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A LONGITUDINAL INVESTIGATION INTO EMPLOYABILITY: STUDENT TRANSITION AND EXPERIENCES FROM TERTIARY EDUCATION INTO THE LABOUR MARKET.

BY

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200909617

SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF COMMERCE IN INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY

FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND COMMERCE

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2018

Abstract

Orientation: Several policies have been formulated by the government to redress the inequalities of apartheid. However, the policies have not yielded any positive results as many graduates from Historically Disadvantaged Institutes (HDIs) continue to struggle in the open labour market as compared to graduates from Historically Advantaged Institutes (HAIs). This has been mainly attributed to the legacy of apartheid in several previous studies. As a result, most of these previously disadvantaged individuals (mostly Black Africans) struggle to make the transition from higher education into the world of work.

Research Purpose: This study thus explores the journeys of these Black African students from HDIs to understand the transition and experiences from tertiary education into the labour market. Further, the research sought to understand how these transitions and experiences manifest in a context of high unemployment. Finally, the resolution tactics used by students in such a context are given attention.

Research approach, design and method: A longitudinal qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for the study as the aim was to understand the changes that occurred over time. The data was collected over a two-year period. A narrative inquiry was utilized as it allowed the participants to share their perceptions without limitations. A total of 30 participants partook in the study. The participants were selected using a purposive sampling to ensure the right participants were involved in the study. The main criteria for selection to participate was that the participants had to be enrolled with a HDI.

Main findings: The narratives of the participants led to the formulation of six main themes that were regarded as affecting the transitions and experiences of the Black graduates from HDIs; namely, (1) socio-economic background, (2) education system, (3) labour market experiences, (4) geographical location, (5) social capital and (6) student resolutions to the challenges of employability. A previously disadvantaged background resulted in the participants being recipients of poor education quality, no social networks or information to navigate the labour market and limited access to the labour market due to secluded residential areas. Subsequently, most participants were unable to take responsibility of enhancing their own employability.

Contribution: It is not the sole responsibility of the higher education institutes to produce employable graduates, but it's a process that should also involve government, students and employers. As long as the social inequality remains an issue in the country all the efforts to improve employability and transition into the open labour market will be in vain. Furthermore, employers must work together with higher education institutes by offering programs such as internships and career expos to enhance the employability of the graduates. A Graduate Transition Model (GTM) is suggested based on the findings of this research.

Keywords: Graduate Employability, Graduate Transition, Longitudinal Qualitative, Narrative Inquiry

Declaration

I, Tinashe Timothy Harry, declare that "*A longitudinal investigation into employability: student transition and experiences from tertiary education into the labour market"* is my original work and has never been submitted by the author or anyone else at any university for a degree. All the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I also hereby declare that I am fully aware of the University of Fort Hare's policy on plagiarism and I have taken every precaution to comply with the regulations.

Tinashe Timothy Harry   Date: September 2018

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Signature

Acknowledgements

My gratefulness goes to the following individuals who directly and indirectly contributed to my study:

Dedication

I would like to thank The Almighty Father for giving me the strength and wisdom to complete this work. I also to dedicate this study to all the previously disadvantaged individuals in the world trying to be the best can be regardless of the adversities.

To my mother, **Auxilia Harry**, you taught me to persevere from a young age, in your presence and in your absence. It is unfortunate you are not here to celebrate this achievement with me. I hope you are proud of your son. I love you.

List of papers

Harry, T., Chinyamurindi, W.T., & Mjoli, T. (2018). Perceptions of factors that affect employability amongst a sample of final-year students at a rural South African university. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology,* 44(0) 1-10.

