadership abilities. Furthermore, Group-work-based examinations aid students in developing their teamwork abilities (Strom et al., 2024; Ndlovu & Ndebele, 2019).

To narrow down the possible causes of unemployment among graduates, Walker (2015) & Fongwa (2017) argue that graduates from historically disadvantaged universities are often lacking in practical experience and abilities. Hence Molele et al., (2024); Graham & Mlatsheni (2015); and Jonck (2014) suggest that integrated learning at a tertiary institution exposes students to the work environment as part of their education, providing valuable job-based experience and skills for the future employment opportunities.

2.8.3 Intellectual abilities and personality traits

Intellectual capacity and personality qualities are very essential in determining graduate employment. Some of the intellectual qualities that can affect career chances are critical thinking and problem-solving skills, flexibility and learning agility, technical competence, and quantitative capabilities. Some personality attributes that influence employability include, but are not limited to, interpersonal skills, motivation and work ethic, resilience, openness and experience, and leadership skills. According to Griesel & Paker (2009) and Wildschut et al. (2019), employers often expect graduate students to be intellectually proficient and have a solid knowledge base that will prepare them for professional duties and working expectations.

Graduate students must demonstrate abilities like critical thinking, concept and assumption formulation, logical argument formation, high-quality research, and the willingness to learn new things (Griesel & Paker, 2009; Wildschut et al., 2019). Griesel & Paker (2009) highlight that since we live in a world that is changing constantly, employers are also looking for graduates who demonstrate an interest in working with ideas (i.e., inventive). However, Wildschut et al., 2019 declare that the growing percentage of graduate unemployment in South Africa results from a substantial discrepancy between the calibre of skills graduates possess and the capabilities employers want.

MacGinty (2024) study suggests that graduate education holds substantial value in employability. Employers look for personal skills in graduate students, including openness, initiative, self-motivation, negotiation skills, locus of control, flexibility, emotional stability, and the

drive to learn to adapt to the ever-changing nature of the workplace (Griesel & Paker, 2009; Wildschut et al. 2019; Ndlovu & Ndebele, 2019). Wildschut et al. (2019) further concluded in their research that failure to fulfil employers' expectations is one of the reasons why recent graduates are unable to find work after completing their studies. In this regard, the activities undertaken in higher education institutions can be considered as planned to give students with the abilities required to succeed in the workplace.

2.8.4 Type of Institution, field of study, and type of qualification

University unemployment rates are far lower than other tertiary institutions, including TVETs (MacGinty, 2024). A graduate's employability can be strongly influenced by the type of institution, disciplines of study, and qualifications. Graduates' employability in South Africa is also influenced by the institution they attended and the degrees they hold (Moleke, 2005). Furthermore, although the study's primary focus was on graduates (those with a bachelor's degree or above) it is evident that people with other types of postsecondary education have far greater unemployment rates than grads (MacGinty, 2024). Baldry (2016); Graham et al. (2019) and Moleke (2005) argue that even though all institutions of higher learning are open to everyone regardless of race, gender, or culture, historically Black institutions (HBIs) continue to be predominantly attended by Blacks, whereas historically White institutions (HWIs) have a changing racial composition of students and are more inclusive.

Their research study by Wildschut et al. (2018) on employment prospects for graduates in the South African banking sector found that Black graduates from HBIs (such as the University of Fort Hare, the University of Limpopo, etc.) have a lower employment rate than Black students from HWIs (such as the University of Witwatersrand). This is despite the government’s efforts to equalise qualifications across the country through the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). A study by Oluwajodu et al. (2015) also indicates that graduates from HWIs, who are thought to have a higher level of education, are highly preferred over graduates from HBIs, who are thought to have a lower level of education. The problem with this highlight is that graduate students from HBI have trouble becoming incorporated into the labour market compared to graduate students from HWI (Bhorat et al., 2016). This explains why Black graduates from HBI account for the highest proportion of those who are unemployed.

Although the study by MacGinty (2024) focused on graduates (those with a bachelor's degree or more), people with additional postsecondary degrees have significantly greater

unemployment rates than graduates. Non-graduate tertiary unemployment rates have increased significantly, from 11% in 2008 to 26% in 2023. Graduate students' employability also depends on their field of study and type of qualification (Wildschut et al., 2018). The analysis was aided in determining the study fields with the highest rates of broad unemployment by the inclusion of QLFS relevant to the subject of study for individuals who had tertiary-level qualifications. As previously discussed, unemployment rates in most study domains have increased during the sample period. Graduates in Administration, Science, and Arts and Social Sciences face a significant increase in unemployment by 2023 [*Table 4*] (p. 93). More broadly, among those with any tertiary qualification, the education disciplines with the highest unemployment rates are Hospitality and Tourism, Technology, and Administration. Meanwhile, the Health and Education industries continue to have the lowest unemployment rates among graduates and those with university qualifications, notwithstanding the rising trend (MacGinty, 2024). These findings are consistent with previous research such as Bhorat et al. (2017) indicating that education and health areas offer better job prospects. This is because these fields provide career specific training and produce specific categories of professionals. Previous studies by Fongwa (2018), Walker (2015), and Van der Berg & Van Broekhuizen (2012) highlight that college graduates from the faculty of humanities and art are more likely to take longer to be incorporated into the labour market than graduates from faculties such as engineering, who can find work quickly after finishing their studies.

Walker (2015) argues that humanities and arts may not be in high demand, but they are vital in improving and addressing critical social, economic, health, and public policy concerns affecting South Africa and the world. According to Walker (2015), humanities and arts graduates struggle to get employment because their qualifications are less in demand in the labour market. They are not sought after because they are deemed "too general" in the abilities that they convey, resulting in employers being sceptical of the capability of graduates who have received these qualifications (Moleke, 2005). While other fields of study, such as engineering, science, health science, and commerce impart job-specific skills that are easy to comprehend in the labour market and explicit in what skills/capabilities students should have when they enter the workforce to be productive at work (MacGinty, 2024; Moleke, 2005; Fongwa, 2018; Mncayi’s, 2016).

2.8.5 The lack of career guidance and counselling

In their study, Zhang et al. (2023) determined that one of the career skills that has a major impact on a graduate's employability is career management. Career guidance and counselling have a major influence on graduate employability in many ways, including but not limited to informed decision-making, skill development, networking opportunities, mentoring and support, and job search strategies. Another element that affects some graduates' employability is the function of career counselling (Graham and Mlatsheni, 2015). Additionally, MacGinty (2024) highlights that giving students thorough career counselling would be essential to directing them toward sectors with higher demand or shortages. Career advice programmes are designed to help young people make the best decisions possible when choosing a career path and to meet the needs of the labour market (Moleke, 2015).

When choosing a professional path that aligns with available employment prospects, people can benefit from career counselling by using it to help them make logical judgments (Mokhali, 2021). According to Nel and Neale-Shutte (2013), particularly majors that are in great demand in the job market, career counselling in postsecondary institutions should be significantly enhanced and provided to students from the time of enrolment until they leave the system. A research study by Moerane (2016) and Kraak (2010) supports career guidance that is sensitive to the realities of the labour market in South Africa. It needs to be aware of the labour market trends and sector-specific insights. The argument is that students should be appropriately educated on their chosen job route, as well as informed of the risks and how to prevent becoming trapped in unemployment. Additionally, MacElheron (2024) highlights developing more effective career support and assisting their path to career preparedness. Moreover, McConnell (2009) advocates the need to create a local, market-driven career advisory programme to assist students in making educated decisions about their career path.

In an era of growing skill mismatches brought on by the shortcomings of the educational system and the abilities needed in the labour market, offering career guidance is an important method to increase labour mobility (Moerane, 2016). MacGinty (2024) argues that it is crucial to implement tactics like offering career counselling, encouraging leadership and internships for skill development, and making consistent attempts to increase access to higher education. Problems related to unemployment may arise from a lack of career counselling (Scholtz, 2024) and the unemployment rate among graduates (Moerane, 2016). Because they chose jobs that are not in demand in the South African labour market or, in a desperate attempt to increase their

prospects of landing a job, graduates struggle to find work compared to those who just have a matriculation certificate.

The majority of South African traditional universities, including TVET colleges, offer assistance programmes aimed at improving their graduates' employability. These services include career assistance services such as workshops on work etiquette, CV preparation, interviews, and career guidance (Stephen, 2024). Moreover, Walker (2015) discovered that students' participation is quite low and they do not fully utilise the services, even though they are available. According to Walker (2015), approximately 90% of students showed no interest in the services provided by their institutions. Research conducted by Oluwajodu et al. (2015) and Moleke (2015) has criticised higher education for failing to offer sufficient job counselling, particularly to humanities graduates, which contributes to their high unemployment rate. When students receive proper career advice early in their university career, they may select majors that are highly sought after and in demand in the labour market (Moerane, 2016). Students would be allowed to choose majors based on how likely they are to find employment after graduation. If students opted to pursue majors that are not in great demand, they would at least be aware of the job market before deciding.

2.8.6 The value of social networks and limited and ineffective employment search

Young graduates face high unemployment rates not only due to a lack of skill but also due to a lack of networks that might connect them to prospective employment prospects (Wildschut et al., 2018). According to Liu (2022), social networking is the major internet activity, but other technology use may also affect job search responses. Walker & Fongwa (2017) support the belief that a person's social network quality can harm their career prospects since the network determines both the opportunity and the sort of employment opportunities available to the job seeker. As a result, having greater social networks increases one's chances of receiving information about numerous potential job prospects that correspond with their career aspirations. Mseleku (2024) highlighted the value of having a social network when transitioning into the labour market, as employers are more inclined to hire someone referred to them by someone in their trusted social network.

Networks play an important role in the labour economy. Many people obtain jobs through family, friends, and other networks, which is now well recognised in both economics and sociology (Tholen et al. 2013). Based on their study, De Schepper et al. (2023), social networks, which

are sometimes disregarded but hold enormous influence in connecting graduates to the labour market, appear to play a role in graduates' transition results. Additionally, Wildschut et al. (2018) claimed that by connecting people to job openings through their social networks, which include friends, family, and acquaintances, networks play a vital role in obtaining employment. According to Altman et al., (2012) this is because people frequently obtain work through word-of-mouth or personal connections with possible employers. Township youth may have lacked "bridging" social capital, such as friends and acquaintances who might offer them resources, knowledge, social support, and counsel, on an individual basis. These young people are removed from social networks and social capital, which are necessary for finding work as the labour market grows more competitive (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2021).