Harry, T.T, Chinyamurindi, W.T., & Mjoli, Q.T. The role of socio-economic status background on university to work transition. Submitted *to South African Journal of Higher Education.*

Harry, T.T, Chinyamurindi, W.T., & Mjoli, Q.T. Using drawings as a data generation method with a sample of South African students: Expressing concerns of transitions into the world of work. Submitted *to Journal of Student Affairs in Africa.*

Harry, T.T, Chinyamurindi, W.T., & Mjoli, Q.T. "Still haven't found what I am looking for" – Black students' narratives on the role of the education system on their employability. Submitted to *Psychology in Society.*

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Chapter One

1. Introduction

Quality is regarded as a predominant theme within higher education (Adrian, 2017; Botha & Coetzee, 2017; Campbell, 2018). However, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are failing to meet the needs and wants of 21st century students (Hooley, 2017). This subsequently becomes a concern not just for students, but also employers. This concern is heightened because of the value that is attributed towards education and the need to balance between the practical and the theoretical concepts (Blackmore, Bulaitis, Jackman, & Tan, 2016; Pitan & Atiku, 2017). Furthermore, previous studies (e.g. Allais, 2017; El-Fekey & Mohamad, 2018; Mncayi, 2016; Motala, 2017) have indicated that there is a strong relationship between higher education and economic development. Thus, in knowledge-based economies, governments expect HEIs to produce employable graduates and increase human capital for the development of the country.

The rise of knowledge-based economies since the start of the new millennium is an indication of a chance to usher in a golden era where fates will be determined by brains not by birth or social mobility (Bhorat, Cassim, & Tseng, 2016; Carrillo, 2015). An expansion to the accessibility of higher education has become a cornerstone of third way politics where equality of opportunity has become the king as compared to equality of outcome. On no occasion had many young people accessed higher education (British Council, 2015; Van Broekhuizen, 2016) and never had assurance of meaningful, well-paying jobs appeared so perceivable or accessible (Aida, Norailis, & Rozaini, 2015). The belief, therefore that improved access to higher education is an important way of creating a fairer, if not more equal, society and of improving social mobility, continues to prevail (Mok, 2016; Musitha & Mafukata, 2018). Many people from disadvantaged backgrounds are enrolling for university studies in the hope of securing employment after graduation.

Despite an increase in access to universities, the youth, all over the world, still face high unemployment rates as compared to the senior members of the labour force. The trend is even more pronounced since the global financial crisis (Artess, Hooley, & Mellors-Bourne, 2017). South Africa is no exception as the phenomenon is more severe (Graham & De Lannoy, 2016). The rate of unemployment among young South Africans is high and is a cause for concern for policy makers (Fox, Senbet, & Simbanegavi, 2016; Statistics South Africa [StatsSA], 2018). Despite the existence of evidence suggesting that acquiring higher education can improve an individual's opportunities on the job market; several young individuals from developing

countries in possession of advanced degrees remain unemployed (Fox, et al., 2016). According to the National Youth Policy (2015) in South Africa high unemployment rates are caused by "poor quality of education at all levels of the system" (p. 11). Most schools where Black students obtain their foundational education qualifications are reportedly underperforming (Bhorat, et al., 2016), resulting in unpreparedness for higher education (Maila & Ross, 2018). In addition, within the South African context, race remains a major determinant of labour market outcomes of graduates (Le Roux, 2016; Motala, 2017; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). Racial inequality has as a result created a perceived graduate unemployment among Black graduates.

Graduate unemployment has resulted in the growing interest in graduate employability, not only in South Africa, but throughout the world (Adrian, 2017; Baldry, 2016; Campbell, 2018; Crawford, Gregg, Macmillan, Vignoles, & Wyness, 2016; Magagula, 2017; Marshall, 2018). Despite increasing research on graduate employability, the concept remains contentious and exposed to various interpretations (Coetzee, 2012; Hooley, 2017; Milner, Cousins, & McGowan, 2016). The issue of how employability is defined is a complex one. However, it has been widely understood as "a set of achievements-skills, understanding and personal attributes - that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits them, the workforce, the community and the economy" (Yorke, 2006, p. 23). The definition implies that employability is not only about acquiring a job, but the abilities and skills of a graduate to work effectively. Employability is not only about an individual's abilities, but it is determined by several external factors such as race, availability of employment opportunities (El Mansour & Dean, 2016; Mncayi, 2016). It is thus important to understand how such external factors play a role in the development of employability skills.