Burns et al. (2009) highlighted how crucial it is to have a social network while entering the workforce because employers are more inclined to hire someone who was recommended by a member of their trusted social network. Walker & Fongwa (2017) support the idea that a person's social network quality might harm their career prospects since the network influences the scope and nature of the job seeker's employment options. As a result, having stronger social networks increases one's likelihood of learning about job openings that fit their professional objectives (Walker & Fongwa, 2017). Furthermore, inefficient job search tactics increase unemployment among recent graduates (Graham et al., 2019; Wildschut et al., 2018). In conclusion, a study by Graham et al. (2019) found that White graduates are more likely to find employment than Black graduates because their effective job search techniques use social media. In contrast, the latter rely on weak strategies such as applying through newspaper ads.

2.8.7 Geographical mobility and employment rates

Geographical mobility refers to people's ability and willingness to relocate from one location to another in search of work, education, or other opportunities. It includes movement within a country (internal mobility) and across national borders (international mobility). This concept is crucial to comprehend population movements and migration trends within and across nations. Some scholars agree that geographical mobility is a key factor in economic growth and development since it allows people to access new employment possibilities and acquire new skills. Graduates with greater financial advantages find it much easier to get to work since they can access vehicles, which boosts their mobility (Penniston, 2021). Graduates lack the necessary financial means to move to high-demand job markets (Cassim and Oosthuizen,

2014). Geographical mobility is an important factor in labour market dynamics, affecting how efficiently workers can find suitable employment opportunities that meet their needs and skills.

Geographical mobility is essential in labour market dynamics, impacting how quickly people can discover suitable employment opportunities that match their needs and skills. A rising amount of study has been conducted recently on the factors that affect spatial mobility, such as social networks, government regulations, and economic possibilities (Borjas, 2017; Wyk 2023). On the other hand, Graduate labour immobility in South Africa is influenced by multiple factors, including geography, occupation, and skills. Examining these variables can provide policymakers and stakeholders with significant insights to reduce graduate labour immobility and foster economic development (Wyk, 2023). Graduate pathways were usually challenging journeys reflecting a series of interim jobs and high mobility (Lourens, 2016). Graham & Da Lannoy (2016) insist that the increased number of unemployed graduates can be attributed to South Africa's spatial imbalance. South Africa has unequal job prospects among its provinces, and unequal opportunities between underdeveloped rural or townships and developed metropolitan areas (Mokhadi, 2021).

Graduates seeking employment are disadvantaged when job possibilities are elsewhere rather than in their home location. According to Sekatane (2004), unemployment rates are rapidly increasing in undeveloped rural and township regions due to a lack of employment or training options, as opposed to urban areas. This finding is supported by Mokhadi (2021) who argues that graduates who live in metropolitan areas (also known as economic centres) have a better chance of obtaining work due to the abundance of job options available. The inaccessibility of job possibilities due to graduates' geographical location contributes significantly to the low employment search intensity, which delays entry into the labour market (Moleke, 2015). When placed far from economic hubs, graduates face the higher financial burden associated with career seeking (travel costs to economic hubs, internet (cafés), etc.

Additionally, previous literature by Moleke (2015) and Baldry (2016) concerning graduate unemployment also exposes the job gaps among various races in South Africa due to spatial mismatch. According to Stats SA Q1:2024, Black Africans continue to have a higher unemployment rate (37.6%) than the national average and other populations. Geographical location has a significant impact on the disparity between South Africa's black and white unemployment rates. The highlight of the apartheid regime's ongoing structural legacy is that, even in modern-day South Africa, the majority of the unemployed population lives in areas with

little to no economic activity and thus has restricted access to employment hubs (Mokhadi, 2021). Employment opportunities are limited or only available in specific places, such as metropolitan areas. Black grads commonly believe that geographic location is important when looking for work. As a result, Mokhadi (2021) concludes that black graduates are increasingly moving from rural and township regions to cities in search of better job opportunities.

2.8.8 The influence of industry collaboration and partnership

Industry collaboration and partnerships are extremely influential for TVET graduates in finding employment. These collaborations have a significant impact on TVET graduates' career prospects. Partnerships were identified as a critical aspect in the link and match between TVET and industries (Ali et al., 2019). The collaboration and partnerships with industry have a significant impact on national growth and development. They suggested that these collaborations be carried out through curriculum development, industrial visits, involving industry experts in training, seminars, workshops, industrial attachments of trainees, capacity building of trainers in industries, and training of industrial staff in TVET institutions (Ayieko et al., 2023). Partnerships and cooperation with industry improve the practical abilities of trainers and trainees in TVET colleges. Partnerships between TVET colleges and stakeholders, particularly industry, are important for meeting the needs of stakeholders, including the labour market (Makgato & Moila, 2019).

The influence of industry collaboration and partnership is not taken seriously enough in South Africa. In contrast, in Kenya, the national government manages TVET institutions through the State Department for Vocational and Technical Education under the Ministry of Education. County governments also maintain vocational training facilities for young polytechnics, known as TVET (Ayieko et al., 2023). Each developing country should have a Ministry dedicated to TVETs, to provide, promote, and organise training while assuring quality, inclusiveness, and relevance for advancing national economic and global competitiveness. According to Morape et al (2015), a collaboration between TVET institutions and industries necessitates establishing a legal framework to ensure that all parties adhere to their training and skill development commitments.

A study by Sharma (2015) revealed that skill development initiatives require collaboration with industries and enterprises. In emerging nations such as Kenya, considerably greater links between TVET institutions and industry are critical for making the system responsive to rising skill demands. Kenya's industrial attachments are supervised by the National Industrial Training Authority (NITA), a state body. The government works with the agency to improve industrial training throughout the country. Project Management South Africa (PMSA) reported in February 2023 that the Services SETA was collaborating with TVET Colleges to deliver SETA Learning Programmemes, including Occupational Qualifications. This will also increase TVET College's capacity. Perhaps, South Africa may consider investing more in initiatives that involve collaboration with SETAs in order to make the system responsive to relevant skills demands.

Regarding the challenges with collaborations and partnerships, Singh and Tolessa's study (2019) reported that a lack of operational capability in industries has been identified as a barrier to the adoption of cooperative training. It is also challenging for TVET institutions to find appropriate industries for their programmes. This indicates that these industries need to be evaluated. These industries demand the ability to affect skill development and training (Ayieko et al., 2023).

Partnerships are important in the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) space because they help improve the quality and outcomes of TVET provision in both South Africa (Njengele et al., 2024) and internationally (Beddie & Simon, 2017). According to (Amey & Eddy, 2023), strong collaborations help TVET colleges to be responsive to new technologies and new practices across occupations and areas, as well as maintain relevance in a period of fast technological, social, and economic change. TVET colleges and their graduates are the principal beneficiaries of these collaborations. Employers, companies, industries, and communities connected to the collaborations are also beneficiaries, as are students who receive improved educational opportunities. In addition to producing social, economic, and individual results, productive partnerships are widely recognised as having a multiplier effect in enhancing the quality of TVET since they contribute to financing, educational provision, and employment opportunities in TVET, with employers, industries, and communities (Beddie & Simon, 2017).

The quantity and diversity of TVET and industrial relationships in South Africa have increased significantly (Petersen et al., 2016), and both industry partners and TVET colleges have benefited from these. Partnerships not only increase the employability of graduates but also present chances to produce new skills and knowledge that improve the competitive advantage

of all stakeholders (Grollmann & Rauner, 2007). My goal is to see TVET colleges and industry prioritise partnership-building strategies that will allow them to establish, maintain, and grow mutually beneficial collaborations. According to Amey & Eddy (2023), partnerships are co-configurations that need ongoing care as demands change. TVET colleges must evaluate their preparedness (Duncan, 2017) to form a fruitful collaboration, as well as to clearly articulate their vision, mission, and values (Billett & Seddon, 2004), and fulfil industrial partners' requirements (Abdullah, 2013). In both South African and international contexts, major enablers of college preparation for collaborations include past industry links (Duncan, 2017), sufficient planning (De Paor, 2018), as well as an effort to match partner and college requirements (Sappa & Aprea, 2014). Incentives and government policies can be useful in establishing and maintaining partnerships (Remington, 2018; Keevy et al., 2021).

The dual-education system is the most well-known type of college-industry collaboration and is used in many European nations, most notably Germany (Taylor, 2009). Governments in some nations, including the US, Russia, China, and South Africa, are attempting to implement this approach to enhance the interactions between colleges and industries (Remington, 2018; Wiemann & Fuchs, 2018). The dual-education method alternates block periods of supervised work experience with theory-based classroom instruction. Over time and through lengthy discussions "between employers, unions, government, and schools over control of training, and the value of that training in the labour market," dual-education systems were initiated (Taylor, 2009). This model's success has been widely recognised, but because it is "dependent on employer engagement," it is challenging to duplicate (Smith et al., 2011). The abilities of the industry partner are essential to the success of a college-industry partnership (Keevy et al., 2021) and the leadership capacity (Amey & Eddy, 2023). Students are supposed to be oriented to the field of practice by college faculty (Thaba-Nkadimene & Kgomotlokoa, 2021) while industry partners offer the required guidance and training (Jansen & Pineda-Herrero, 2019). Support and mentoring are also required, with specialised support personnel made accessible for internships and coworkers. The assessment of student interns is an important feature of collaborations (Yusop et al., 2023) with industry partners frequently having the knowledge and abilities to evaluate students' work practices.

2.9 Policy frameworks and interventions to address graduate employability

From a policy point of view, the South African government is in charge of lowering the obstacles that people face when looking for jobs, and they have taken certain steps to do so. According to

the South African government (National Planning Commission, 2020), Using a multi-sectoral strategy and policy, NPC seeks to lower youth unemployment by assisting young people in entering the workforce through formal, enterprise, and social economy models. There are some policy measures to consider when addressing graduate unemployment (MacGinty, 2024) but none specifically addresses graduate employability. Although this is not a policy paper, the findings might suggest potential methods to alleviate labour market difficulties. This study's findings can be a significant resource for educational policymakers, institutions, and industry stakeholders looking to develop a sustainable and mutually beneficial space for vocational education and employment in the country. South Africa's National Youth Policy (NYP) was created, and its purpose was to enhance the lives of youth through national, provincial, and local development initiatives.

Baldry (2013) and Nel and Neale-Shutte (2013) argue that these policies did not result in the intended participation of formerly excluded communities. South Africa is one of the countries with the worst levels of poverty and unemployment, with young people being the most affected. Even policies towards entrepreneurship as a possible solution to graduate unemployment still did not achieve their intentions. The new democratic government developed several economic programmes such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution Policy (GEAR), and the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative (ASGISA), to bridge the inequality gap created by the apartheid regime (Ali & Jabeen, 2016; Gwija et al., 2014).

2.10 Chapter summary

Focusing on the difficulties of TVET graduate employment and its effects, this chapter has examined past research on employment patterns in a global, African, and South African setting. It emphasises how important it is for TVET colleges' curricula to be relevant in order to guarantee that graduates have the abilities and competencies that industries require. The chapter looked at a number of elements that affect employability, such as work experience, soft skills, academic achievement, and how well educational programmes match industry demands. Furthermore, it discussed the need of policy frameworks and interventions meant to improve the employability of graduates, like collaborations between academic institutions and the commercial sector, training programmes, and government programmes meant to promote job creation.

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methods that the researcher utilised to investigate the experiences and perceptions of unemployed graduates, industry experts, and government recruiters who participated in the study.

In this study, it was determined that qualitative research was the most appropriate methodology. The sections below outline the research design, study environment, target population, sampling strategy, data collection procedure and tools, data analysis, limitations, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research paradigm

Given that qualitative research is characterised by "flexibility, openness, and responsiveness to context," as highlighted by Busetto et al., (2020, p. 1) in their article under 'How to conduct qualitative research?' section, these characteristics of the qualitative research method allowed for a thorough in-depth analysis and delving into the analytic procedure. Using qualitative techniques allowed the researcher to conduct a full investigation of Tshwane TVET, including discussions about securing and maintaining work, preparing graduates for employment in their respective fields, and career and advancement opportunities.

Understanding the fundamental ontological and epistemological presuppositions is also crucial for researchers, as is comprehending how these presumptions influence the methodology and techniques they choose. Qualitative research is frequently connected with interpretivism, but alternatives exist. In addition to critical research and positivism, qualitative research can be conducted using a pragmatic paradigm. The study by Alharahsheh & Pius (2020), which reviewed key paradigms, suggests that interpretivism focuses on the intricate variables and aspects associated with a context, positing that humans are distinct from physical phenomena, since they generate additional layers of meaning, under the idea that human beings cannot be examined in the same manner as physical phenomena.

In addition, Kaushik & Walsh (2019) argue that pragmatism, as a research paradigm, refuses to engage with disputed philosophical ideas like truth and reality. Instead, it accepts that there can be one or many realities that are open to empirical inquiry. Pragmatist scholars assert that an objective reality exists independently of human experience. However, this reality is rooted in the environment and can only be experienced through human interaction. When examining the characteristics of qualitative research, it is critical to include different theories that are relevant to the research topic.

Interpretivism is best suited to the study since qualitative research focuses on understanding experiences, perceptions, and meanings. Employability of TVET College graduates is more than simply statistics; it also includes students' life experiences, beliefs, problems, and societal realities. Interpretivism posits that reality is socially produced and interpreted from the views of its participants. It enables researchers to investigate how TVET students perceive employability, interact with industry partners, and interpret employment challenges. This study contains conducting interviews, therefore interpretivism is the best philosophical fit.

The qualitative methodology was chosen because it provided in-depth insights into the feasibility of career advancement and professional growth in the current and future job markets, as well as an examination of the intervention support that can be implemented to improve the employability of TVET graduates, and only one Tshwane TVET College will be sampled. This study will employ a qualitative research approach due to its exploratory and descriptive nature.

3.3 Research design

According to Alanezi (2024), qualitative approaches are important since they help to deepen the understanding of user ideas and beliefs in varied circumstances. A qualitative research approach will be used in the study to analyse the present employability skills required by industries in the TVET sector. The approach will further assess how effective TVET graduates are in finding work in their various sectors, as well as to examine the main challenges and opportunities facing TVET graduates in Tshwane. The same methods used will help to better understand and analyse the perceptions of TVET College graduates and how they are influenced by employability and challenges.

A case study design is employed to investigate a phenomenon comprehensively within its authentic setting. The employability of TVET graduates is the subject of this study, and its context is determined by a variety of factors, such as industry collaborations, institutional

practices, and curricular relevance. These factors can be thoroughly and historically examined through a case study.

3.4 Case study area and institutions

The City of Tshwane is located in the Gauteng province of South Africa. It is situated in the northern part of the country, and it is the administrative capital city of South Africa. Tshwane covers an area of approximately 6,298 square kilometres (2,431 square miles). As of the latest available data, the population of the City of Tshwane is estimated to be around 3 million people. It is one of the largest cities in South Africa and is known for its diverse cultural heritage and rich history. The main occupation in Tshwane is primarily focused on government services, as it is the administrative capital city of the country. It is home to numerous government institutions, including the Union Buildings, where the President's office is located. The presence of government organisations and related industries in Tshwane provides employment opportunities for a significant portion of the population.

There are several TVET Colleges in the City of Tshwane that offer a range of vocational training programmes. Some of the well-known TVET Colleges in Tshwane include Tshwane North College (TNC) and Tshwane South College (TSC), amongst others. These Colleges provide training in various fields such as engineering, hospitality, business studies, finance, marketing, and more. Skills development is a key focus and prioritised in TVET Colleges, and it aims to equip students with practical skills and industry-specific knowledge that can make them more employable. TVET Colleges often have workshop facilities and experienced workshop instructors who provide hands-on training and Work Integrated Learning to ensure that students are job-ready upon completion of their programmes.

3.5 A brief description of the Department of Higher Education & Training (DHET)

The DHET was founded in 2009 as the South African government restructured its educational ministries, separating basic education from higher education and vocational training. This led to the formation of DHET as a district entity. Its mandate is to provide a competent workforce to support South Africa's economic progress. The DHET has placed significant emphasis on TVET in recent years, acknowledging the need for skilled workers in the economy. It has implemented strategies to improve the quality of TVET colleges and enhance their collaboration with industries. The DHET has prioritised TVET in recent years, recognising the economy's need for

skilled workers. It has implemented strategies to improve the quality of TVET colleges and strengthen their collaboration with industry. The DHET continues to address challenges such as student funding, institutional transformation, programme alignment with labour market needs, and ensuring that education and training contribute to social and economic development.

Agencies under the DHET are Higher Education Institutions, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), Council on Higher Education (CHE), Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA), and the Quality Council for Trade and Occupations (QCTO). All these agencies report to DHET and collectively work towards enhancing the quality, accessibility, and relevance of education and training in South Africa. The DHET Head Office is located at 123 Francis Baard, Pretoria Central, South Africa.

3.6 A brief description of SETAs, NSF, NSDS

Considering the South African SETAs System. South African policymakers recognised the need for a skills revolution to compete in the global economy, resulting in the formation of the Skills Development Act of 1998 (Lundall, 2003). In South Africa, the Act resulted in the establishment of SETA, a vocational skills training system that is responsible for the development of sector skills plans, promotion of learnership, internships, and distribution of the skills development levy paid by employers. The South African SETA system, like the Brazilian S-System, consists of 21 SETAs. Each sector has distinct sub-sectors that encompass a range of connected economic activity. SETAs oversee both commercial and governmental sectors within their respective sectors (Tekwa, 2024).

The National Skills Fund (NSF) provides funding for national skills priorities as defined by the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) and the Human Resources Development Strategy (HRDS) and used for education and training, skills infrastructure development, and development research. NSF has a focus on disadvantaged groups (such as individuals from rural areas) with an objective to develop skills in priority occupations to address skills imbalances by funding learners in universities, TVET, and workplaces. The relevance of SETA, NSF and NSDS in the employability of TVET graduates in South Africa is very significant as they directly influence skills development, funding and labour market alignment.

3.8 Sampling and sample size

This study utilised the case study method, where Tshwane North College (TNC) was chosen as the case to be studied, and served as the research site. With the TNC being the case study, the key informants were identifiedas (a) the TVET Principal; (b) or/and Campus Managers from the college; (c) recruiting officials from the national department; (d) and industry experts.

These respondents were interviewed to solicit perspectives on research questions. Due to the nature of TVET Colleges and how busy the Principals usually are, convenience sampling was applied to the Principal/Campus Managers, while the purposive sampling approach was used for the department officials, industry experts, and TVET graduates.

3.8.1 A brief description of the Tshwane North TVET College (TNC)

TNC was founded in 2006 with the merger of many other colleges. This decision was part of the SA government's larger attempt to reorganise and modernise the TVET system to suit the economy's demands better. The college is located in the Greater Tshwane Metropolis, Gauteng. It has six campuses: Mamelodi, Pretoria, Rosslyn, Soshanguve North, Soshanguve South, and Temba, as well as a corporate (central) office in Pretoria's inner city.

TNC's six (6) campuses are all 25 kilometres away from the central office, with the Temba Campus being the furthest at 41 kilometres. TNC offers NC(V) level 4-6 (Business and Utility Studies) which includes Management Assistant, Financial management, Art and design, Public relations, Clothing production, Tourism, Hospitality & catering services, Public management, Legal secretary, and Business management, and it offers NC(V) level 4-6 (Engineering Studies) which includes civil engineering (brick-laying, plumbing), electrical engineering, and mechanical engineering (automotive, fitting, boiler making), as well as level 2-4 and 1-year bridging programme. All TVET Colleges in South Africa report to the Office of the Minister in the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

3.9 Data collection tools

This section provides an overview of data collection tools, which include key informant in-depth interviews and document analysis.

3.9.1 Key informant in-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted as part of the data collection process. A questionnaire with open-ended questions was designed and used as a data collection tool. The respondents were the Campus Manager and/or Principal from Tshwane North College, industry experts, and TVET graduates, and the respondents imparted their knowledge on the TVET College Graduates, shared their personal experiences, expectations, thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and challenges related to issues of TVETs, graduate Employability in South Africa, Skills, Prospects, and Challenges. The in-depth interviews assisted in producing rich data and allowed detailed and comprehensive exploration of skills development, TVET graduates, challenges as well as prospects. Boyce & Naele (2006) indicated that in-depth interviewing entails holding lengthy, one-on-one interviews with a selected group of respondents to learn about their viewpoints on a given concept, initiative, or circumstance. Some of the limitations or challenges of interviews are when only one person dominates the interview, and time restrictions (Szulc & King, 2022). The total number of key informants interview are 10, as tabled in Table 2 (p. 44).