Obtaining a qualification no longer guarantees employability as students are increasingly required to enter the labour with skills which will not only make them employable, but also make them competitive in an ever-changing labour market (Crawford, et al., 2016; Magagula, 2017; Moolman, 2017). HEIs are perceived by many employers as responsible for developing students with relevant workplace attributes. The main objective of higher education is suggested to be to deliver knowledge specifically for a qualification (Shivoro, Shalyefu, & Kadhila, 2018); however, universities are not convinced it is their unilateral obligation to ensure employability of students. In order to prepare students for the labour market, graduate attributes are being embedded into the course curriculum by some universities within South African universities (Council of Higher Education [CHE], 2016); however, it is relatively still

distinctively instigated (Coetzee, 2012). Higher order thinking skills must be prioritised and developed in order to enhance the employability of graduates (Artess, et al., 2017; Paterson, 2017). Focussing only on subject-specific skills will not result in employability as it is a concept that is made up of different sets of skills.

Finding an appropriate job is not something that is easily accomplished. However, a consensus (Altbeker & Storme, 2013; Dunga, 2016) is passed that in the labour market, graduates have an advantage. It is also agreed that the rate of unemployment for graduates is very low and if it does exist, it will only be for a short period. However, due to the mismatch between what is required by the employers and what is offered by HEIs (Edayi, 2015; Magagula, 2017), the so-called advantage is not being enjoyed by all graduates.

1.1. Problem Statement

According to the International Labour Organisation [ILO] (2018) the unemployment rate within Sub-Saharan Africa is 7.2% and the number is expected to increase due to the expected growth of the labour force. The unemployment rate is low as compared to other regions. However, this is not a true reflection of the prevalences across the region, for example, in the past ten years, South African unemployment rate has been averaging 24.4%, and the most recent unemployment rate for the fourth quarter of 2017 released in February 2018 being about 26.7%, while the rate for unemployed graduates was at 6.6% for the same period (StatsSA, 2018). Most of the working age people in the Sub-Saharan Africa region is too poor not to be in employment and this leads to poor quality employment, demonstrated by high occurrences of vulnerable, informal and under employment (ILO, 2018). The number of people in poor-quality employment is expected to increase in the region. This is despite an increased access to higher education for people from various backgrounds. The study also looked at graduate unemployment rates in South Africa because employment is a result of having employability skills, hence the need to look at unemployment to understand the causes of unemployment.

One attributing source of this high unemployment is the misalignment of needs between the labour market and the citizenry (El Mansour & Dean, 2016; Walker & Fongwa, 2017). For instance, the South African Finance Minister, Mr Nhlanhla Nene, is quoted as stating that "the skills people are getting are not aligned to the needs of the economy" (Zwane, 2015). This posits the importance of employability, not just as a vehicle for human capital development, but also solving the unemployment crisis. Despite the recurring view that South Africa faces high unemployment and skills shortage, at the receiving end are graduates that are failing to

get opportunities for advancement (Kundaeli, 2015; Oluwajodu, Blaauw, Greyling, & Kleynhans, 2015). Most university graduates lack sufficient practical work experience but have theoretical knowledge. As a result, employers are reluctant to hire graduates as they will need extensive on-the-job training before contributing efficiently to the firm.