3.9.2 Document analysis

This study focused on reviewing printed and electronic documents, including, but not limited to, PSET and skills development reports, SETA report, and analysis of relevant legislation and strategies for data collection. This study focused on analysing documents that specifically entail Skills Development from different perspectives to synthesise and appraise the research question and any written documents by pioneers that directly deal with TVET College Graduates, Employability, Skills mismatches, and Challenges in the South African context. Cardno (2018) states that document analysis “is seen as a practical tool that can be put to valuable use by education leaders and can also be adopted as a research method,” as buttressed by Cardno (2018, p. 623). Document analysis has several limitations, one of which is that “documents are not always available as they may be protected or access deliberately blocked” (Cardno, 2018, p. 262). The research engaged and reviewed printed and electronic documents of policy documents, reports, strategies on TVET Colleges. The following documents were analysed;

Table 1D: List of analysed documents

Document no.	Title	Dates	Author/Department
1.	Technical Report	2023	Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)
2.	Strategy Report	2022-2029	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
3.	Study Report	2024	Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)
4.	White Paper on PSET	15 January 2024	South African Government
5.	Innovation and Development 2025 Q4 Stakeholder Committee Report	2024	Tshwane North TVET College
6.	Overview Report on Theme 2: Responsiveness of TVET Colleges To the World Of Work	2024	Commissioned by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and funded by the National Skills Fund (NSF)
7.	An evaluation of the TVET College Governance System	February 2024	DHET, NRF and Institute for Post School Studies
8.	The Services SETA Annual Performance Plan	2025/26	Parliamentary Monitoring Group/ServicesSETA
9.	National Skills Development Plan 2030	2019	Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)

3.10 Ethical consideration

Before beginning the research project, a non-medical clearance certificate was applied for, and the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) School of Governance Ethics Committee issued the clearance certificate (WSG-2024-23) (APPENDIX A). In this research study, consent from participants was acquired before performing the interviews. The participants were told of the research study's aim and objectives, which were to get a thorough understanding of youth employability challenges in South Africa, particularly among TVET graduates. In addition, they were encouraged to ask questions if they required clarification.

They were also told of their rights, which included the ability to withdraw at any time during the interview if they felt uncomfortable, with no consequences for them. Aside from the concerns raised by the procedures and apparatus utilised in a research project, the collection of data from study participants has been shown to pose some ethical considerations that must be closely managed throughout the research process. According to Masud et al., (2025), the information that participants submit as a result of participating in the study needs to be protected. The information will be stored in a hard drive, and a password will be required. This study addressed several ethical considerations, including the right to full disclosure and informed consent, the right to privacy, the right to secrecy, and the avoidance of damage to participants.

Additionally, all research participants were given a participation information sheet (APPENDIX B), which detailed the study's purpose. And an informed consent form (APPENDIX C) to consent to participate in the study and to utilise sections of their narrative in the study. Both materials offered adequate, factual information that the study wanted to obtain. All participants signed a consent form, granting permission to record the interviews and extract quotes from them. Participants were told about their privacy rights, the option to accept or deny the study, and that not participating would not result in any negative consequences or penalties. Participants chose to participate voluntarily. After signing the consent form, participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any moment. In this study, all subjects volunteered to participate, and none withdrew.

This secrecy strategy applies to the data collection procedure, consent forms, recording, transcripts, data processing, data reporting, and dissemination of study findings. After the interviews were completed, the study's recorded audio and electronic documentation were saved on a password-protected computer and will be destroyed after five years. All participants were well-informed about the procedures outlined above.

3.11 Demographic profile of participants

An overview and description of the demographic profile of the research participants, which includes the name of the employer, years of experience, is significant for the study. The following research participants are officials who have been in the industry for many years, and two youth graduates from TVET Colleges (one female who graduated recently, and another one is a male who graduated 10 years ago).

Table 2: Demographic profile of participants

No.	Institution	Description of respondents	Years of experience
1.	Tshwane North (TNC) TVET	Campus Manager	10+
2.	Tshwane North (TNC) TVET	Head of Department: Placements	10+
3.	Tshwane North (TNC) TVET	Head of Department: Partnerships and Linkages	10+
4.	DHET	Chief Director: Programmes, Qualifications & Curriculum Development and Support	10+
5.	DPME	Chief Director: Education & Skills - Monitoring Specialist	10+
6.	DPME	Director of Human Resources: Recruitment & PMDS	10+
7.	DPME	Deputy Director: HR Planning & Administration	10+
8.	DPME	Assistant Director: HRD	10+
9.	TVET Graduate	Graduated 10 years ago	5 years of work experience
10.	TVET Graduate	Graduated 1 year ago	1 year of in-service training
Total number of participants			**10**

The DPME officials were recruited into this study because they work closely with agencies (including SETAs) to recruit graduates for in-service training and internship programs.

TNC's Placement, Partnership, and Linkages departments have a significant impact on employability by facilitating Work-Based Learning, establishing industry collaborations,

promoting graduate recruiting opportunities, and improving career preparedness. While the Qualification & Curriculum office at DHET is critical in defining the employability of TVET graduates since it defines what is taught, how it is structured, and if it matches with labour market needs. The opinion of an Education Monitoring Specialist is needed to gain an overview of the influence that all of these stakeholders have on the employability of TVET graduates from a monitoring standpoint.

3.12 Research limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The study was conducted at only one (1) TVET College, Tshwane North TVET College, where only one (1) TNC Pretoria Campus Manager and/or Principal, recruiting government officials, and industry experts were interviewed. As a result, the views of the Campus Manager and/or Principal cannot be generalised to the larger student population in Tshwane or applied to other TVET Colleges in Gauteng. However, there may be similarities, particularly in terms of challenges, as most TVET colleges operate similarly. Another limitation of the research was that some of the documents could not be accessed due to restrictions.

Thematic analysis is useful as a "basic" method for a variety of research interests and theoretical perspectives because: a) it can be applied to a wide range of research questions, from those about people's experiences or understandings to those about the representation and construction of particular phenomena in particular contexts; b) it can be used to analyze different types of data, from media to focus group or interview transcripts; c) it can work with large or small data-sets; and d) it can be used to produce data-driven or theory-driven analyses (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

3.13 Data analysis approach

The study employed thematic analysis approach to provide insights into how TVET Colleges can enhance their programs and better prepare students for the workforce. Through interviews and document analysis, the data was collected from reviewing documents, and by interviewing one (1) Tshwane-based TVET College, two (2) TVET College graduates, one (1) Sector Expert, one (1) Skills Expert, one (2) Industry Experts, and three (3) HR government officials. The data was processed in such a way that the researcher became acquainted with it, by generating themes, reviewing themes, and writing reports. Although data interpretation can be subjective,

the researcher identified various themes based on the participants' perceptions and objectives of the study.

3.14 Chapter summary

This chapter described the methodological design and technique that this study adopted. It began with an explanation of the research paradigm, followed by details of the sample techniques and tactics employed in this study. The study's data-gathering methodologies were discussed in detail, followed by a description of the transcription and analysis of methods used.

A thorough discussion of the ethical implications of this research study was also provided. The limitations that could have influenced the validity and reliability of the findings were also discussed in full. Thus, to better understand the experiences and opinions of industry experts and employers on TVET graduates from the City of Tshwane, a qualitative research paradigm and its subjective nature were chosen as appropriate paradigms for the study. The next chapter describes the study's research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the study outcomes among perceptions of the TNC Campus Manager and/or Principal, Industry Experts, Skills Expert, unemployed TVET graduates, and government officials who work in recruiting and placements to capture views about TVET Graduates' entry into the labour market. It also reviews relevant documents. The study focuses more on the key government recruitment and industry experts than the perceptions of the graduates themselves, who are only two in this case.

4.2 Findings

The findings of the research are summarised in the form of themes. The primary research questions were broken down into sub-questions, and the respondents will be asked questions based on themes. The questions based on themes addressed both the objectives and the research questions.

4.3 Presentation of data

Data will be gathered through interviews and analysis of documents to examine participants' trends, experiences, and beliefs. The study's objectives are to investigate how effective are the TVET programmes, and what industries think about the skills and abilities of TVET graduates compared to graduates from other higher learning institutions. In addition, the challenges and prospects for career advancement and professional growth for TVET graduates in the current and future job market will be discussed. The themes are presented as follows;

4.4 TVET Employability skills demanded by Industries

The following sub-themes are developed: soft skills versus technical and programmes that are in high demand.

4.4.1 Soft skills versus technical skills

The participant is asked about how essential soft skills are relative to hard skills for TVET graduates in securing employment, and they responded:

"Both are equally vital in obtaining a job. If you lack technical capabilities (hard skills), you will be unable to perform the job, and you do not have a base, meaning the Department must train

you from scratch. Soft skills will help you comprehend the processes of the Department or Unit where you will be employed. Candidates must have good interpersonal skills" (The DPME-HR, Mouth, February 2025)

The response above emphasises the need for both technical and soft skills in finding employment. It suggests that without the essential technical skills, candidates will struggle to carry out their job tasks efficiently. Additionally, good interpersonal skills are essential for workplace performance and interactions.

Collaboration with corporate partners is necessary to ensure case studies include important real-world concerns and abilities, both hard and soft. A relevant case study should improve both technical and soft abilities, such as leadership, professionalism, ethics, interpersonal communication, and critical thinking, which are essential in the workplace (CPUT Technical Report, 2023)

It is evident that the quote above is in agreement that both hard and soft skills are equally important, with area of improvement on skills such as leadership, professionalism, ethics, and communications. This emphasises the issue of conduct and how to communicate properly.

When asked about the essential key skills that are sought after, the participant responded that:

"Report writing and office management. Office management is broad, encompassing filing, telephone etiquette, communication, tidiness and neatness, and confidentiality as interns. Even after you've been appointed, you should stay up to date on current training in your field" – (The DPME-HR, Mouth, February 2025)

It was observed during the field interviews that essential key skills, especially in government, are mostly broad, which includes office management. This emphasises that even after being appointed, candidates need to stay on top of their game by being updated with the latest training in their respective fields.

The participant mentioned that based on the surveys and mini-research done at the DHET level, the most sought-after skills are:

"amongst others, communication, adaptability, teamwork" – *(The Sector Expert, Mouth, February 2025)*

The above responses emphasise that report writing, filling, telephone etiquette, communication, tidiness, neatness and confidentiality, and team work are some of the soft skills that are mostly in demand.

4.4.2 Programmes that are in high demand

"Business management is the most in-demand talent by industries, and there has been a significant increase in demand to the point where all students have been put in industries. Demand exists in both the public (government) and private sectors, with the latter accounting for the majority. Management Assistant is another profession that is in high demand in most businesses. Placed in TVET on all campuses and interned in various offices. Finance management and public relations are also in high demand, with PR supporting marketing initiatives. Things were awful during COVID-19, but the industry began to recover in 2024. The students are placed in various government departments throughout Pretoria, as well as commercial firms such as PricewaterhouseCoopers International Limited, Ernst & Young Global Limited, and Alexander Forbes Group Holding" – (The TNC Pretoria Campus Manager, Mouth, February 2025)

It is evident that the quote above from the interview extract highlights business management as the most programme in demand, as illustrated by the number of students that have been placed in different industries for in-service training. The participant explains that all their business students were placed in various offices including other campuses. The participant further added that finance and public relations students are also in demand.

4.5 Effectiveness of TVET programmes

The following sub-themes are developed: Effectiveness of TVET programmes; Local and International Partners and Work Intergrated Learning (WIL).

4.5.1 Effectiveness of TVET programmes

In the interview, the participant is asked how they would describe the effectiveness of TVET programmes, the response demonstrates that the college TVET programmes are effective since they provide students with the necessary workplace skills. The curriculum focuses on real-world work situations and hands-on learning to help students understand and function in the workplace. This is summarised in the interview extract below;

"TVET programmes are beneficial in that they prepare students for work; the material of their syllabus discusses practical situations that arise in industries and provides students with a

glimpse into what happens in the real work environment" – (The TNC Pretoria Campus Manager, Mouth, February 2025)

The same question is asked from the policy alignment perspective, the participant agrees that the curriculum is centred around practical and job-related qualifications, emphasising the importance of Work-Based Learning (WBL), which is often a mandatory part of TVET programmes. It is evident that WBL is crucial for improving the effectiveness of these programmes and boosting the employability of graduates by providing hands-on experience in real work situations. The response from the participant below explains;

"it all starts with the curriculum, which consists primarily of practical and occupational qualifications offered by TVET Colleges. Comprises three components: knowledge (theory), college-level practicals, and workplace-based learning (WBL), which is a key component for TVET graduates' employability. Most TVET programmes require this WBL. WBL is the primary means of programme effectiveness and enhancing the employability of TVET graduates" – (The Sector Expert, Mouth, February 2025)

When asked about the curriculum's relevance, it is mentioned that TNC provides ministerial programmes aimed at developing a workforce ready for training. This explains that while students obtain product training at these large, recognised organisations, they also acquire exposure to all aspects of their industry, widening their total training experience. The participant emphasised by agreeing below;

"*TNC provides ministerial programmes, which are geared at developing a trainable workforce. TNC provides motor mechanics who can work for Ford, VW, Benz, and BMW, among others. For instance, when students go there, they are focused on product training, but they are exposed to more than just motor mechanics. TNC produces trainable graduates, providing a foundation for industries to expand on training. Industries are contacted when there is a curriculum modification*" – (*The TNC HOD for Partnerships and Linkages, Mouth, February 2025)*

It is quite clear that the success of TVET College courses varies, with some institutions adjusting their programmes and others not. The participant stated that the government has made attempts to modernise the curriculum by switching from N to NCV courses. As a result, what students learned years ago may not be applicable today. This highlights the importance of updating programmes regularly to ensure they remain relevant and marketable in today's job markets. The participants' response is quoted below;

“The issue of content is that some TVETs' curricula are aligned, while others are simply not altering their curriculum. DHET has worked hard to modernise the curriculum, transitioning from N courses to NCV. The industry may be familiar with NCVs that are still in their early stages. It may take some time for them to be interested. Collaborating with industry, the industry is constantly changing; what you did two years ago, for example, educating graduates on Mercedes, the company now uses electricity, whereas it used petrol two years ago. Programmes are constantly being updated to make them more marketable” – (The Skills Expert, Mouth, February 2025)

The study suggests that an effective TVET curriculum should prepare students for low to intermediate skills that are linked to demands in industry.

To be responsive to industry needs, TVET colleges must provide a curriculum that is current and relevant. TVET curriculum content must be kept relevant to the demands of the industry through continuous research, reviews, and industry participation in and support for curriculum development – (Study report by DHET, 2019) [Accessed: January 2025]

4.5.2 Local and International Partners

It is noted that the college has both formal and informal connections with many companies. Although some are put in private companies (both local and international), others are placed in the public sector throughout Gauteng province to conduct practicals and potentially find work after graduation. This explains that students are well placed in local and international partnerships for their practicals, and this is emphasised by the participant below;

“The TNC has informal and formal partnerships with different industries, both local and international, and different government departments, our students are placed in different government departments across Gauteng province, and private companies such as SETA’s, PricewaterhouseCoopers International Limited, Ernst & Young Global Limited, Alexander Forbes Group Holdings, Tsogo Sun, and Mercedes-Benz SA”. It is worth noting that these formal and informal partnerships are formed based on offering student placements to do their in-service training (before graduation), and for possible employment thereafter (after graduation)” – (The TNC Pretoria Campus Manager, Mouth, February 2025)

The study's findings show that the government works with several institutions and agencies, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to improve curriculum development and support students with disabilities. These partnerships make a distinctive contribution to the

implementation of educational initiatives. Additionally, TVET colleges are actively seeking to maintain these collaborations to provide better possibilities and benefits to students. The participant highlighted below;

"DHET has successful partnerships in various areas, there is a range of entities that support curriculum development in different areas, some entities will have a partnership at the National level, and they will be supporting TVET Colleges (supporting TVET with machinery, skills in certain programmes, work readiness programmes, entrepreneurial skills and competition). Including other partnerships with NGOs in support of students with disabilities. Some provide unique support to the delivery of curriculum (e.g. partnerships that provide technology integration). There is a multitude of partnerships that exist for supporting different teaching and learning areas, and TVET Colleges are doing so much to maintain these collaborations and partnerships to benefit the students. – (The Sector Expert, Mouth, February 2025)

The study discovers that the college seeks engagement with industry by soliciting their assistance. It pairs students with sectors that are relevant to their respective fields and seeks funding from SETAs to support student stipends. Furthermore, the college conducts marketing campaigns to negotiate prospective job prospects for its graduates. This was emphasised by the participant below;

"The college will approach the industry and request a collaboration. However, the College's strategy is to seek assistance or explain the problem, and then match students with sectors that provide services for that specific programme, such as placement in automotive courses to automotive industries. After placing a student, the college will seek funding from the SETAs to pay stipends. Students will also assist with the workforce, increasing productivity. The college will market itself by negotiating with industries for employment. TNC is performing well in terms of student placement, and we have a separate office dedicated just for that" – (The TNC HOD for Placement, Mouth, February 2025)

The study emphasises the necessity of matching vocational training to employment market needs. It underlines that industrial attachments are the most important link between TVETs and industry. However, problems exist, such as a lack of proactive efforts by colleges and tardy answers by industry, which impede effective collaboration. This is evident as quoted below;

the need to connect training to the labour market. The most significant link between TVET institutions and industry was found to be industrial attachment. However, problems in the

cooperation included a lack of initiative from TVET institutions and a slow response from the industries - UNESCO 2022-2029 Strategy [Accessed: February 2025]

The study found a scarcity of job placement prospects for learnerships, apprenticeships, and internship programmes. Because of the scarcity of accessible roles, students find it difficult to get practical experience and find work after completing their education. This is extracted and explained below;

lack of available employment placements for the LAI (Learnerships, Apprenticeships, and Internships) programme, and encouraging more employers to participate is crucial for successful implementation – (Study report by DHET, March 2024) [Accessed: February 2025]

The study found that in order to close the gap between education and the workplace, South Africa's Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) mainly collaborate with companies, educational institutions, and training providers to assist recent graduates in finding employment. They organise, fund, and oversee apprenticeships, internships, and learnerships that offer vital work experience.

"The Services SETA's skills development approach places a strong emphasis on collaboration since it works with a variety of economic players. This is a result of the recognition that demand exceeds supply, necessitating the establishment of strategic alliances to expand access to and opportunities for skills development. The Services SETA has created a Strategic Partnerships & Collaboration section to promote this corporate culture and make sure that interventions for skill development are in line with this main objective" – (ServicesSETA, 2023) [Accessed: December 2025]

The study found that Services SETA has initiated several partnerships with key stakeholders, including TVET and CET Colleges, and Universities. These partnerships focus on the need and supply of skills, as well as the role of higher education institutions.

4.5.3 Work Integrated Learning (WIL)

According to the study, the foundation for enhancing employability begins with the curriculum of TVET programmes, which prioritises work-based learning (WBL). WBL is necessary for completing qualifications and serves as the college's primary strategy for increasing students' employability. Recent advancements in this area have resulted in the creation of new programmes aimed at better preparing students for the job market. This is emphasised by the participant below;

“It begins with the curriculum itself. The vocational and occupational curriculum programmes consist of three components: knowledge (theory), college-level practicals, and Workplace Based Learning (WBL), which is crucial for TVET graduates' employability. This WBL is required for the majority of TVET programmes. The primary strategy for enhancing TVET graduates' employability is WBL. For this reason, organisations ought to form and preserve alliances with businesses. And that's one area where the new programmes have improved” – (The Sector Expert, Mouth, February 2025)

When asked about the importance of internships, apprenticeships, and WIL in helping TVET graduates find employment, the participant answered:

“Very important. Without WIL, the student lacks the practical component required to graduate and find work. These practicals provide students with exposure and experience, as well as an overview of whether or not they are well situated. The only issue is that students are only exposed to the bare minimum throughout training, rather than the maximum” – (The Skills Expert, Mouth, February 2025)

The student found out that WIL is important, as it equips students with practical skills necessary to graduate and succeed in the job market. These experiences help students assess their preparedness for employment. However, a significant concern is that these students often receive only minor exposure during their training, rather than a comprehensive and enriching experience for them to use when applying for employment. The participant explains in the above statement.

The participant was asked in an interview how TVET college–industry partnerships can be strengthened to benefit students, colleges, and industry, and they responded:

“If only government can intervene in strengthening the relationship between students, colleges, and industry. There is a form of mistrust that is always perceived between TVET graduates and the industry. If the issue of the stipend for graduates can be solved. Both manpower and productivity (WIL) will be increased” – (The TNC Pretoria Campus Manager, Mouth, February 2025)

The study discovers that the institution follows criteria from a White Paper that advocates for collaborations between TVET colleges and industrial partners. This explains that the primary goal of these collaborations is to facilitate student placements for practical experience. Furthermore, the industry helps the institution by providing instructors with upskilling, training,

and exposure to real-world work contexts, which improves the overall educational experience for students. It is mentioned in the interview by the participant and expressed below;

“The college is guided by The White Paper, which promotes TVET Colleges to create industry collaborations. The goal, among others, is to place students for practicals. The industry also provides support in the form of lecturer upskilling, training, and Work-Base Exposure” – (The TNC HOD for the Placement, Mouth, February 2025)

The participant emphasises the value of partnerships in TVETs. It is recommended that TVET councils regularly engage industry representatives to avoid working in isolation. This tells ys that the Industry involvement is critical in defining the practical components of qualifications, and there should be an integrated ecosystem in which all stakeholders collaborate and contribute efficiently to improving the educational experience. The participant explained;

“The official working relationship is important. TVET councils must involve industry representatives. They cannot have a council of academics and a council of community stakeholders working in isolation and conclude. They must give the industry a bigger voice in the running of those colleges. Diversity is important, the whole ecosystem must be interconnected and presented” – (The Skills Expert, Mouth, February 2025)

The study found that ServicesSETA established a learner portal to gather information regarding prospective learners seeking training opportunities.