Many studies have been conducted on graduate employability in South Africa (e.g. (Goodman & Tredway, 2016; Mncayi, 2016; Pitan & Atiku, 2017; Van Broekhuizen, 2016). However, scant attention exists on measuring employability on the two fronts argued for in this research. Employability is usually measured on a fragmented trajectory. For instance, some authors (e.g. Li & Zizzi, 2017) measured employability using a sample of students over a three-month period. The issue here could be that employability exists as an ongoing phenomenon and as a result, would require researchers to take this into consideration. Second, employability is usually researched within a single context. For instance, Christie (2016) measured employability amongst a sample of university students or El-Fekey and Mohamad (2018) who focussed on graduating students. Further, some studies were conducted on graduates after leaving universities (e.g. Magagula, 2017; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016) used cohort graduates overlooking their transition within the university environment. The issue here is the notable exclusion of measuring employability as a part of a relationship between the tertiary experience and transition into the labour market. Thus, this study responded to calls (Clements & Kamau, 2017; Magagula, 2017) to conduct qualitative longitudinal studies of students before and after graduation. The aim of such an approach is to understand the process and systems that students go through in developing employability skills and preparing to transit into the labour market.

Furthermore, despite South African universities going to great lengths to include and accommodate black students with regards to accessing higher education, evidence suggests that the structural adjustments are insufficient to redress the disadvantages (Burger, 2016; Pitan & Atiku, 2017). Many Black graduates struggle to secure employment after graduation than white students (Graham & De Lannoy, 2016; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). This is mainly attributed to where one obtains their qualification, which is either at a Historically Disadvantaged Institution (HDI) or Historically Advantaged Institution (HAI) (Ismail, 2017; Van Broekhuizen, 2016).

Many Black students are enrolled with HDIs where unemployment is most prevalent for graduates from these institutions (Van Broekhuizen, 2016). This is so as most employers perceive HDIs education quality as poorer than HAIs education (Magagula, 2017; Mncayi, 2016). Consequently, most of the Black graduates are trapped in the transition phase from university to the labour market (Edayi, 2015) not only because of the institution type but for various other reasons (Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017). Therefore, the need to understand the

experiences of Black students and graduates. Furthermore, it is important to explore the perceptions of Black students with regards to their employability and future careers in the context of high unemployment.

Essentially, as per the theoretical foundations, obtaining a higher education qualification should be enough to secure employment in the labour market. This study thus contributes to the understanding of why Black graduates at HDIs struggle to make the transition into the labour market despite obtaining degrees. The study also contributes to the understanding of how an HDI in the rural areas is preparing its students to make the transition into the labour market from the perspectives of the students.

1.2. Research Objectives

a) To explore the students' transition and experiences from tertiary education into the labour market over a two-year period.
b) To investigate the students' preparation to enter into the labour market during their last quarter as undergraduate students.
c) To investigate the graduates' activities to get employment during their first year in the labour market.
d) To suggest policy, theoretical and practitioner, specific interventions towards the employability of students (accounting also for the transition from tertiary to post-tertiary institutions).

1.3. Research Questions

The main questions that guided this study are "*What are the students' transition and experiences from tertiary education into the labour market? How do these transitions and experiences manifest in a context of high unemployment"?* The following sub-questions were formulated from the literature review and as per the objectives of the study:

Sub-Questions

a) What were the students' transition and experiences from tertiary education into the labour market?
b) How were the students preparing to enter into the labour market during their last quarter of undergraduate studies?
c) What were the graduates' activities to obtain employment during their first year in the labour market?

d) How can the policy-makers intervene to enhance employability of university students?

1.4. Literature review

1.4.1. Theoretical approach.

The theoretical framework of this study was based on three theories, namely: employability-consensus theory and conflict theory (Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2003) and human capital theory (Becker, 1975; Gillies, 2015). The theories offer explanations of the altering relationship between higher education and the labour market.

a) Consensus Theory

The consensus theory postulates that the instilling of generic skills at the university level will enhance graduates' employability and consequently assist them in their progress in the corporate world (Selvadurai, Choy, & Maros, 2012). The underlying issue here is that universities have a responsibility to enhance employability by incorporating generic skills development into the curricula of the university (Gordon, 2013). Generic skills incorporation should be made a priority by universities as mere theoretical knowledge of the subjects is insufficient in the contemporary economic situation. Hence, it is important for universities to review and alter their programmes in order to instil generic skills using different means (Selvadurai, et al, 2012). Nonetheless, creating employable graduates should not be the sole responsibility of the universities; employers should cooperate with the universities to enhance graduate employability. The discussion of employability under the consensus theory has much in common with the human capital theory.