“ServicesSETA developed a learner portal to collect information about potential learners seeking training opportunities. Being on the learner portal allows businesses and training providers to find you when they are seeking for learners. Employers, training providers, and partners offering Services SETA-funded services will receive information through the learner site” – (ServicesSETA, 2024) [Accessed: June 2025]

The study found that through collaboration with industry and support of the government's initiative to encourage the employment of young people, SETA Sector Skills Plan will incorporate digital skills and internships for graduates in their interventions.

SETA Sector Skills Plan to include graduates (internship) in partnership with the industry and supporting the government’s programme to promote the absorption of youth in employment. (SETA Sector Skills Plan 2030, 2019) [Accessed: July 2025]

Lastly, the study found that SETA bridges the gap between formal education and training systems and the workplace by facilitating and funding learning programmes that build the skills set.

SETAs in South Africa address skills gaps by serving as a link between education and the workplace. They assess industry-specific skill shortages and fund training programs such as learnerships, apprenticeships, and internships to help both working and unemployed people improve their skills" (ServicesSETA, 2024) – [Accessed: July 2025]

4. 6 Competencies of TVET graduates compared to those from other institutions

The following themes are developed; Competencies of TVET graduates and Certification and qualification.

4.6.1 Competencies of TVET graduates

It is quite clear that TVET graduates have distinct behavioural attributes, particularly humility and groundedness, that set them apart from traditional university graduates. While all graduates have unique behaviours, TVET graduates are perceived as more approachable and easy to interact with within the workplace. This distinction emphasises the relevance of interpersonal skills in graduates' employment prospects. This is highlighted by the participant below;

"The behaviour and attitude of TVET graduates are among the characteristics that set them apart from other graduates. Not that other grads lack behaviour, but TVET graduates are consistently distinguished by their humility and groundedness. That is the quality that employers find they can work with. Most traditional university graduates are "know-how" inclined, and that's the attitude employers find difficult to work with" – (TNC Pretoria Campus Manager, Mouth, February 2025)

It is evident that TVET graduates are more independent and capable of working on their own, particularly in practical activities. They typically outperform individuals who have simply obtained theoretical schooling, as their hands-on experience throughout training provides them with valuable abilities. This explains why practical learning is more successful in improving job performance than theoretical information. It is expressed below;

"TVET graduates have a certain level of independence, making them work with or without supervision, particularly in the practical area, TVET sectors are performing fairly well. Compared to those who only acquired theory, graduates who completed more practical work throughout

their TVET are performing far better" – (The TNC Pretoria Campus Manager, Mouth, February 2025)

The research found that TVET graduates are believed to have a superior understanding of practical work and can grasp concepts faster than graduates from other higher education institutions. This shows that TVET graduates are better prepared for the workforce and can handle duties more efficiently than their colleagues from other educational backgrounds. The participant explains;

"Compared to graduates from other higher education institutions, TVET graduates understood the work and grasped the concepts considerably more quickly. TVET graduates outperform graduates from other higher education institutions in terms of readiness and responsibilities. Graduates are not the same, so are their competencies at work" – (DPME-HR, Mouth, February 2025)

It is evident that TVET colleges believe their graduates have good qualifications and abilities, which is supported by the high demand for in-service training from industries. TNC Pretoria Campus also offers exit programmes to help students develop important soft skills, enhancing their employability. It is explained by the TNC Pretoria Campus Manager below;

"Indeed, TVET colleges have long held the view that their graduates are highly qualified and skilled, as evidenced by the considerable demand for in-service training students they are requested from industry. All students ready to graduate are invited to exit workshops at the Pretoria Campus. Gather all N6 students and prepare them for CV writing, interview presentations, interview questions, and internship/employment and placement, and explain to them how to conduct themselves while completing practicals in their respective disciplines, such as the subject of bribery, corruption, and confidentiality. For example, when it comes to hospitality, you should focus on cooking rather than burning because money is lost. Issue of the strike, beg to be released, and do not join a strike that has nothing to do with you" – (The TNC Pretoria Campus Manager, Mouth, February 2025)

The participant explains that the TVET College graduates are better prepared for the workforce because they receive a well-rounded education that encompasses soft skills, theoretical knowledge, and practical work preparedness. This intensive preparation improves their potential to flourish in a professional setting. The participant elaborates below;

“TVET College prepared me for the workforce in several ways, including soft skills, knowledge and theory, and work readiness” – (TVET College Graduate, Mouth, February 2025)

It is proven that the former TVET College alumni have confidence in their abilities thanks to the TVET's extensive training. However, they face problems due to an oversupply of graduates compared to the limited career prospects available in Tshwane, causing them to relocate in search of employment. The participant highlights below;

“I believe I am competent because TNC prepared me thoroughly for work, the problem is the number of Marketing graduates versus the limited number of jobs in Tshwane, I even relocated to Rustenburg because of a lack of jobs” – (The TNC College Graduate, Mouth, February 2025)

4.6.2 Certification and qualifications

In terms of how industries perceive the skills and competencies of TVET graduates in comparison to graduates from other higher learning institutions, and it was revealed that TVET sectors perform well, particularly in terms of practical qualifications. Graduates who participated in more hands-on practical work through TVETs are more successful than those who concentrated exclusively on theoretical study. This demonstrates the importance of practical experience in improving job performance and readiness. The participant explaines below;

“TVET sectors are doing fairly well, especially when it comes to the practical part. Graduates who did more practical work from TVETs are doing much better than those who just learned theory” – (TNC Pretoria Campus Manager, Mouth, February 2025)

Again, in terms of the recognition of TVET qualifications' impact on the employability of graduates, government officials shared almost the same perspectives from the government side highlighting that while some qualifications, such as an N6 in Office Administration or a Degree in Administration, can have a significant impact on hiring decisions, the particular requirements for roles can vary depending on departmental needs. These requirements may change annually, suggesting that job descriptions are not static and must adjust to changing departmental demands. The participant adds below;

“It does impact a lot, but also it depends on the need requirements of the Branch or Directorate where they need graduates. Some requirements will come mentioning they need N6 Office Admin, and HR will advertise using that. Some will say a Degree in Admin, and HR will advise using the exact specification. It depends on what the Branch or Directorate needs for that year, as needs keep changing each year” – (The DPME-HR, Mouth, February 2025)

Following up, when asked if there are any specific certifications that give candidates an edge, The study reveals that applicants who use additional certificates during interviews can get a competitive advantage. Effectively displaying how these credentials will help their success in the applied position is vital for making a positive impression on potential employers. The participant responds;

Indeed, if candidates use those extra certificates to market themselves during the interview, the extra training gives them a competitive advantage and helps them stand out from the others. Additional certifications always give candidates an advantage when selling themselves in an interview by mentioning the relevance of their additional certification to the position applied for, even though the majority only come with their qualification and receive training after joining the Department – (The DPME-HR, Mouth, February 2025)

According to information from DPME-HR, the government agrees to extend internship programmes from one to two years. This modification intends to help recent graduates achieve the necessary experience to qualify for entry-level positions, correcting a previous issue in which one year of experience was insufficient for job applications. The DPME-HR further added;

"The government came up with a plan to extend the internship programme from one year to two years so that recent graduates with internships can still qualify for entry-level positions. Previously, internships were only one year long and required at least two years of work experience for entry-level positions. Even after one year of training, the intern would not be eligible for entry-level positions. Even individuals without qualifications who have relevant work experience can still apply because they have changed the requirement to Matric + substantial work experience" – (The DPME-HR, Mouth, February 2025)

4.7 Overall challenges

The following theme is developed; Skills gap.

4.7.1 Skills gap

According to the survey, one primary source of concern is the skill gap in the employment market, among other things. However, it emphasises that without economic growth, training alone will not result in greater employment prospects. As a result, it is critical to tailor training programmes to industry requirements, with a concentration on teaching rare skills. Furthermore, the reputation and trustworthiness of businesses play a critical role in this environment. The participant explains below;

“among other reasons, the skill gap is a concern. However, if the economy does not grow, there will be no employment. You can train as many people as you want, but if the economy isn't expanding, there will be a problem with employment. You need to train them since the industry needs them. Many students are studying Business Management, not Engineering (scarce skills). Another difficulty is that the ecosystem is not entirely intended to support TVET graduates' employment. If the company where you completed your practicals is not trustworthy, you will be disregarded. Not going to obtain the job” – (The Skills Expert, Mouth, February 2025)

The study indicates that, based on research by public entities, employers value soft talents. Employers frequently fail to discover major gaps in technical abilities, despite their importance. Instead, they highlight the importance of an employee's ability to adapt and deal with workplace obstacles. The participant explains below;

“According to the information gathered by DHET through surveys and mini-research, soft skills are primarily important. Employers would not typically identify shortcomings on the technical side, but the ability to cope and adjust in the workplace is key” – (The Sector Expert, Mouth, February 2025)

In terms of how important soft skills are relative to hard skills for TVET graduates in securing employment, the study discovers that both are equally important for finding a job. Technical skills provide the necessary information to execute the job, whereas soft skills improve an individual's grasp of how the workplace works. Together, they contribute to a well-rounded ability in the labour market. The participant explained below;

“They are both equally important in securing employment. If you do not have the technical skills (hard skills), you won’t be able to do the job. It means you do not have the base, the department has to train you from scratch. Soft skills on the other hand help to understand the operations of the department or unit you will be employed in, to shape you up. Candidates must have good people skills. Personalities are different, just like work environments” – (The DPME-HR, Mouth, February 2025)

The participant admits and highlightes below:

“The skills learned in public management are highly relevant to the current job market demand. In South Africa, the public sector is a significant employer, and the skills gained through public management programmes are essential for careers in government departments, municipalities, and public entities”- (TVET College graduate, Mouth, February 2025)

Additionally, the participant concludes that;

"Limited jobs in Marketing, and finding myself working in a mine, not using my Marketing qualification at all" – (TVET College graduate, Mouth, February 2025)

The above statements explain that TVET graduates are well prepared regarding soft skills from different fields. In addition to their technical skills, the graduates will be able to excel in the workplace with the additional soft skills gained during their studies.

4.8 Discussions

A skill mismatch is identified as a challenge affecting the employability of TVET graduates. The respondent sighed about not being qualified to work in the marketing profession, but having to find himself working in the mining sector in Rustenburg, because there were no jobs in Tshwane. The finding is consistent with studies where several factors that affect graduate employability in the labour market, such as the rising gap between the labour market in terms of what employers need and the availability of particular skills given by graduates (Khan et al., 2024; Ahmed, 2024; Albert et al., 2023; Rathelot et al., 2023; Salahuddin et al., 2023; Chuang et al., 2022; Mohd et al., 2020).

Looking for employment is never easy. The participant complained of the challenges graduates face, such as little to no experience, tight competition from other candidates, and a lack of viable work opportunities. This outcome collaborates with a study where the author argued that graduate pathways were usually challenging journeys reflecting a series of interim jobs and high mobility (Lourens, 2016). Although the participant explained that they had attended 3 (three) job interviews so far, it was found that finding a job as a fresh graduate is not easy. This agrees with the issue of a mismatch of skills, lack of experience, geographic mobility, and limited job opportunities (Habiyaremye et al., 2022; Mseleku, 2022; MacGinty, 2024).

This study found that the employability of most TVET graduates begins at the WIL level when students must finish their practical component before receiving their qualifications. This discussion is supported by the literature in chapter two that Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is a pedagogical strategy used in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutes to promote student employability. WIL programmes are another type of opportunity in which students can build relationships with employers for future job opportunities after graduation, as supported by Govender and Wait (2017), that Work-integrated Learning (WIL) attempts to

deliberately inspire students to embrace prospective future occupations, contributing to economic innovation and growth (Govender and Wait, 2017).

During in-service training, the gap that one of the participants observed that there is no system in place to give feedback to the higher learning institutions regarding the readiness and preparedness of their in-service students. Due to embarrassment, graduates who are still performing below expectations will not submit their WIL files to the institution. They would prefer to go through the internship process again. Instead of assuming that graduates are inept right away, DPME is always prepared to take remedial action to help them. In other words, students should strive to grow better in particular areas. This is supported by Winberg & Nomgauza (2023) that the impact of partnership and collaboration is important. The key motivators behind these industry collaborations were the need to ensure that trainers receive sufficient training and to develop a curriculum that better satisfies industry demands. With the economy and job demands evolving, employment opportunities and labour market participation are critical components of modern society (Sharma, 2023). The gap where students in training are not being monitored would have never existed if there were a strong partnership and collaboration between TVET Colleges and Industries.

The DHET mentioned that the government intends TVET colleges to constitute the foundation of the country's skills development system. 12 years later, after the publication of the White Paper on PSET, there is still a stigma associated with TVET colleges over the quality of its graduates and the curricula they offer. The participants supports that the NQF level of TVET colleges remains low, making it difficult for businesses to hire TVET graduates with only a diploma and no extra credentials. Even after they have completed their qualifications and wish to continue their studies (e.g., B-tech or Degree), the institution does not acknowledge their qualifications.

The findings of this research study emphasises the partnerships and collaboration. Therefore, it agrees with UNESCO's international guidelines for improving technical and vocational education and training systems, which explains the need to connect training to the labour market. The most significant link between TVET institutions and industry was found to be industrial attachment (UNESCO, 2015). However, TVET Colleges must strive to improve their initiatives, and the industry responds quickly to the requests from TVET Colleges.

Another factor influencing TVET college graduates' employability is the delay in issuing certificates to students. This is in accordance with a report conducted in 2018, in which 2018 it

was reported that some TVET students had been waiting for their certificates for up to ten years (Adams, 2019). The participants mentioned this issue, saying that after graduating in 2015, they had to wait for their qualification for over a year, and they believed that this may have impacted their employability because the employers wanted the original qualification, not academic records showing qualification completed. This is disadvantaging TVET graduates, while other graduates from higher learning institutions get their qualifications on the day of graduation. This finding is not there in the literature review in chapter two, but it is an important factor that needs to be dealt with by DHET. TVET College graduates must get their qualifications as soon as they graduate.

A variety of contributory reasons and findings are identified, resulting in TVET colleges being unable to meet their purpose of being responsive and connected with local industry demands. The significance of responsiveness and collaboration is supported by Winberg & Nomgauza is(2023). The importance of cooperation and partnership is also emphasised by the participants of the study. The goal, among others, is to place students for practicals. The industry also provides support in the form of lecturer upskilling, training, and a Work-Based Expose. Emphasising more that Workplace Based Learning (WBL) is a critical component in the employability of TVET graduates. Most TVET programmes require this WBL. WBL is the primary means of enhancing the employability of TVET graduates.

The employer seems to be equally valuing both soft and hard skills. Further mentioning that they are equally vital in obtaining the job. If graduates lack technical capabilities (hard skills), they will be unable to perform the job. It means they do not have a base, thus the department has to train them from scratch, which can be quite expensive. Soft skills will help them understand the processes of the department or unit where they will be serving. In a nutshell, the employers do not have any challenges with the competencies of TVET graduates compared with those from other institutes. The importance of soft skills is supported by Majid et al. (2019).

SETA, In South Africa, plays an important role in boosting TVET graduates' employability by integrating education, skill development, and labour markets. SETAs were created under the Skills Development Act to develop sector-specific skills and address national skill shortages. They work within the framework of DHET and match their tactics with the NSDS. Sector Skills Plans (SSPs) help SETAs identify scarce and key skills in each industry. This guarantees that TVET curricula are responsive to real-world labour market demands, hence increasing graduate employability (NSDS 2019). According to DHET, SETAs manage skills development levies

collected from companies and distribute funds to learnerships, apprenticeships, internships, and Work Integrated Learning (WIL). By supporting these, SETAs provide TVET students with real workplace experience, which is sometimes a prerequisite for employment.

4.9 Chapter summary

This chapter presents the study's findings, as well as data presentation and discussion. The findings are organised into themes. The following four (4) themes: (a) TVET Employability skills demanded by Industries, (b) Effectiveness of TVET programmes, (c) Competencies of TVET graduates compared to those from other institutions, and (d) Overall challenges. TVET Employability skills demanded by industries are organised based on the study's objectives and, eventually, respond to the research questions. This chapter analyses the significance of the findings in the context of the research, as well as their relationship to current knowledge and hypotheses. The layout is seeking to provide a complete yet organised structure to the research undertaken, allowing for a clear understanding of the objectives and outcomes.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter includes a summary of the empirical research, conclusion, and recommendations based on the research topic “The Employability of the youth attending the Technical and Vocational Education and Training in South Africa”. The recommendations are based on the research findings, analysis, and what could be feasible in the future, to benefit the whole TVET system.

5.2 Summary

This section discusses the essential employability skills that are now in demand by industries in Tshwane, assesses the efficiency of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes in satisfying these demands, and investigates industry opinions of TVET graduates. It also examines the challenges that TVET graduates experience in finding work, as well as the potential opportunities that await them in the labour market. Overall, it provides an overview of the landscape of employability skills and the role of TVET in educating graduates to meet industrial demands.

5.2.1 Currently demanded employability skills by the Industries in Tshwane

Industries are particularly interested in business management, and demand has increased significantly to the point where all students have been assigned to industries. Demand occurs in both the public (government) and private sectors, with the latter being the majority. Another highly sought-after career in most firms is management assistant. Students are also placed in TVET programmes across all campuses and intern in various offices. Finance management and public relations are also in great demand, with personal relations helping with marketing activities.

The government conducts a requirements assessment and sends requests to Branch Heads to estimate the number of Interns required. If TVET graduates are required, they will indicate how many must be trained under WIL, and assist them in their practice to meet the practical requirements for their various qualifications. Then write a report describing the combined needs of the branches. However, most line functions in government prefer to hire TVET students for administrative posts. In the past, the government focused on graduates from traditional

institutions and universities of technology; however, the standards have lately expanded to include TVET graduates. Market dynamics evolve, and so do employability criteria.

5.2.2 Effectiveness of TVET programmes

TVET programmes benefit students by preparing them for employment. The syllabus material tackles practical scenarios that take place in industries and gives them a glimpse into what happens in the real work world. It all begins with the curriculum, which is mostly comprised of practical components in occupational qualifications provided by TVET Colleges. Most TVET programmes require this WBL. WBL is the key method of programme efficacy and improving the employability of TVET graduates. TNC offers ministerial programmes aimed at establishing a trainable workforce. TNC offers motor mechanics who may work for Ford, VW, Benz, and BMW, among others. For example, when students go there, they are primarily interested in product training, but they are also exposed to more than motor mechanics. TNC provides trainable graduates, laying the groundwork for enterprises to increase their training initiatives. Industries are contacted when there is a curriculum modification.

5.2.3 Perception of industries on TVET graduates' skills & competencies compared to others

TVET graduates differ from other graduates in terms of their behaviour and attitude. Not intending that other graduates lack character, but TVET graduates are consistently recognised by their humility and groundedness. Employers perceive this to be a characteristic they can work with. Most traditional university graduates have a "know-how" mindset, which businesses find difficult to deal with. TVET graduates possess a certain level of independence, allowing them to operate with or without supervision. TVET sectors perform well, particularly in the practical field. Graduates who undertook more practical work during their TVET performed far better than those who merely learned theory.

Compared to graduates from other higher education institutions, TVET graduates understood and assimilated the concepts far faster. TVET graduates beat graduates of other higher education institutions in terms of preparation and responsibility. All students who are about to graduate are invited to departure workshops at the Pretoria Campus. Gather all N6 students and prepare them for curriculum vitae (CV) writing, interview presentations, interview questions, internship/employment, and placement, and explain to them how to conduct themselves while

completing practicals in their respective disciplines, such as the topic of bribery, corruption, and confidentiality, and this was attested by the two TVET graduates.

5.2.4 TVET graduate challenges

The recent admin graduate from Taletso TVET College, but residing in Tshwane, explained that looking for work may be a difficult and competitive process. They highlighted that they applied for administrative employment and attended administrative clerk interviews. Added that despite attending three interviews, getting a job as a recent graduate is difficult due to a lack of experience, strong competition, and restricted career options. While the other marketing graduate who graduated a decade ago complained that they are working in the mine at Rustenburg, and not using their qualification in the mining sector. This is because of limited jobs in the marketing field, and they are forced to take any other job. Also indicated that they received their qualification after a long time, which may be another factor that hindered their employability after graduating.

5.2.5 Prospects for career advancement and professional growth for TVET graduates

TVET gradates are growing and succeeding in their different careers; yet, when they desire to extend their education, their N6/Diplomas may not qualify them for Degrees or B-Tech. This causes them to start their certifications from the beginning, which can be costly and time-consuming. This delays their advancement and growth. Previously, TVET graduates were not prioritised in internships or in-service training because most requirements were geared at graduates with B. Com degrees, for example. They now accommodate all graduates, providing the same stipend and salary and equal opportunity to advance and grow in their careers. The DPSA once issued a circular on it. Another challenge is the interview process; each candidate must perform and market themselves well throughout the interview. TVET graduates have been witnessed to progress and grow professionally when they get trained just like any other graduates.

Additionally, advancement of technology is key, TVET students must keep up with the latest technology. Whether you are studying mechanics, electronic engineering, or administration, everything is going digital. With 4IR in full effect, equipping yourself as a graduate with the latest technology will make you competitive and marketable not only locally, but also internationally.

5.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the employability of TVET graduates in light of South Africa's significant youth unemployment. Using the obtained data, the researcher was able to draw conclusions based on the research questions and make recommendations that could improve TVET institutions' operations and better satisfy the needs of the industry. The study's key contribution is to identify significant hurdles to TVET graduates' employment. TVET institutions must be effective for South African graduates to be skilled and for the economy to function properly.

The findings emphasise the importance of industry players including SETAs and the need for an effective relationship between TVET colleges and the industry. The transfer from a higher education institution to the labour market is also influenced by internal and external factors and challenges, such as geographic location, socioeconomic status, and skill mismatch. With SETAs being a cornerstone of South Africa's strategy to enhance youth employability, this study also discovered that these challenges contributed to the delay in graduates' entry into the workforce. For this reason, DHET must address the challenges that TVET colleges face. TVET colleges' programmes must be based on the country's most sought-after vocations. By examining the skills that are in short supply in the country, TVET colleges can better manage programme enrolment.

To be responsive to the expectations of the industry, TVET colleges must offer a curriculum that is relevant to those demands. The curriculum serves as the link between the concepts of responsiveness and employability, as the latter must be understood in order to accomplish the former. Although all of these curriculum drivers—employers, job seekers, legislation and policies, and education and training institutions—are significant, two imperatives in particular shape curriculum responsiveness in South African Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges. Meeting economic demands comes first, followed by addressing more general societal challenges.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the programmes that TNC TVET College offers, and the varying opinions of industry experts, skills, sector experts, DPME-HR officials, and two TVET College graduates, as well as analysed documents. As such, they cannot be generelised to the whole Gauteng population. It is recommended that:

- A curricula to be developed that align with current industry needs, matching the national list of occupations in high demand, standards, and practices.
- The TVET curriculum content to be kept relevant to the needs of the industry through regular research, reviews, and industry involvement in and support for curriculum development.
- A collaboration with the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) and recruitment agencies to expedite graduate placement. DEL can work with SETAs to create programmes that match graduates with suitable job openings based on their skills, qualifications, and interests.
- An active and regular engagement with the industry in the training process by inviting them to provide inputs on programme design and training content. This will also encourage industries to take an active role in mentoring and training students during their Work Based Learning.
- The TVET Colleges to develop feedback and continuous improvement processes to collect feedback from companies on the performance of TVET graduates during their WBL experience. Additionally, use feedback on a frequent basis to update training programmes and better align them with worker requirements.
- The TVET Colleges, and DHET must streamline administrative processes by increasing staffing and resources, improving communication, in order to reduce certification backlogs so that graduates receive their diplomas on graduation day.
- Include soft skills as part of the training requirement.
- Introduce programmes that will meet curriculum and 4IR workplace demands.
- SETA to strengthen the coordination role between industry and TVET Colleges.
- Introduce a national policy that aligns with the National List of Occupations in High Demand and labour market demands.

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Table 3: Field of Study Categories

Field of study	**Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Categories**
Commerce	Business, Commerce or Management Sciences; Marketing (TVET); Finance, Economics and Accounting (TVET); Management (TVET)
Engineering	Engineering or Engineering Technology; Architecture or Environment Design; Civil Engineering and Building Construction (TVET); Engineering (TVET); Mechatronics (TVET)
Science	Mathematical Sciences; Life Sciences or Physical Sciences; Computer Sciences; Information Technology and Computer Science (TVET)
Arts and Social Sciences	Psychology; Philosophy, Religion or Theology; Visual and Performing Arts; Languages, Linguistics or Literature; Social Sciences or Social Studies; Libraries or Museums; Communication; Home Economics
Education	Education, Training or Development; Physical Education or Leisure; Education and Development (TVET)
Administration	Public Administration or Social Services; Office Administration (TVET)
Hospitality and Tourism	Hospitality (TVET); Tourism (TVET)
Technology	Industrial Arts, Traders or Technology; Electrical Infrastructure Construction (TVET)
Military, Safety, and Police	Military Sciences; Safety in Society (TVET)
Agriculture	Agriculture or Renewable Natural Resources; Primary Agriculture (TVET)
Health	Health Care or Health Sciences
Law	Law

Table 4: Broad Unemployment Rate by Field of Study

Field of study	**2015Q1**	**2019Q1**	**2023Q1**
Commerce	17.5%	19.5%	24.0%
Engineering	14.6%	17.3%	24.6%
Science	22.8%	20.5%	22.3%
Arts and Social Science	15.7%	14.6%	23.6%
Health	12.2%	9.6%	13.2%
Hospitality and Tourism	23.3%	27.3%	39.4%
Education	7.5%	8.6%	12.9%
Technology	23.2%	27.6%	32.8%
Administration	22.0%	28.9%	31.4%
Military, Safety, and Security	25.2%	16.8%	22.4%
Agriculture	11.2%	32.5%	23.4%
Law	10.0%	8.7%	14.4%
Other	24.1%	21.8%	24.7%

Notes to Table 4: Broad unemployment rates for individuals who reported obtaining their highest level of education from particular fields of study. Data sourced from QLFS 2015Q1, 2019Q1, and 2023Q1 and MacGinty, H. (2024). Graduate Unemployment in South Africa.

Table 5: Broad Unemployment Rates for Universities and TVET Colleges

Higher Institution	**2015**	**2019**	**2023**
Universities	14.0%	13.4%	20.5%
TVET Colleges	21.8%	26.2%	28.6%

Notes to Table 5: Broad unemployment rates for individuals who reported obtaining their highest level of education from either a university or TVET. Data sourced from QLFS 2015Q1, 2019Q1, and 2023Q1 & MacGinty, H. (2024). Graduate Unemployment in South Africa.

APPENDIX A



Research topic: The employability of the youth attending the Technical and Vocational Education and Training in South Africa

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is **Vuyane Masiza**, I am a Master of **Management student (2262240)** at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr. Evens Sakyi Boadu. I am conducting a research study about the employability of the youth attending the TVETs in South Africa.

I am inviting you to take part in an interview. If you decide to take part, your participation in this research study will last about 1 hour max. The interview will take place at location & time preferred by you. With your permission, I would like to audio. This data will be stored in secured, lockable space for 5 years and/or deleted after 5 years. Only the researcher will have access to the data.

During the research activity, I will need to ask for some personal information about you, including where are you based, age, profession and years in profession.

The interview will be confidential and anonymous. When I share the results of the research study, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you. With your permission, other researchers may use the data collected from this research study, but your name and any personal information will not be used or passed on.

If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You do not have to take part. You can stop being in the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research study. You will not lose any services, benefits or rights you would normally have if you decide not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything. You will not be paid for being in this research study.

The risks for this research study are minimal, the interview will be paused if questions asked may make you feel sad or upset.

This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the university library website. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,
Researcher:
Vuyane Masiza, 078 213 3098

Supervisor:Dr Evens Sakyi Boadu evans.boadu1@wits.ac.za & Prof. Caitlin Blaser Mapitsa caitlin.mapitsa@wits.ac.za

APPENDIX B



Research topic: The employability of the youth attending the Technical and Vocational Education and Training in South Africa

Mr. Vuyane Masiza

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio-recorded	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report/ manuscript/book chapter	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name or other identifying data will not be used by the researcher in their research report)	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on	YES	NO

…… (signature)
(name of participant)
30 January 2025 (date)

…… (signature)
(name of researcher)
30 January 2025 (date)

APPENDIX C: Ethical clearance letter

SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE ETHICS COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE: WSG-2024-23

PROJECT TITLE: The employability of the youth attending the Technical and Vocational Education and Training in South Africa

INVESTIGATOR Vuyane Masiza

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR School of Governance

DATE CONSIDERED 20 August 2024

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE Approved unconditionally

RISK LEVEL Minimal Risk

EXPIRY DATE Date of submission of the Research Report

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 9th of January 2024 **CHAIRPERSON** _____

Rekgotsofetse Chikane

cc: Supervisor(s): Dr Evans Boadu, Prof. Caitlin Blaser Mapitsa

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.



30 April 2025

APPENDIX D

Research Office:

Lehlohonolo Mmolotsane

Tel: 011 717 3968

Email: Lehlohonolo.mmolotsane@wits.ac.za

Research Ethics Chair:

Rekgotsofetse Chikane

Tel: 0117173869

Email: rekgotsofetse.chikane@wits.ac.za

21 August 2024

Dear **Vuyane Masiza**

Title: **The employability of the youth attending the Technical and Vocational Education and Training in South Africa**

Student Number: **2262240**

Degree: Masters in Management

Ethics Clearance Number: **WSG-2024-23**

All candidates must satisfy the University's ethical standards for research. Your ethics application has been received and reviewed by the Wits School of Governance Human Research Ethics Committee.

Your ethical clearance has been approved subject to you getting permission to conduct research from all sites where research is conducted. The letter(s) of permission to undertake research must be submitted to the WSG Research Office and kept on file with your final proposal and other ethics documents. You may commence your data collection under the guidance of your supervisor that is not related to research sites that have not provided permission. In the event that the scope, methodology or nature of the research changes, you are required to submit another ethics application reflecting the changes. The onus is on you as the candidate, with support from your supervisor, to ensure your research complies with university human research ethics policies and protocols at all stages of the research process. It is recommended that you keep this letter in a safe place as you are responsible for ensuring you have proof of ethics clearance and have lodged the ethics clearance / protocol number with Faculty before final submission of your research report. If you do not have an ethics clearance number, you are not permitted to graduate.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

Rekgotsofetse Chikane - Research Ethics Chair