b) Human Capital Theory

Gillies (2015) state that in the human capital theory, an individual's productivity is increased by education, hence enhancement of performance. Education is deemed to provide skills that are marketable as well as aptitudes appropriate for job performance. Consequently, the success of people in the open labour market with regards to opportunities is contingent on how highly educated they are (Yuzhuo, 2013). The main focus of this theory is on the acquisition of educational knowledge rather than generic skills. The theory is based on the idea that to function efficiently and effectively in the open labour market, one needs the theoretical knowledge.

Commerce students by virtue of these theories, are expected to possess employability skills to enable them to operate efficiently and effectively in the labour market (Altrawneh, 2016). Highly educated people, therefore, are expected to be more employable than people who

are less educated (Yuzhuo, 2013). However, having theoretical knowledge is not a guarantee that one would be successful in the open labour market system (Paadi, 2014), thus one needs both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, in order to be successful. It is thus imperative to understand how these theories can be applied in a South African context given the legacy of apartheid.

c) Conflict Theory

The conflict theory postulates that it is the responsibility of the universities and employers collectively to develop employability skills among graduates (Brown, et al., 2013). The responsibility of developing employability skills among graduates should lie with both parties and not solely on universities. Nevertheless, there is a conflict between academia and employers as employers feel that the universities are not playing their part in equipping graduates with adequate generic skills (Paadi, 2014). As the conflict theory asserts that employers and academia have to work as a collective, it is the responsibility of the universities to develop work experience for their graduates during their studies by incorporating work placement in their curriculum, while on the other hand, the employer needs to offer development opportunities to the graduates (Selvadurai, et al., 2012). Conflict theory, therefore, forms the basis for developing graduate employability skills.

Both theories, conflict and consensus, are of the view that graduates need to acquire generic skills before entering the labour market (Paadi, 2014). However, attainment of generic skills is not an assurance of securing employment (Fox, et al., 2016), but graduates' initial employment chances are increased (Brown, et al., 2013). In the development of generic skills of graduates, conflict and consensus theory have their own limitations. The university environment is not the only avenue through which generic skills can be developed; the pre-university environment should be taken into consideration such as society, family and school (Selvadurai, et al., 2012). The type of university at which one studies can also act as a determinant of employability. In order to understand the graduate unemployment crisis in South Africa, several factors such as race, age, higher education institution and field of study need to be considered (El Mansour & Dean, 2016). This study focussed on graduates from HDIs as they are the most affected in the labour market.

1.4.2. Empirical literature

The issue of graduate employability is of major concern for several stakeholders, i.e. society, government and students (Baron-Puda, 2018; Coetzee, 2014; Hooley, 2017). Graduates are expected to be equipped with knowledge and skills to be competitive in the

labour market (Campbell, 2018; Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013), as a mere qualification is no longer enough to secure employment (Goodman & Tredway, 2016; Lenard & Pintaric, 2018). Several studies have been conducted worldwide with regards to the concept of graduate employability, (Artess, et al., 2017; Coetzee, 2012; Evans & Richardson, 2018; Hooley, 2017; Ismail, 2017). However, as vast as the international employability studies are, they may not be relevant in the South African context owing to the past imbalances that continue to prevail in the country (Heleta, 2016). Hence the need to understand the concept of employability in a South African context using a sample of previously disadvantaged individuals to understand how their employability is being developed.

Most of the countries in the world believe that graduates should be prepared for the world of work by the HEIs (Holmes, 2013a; b; Jackson, 2016). Most of the literature has put emphasis on graduate employability, with South Africa being no exception. In the post-apartheid era in South Africa students from all races have access to higher education (CHE, 2016). Higher education is regarded as a major role player in achieving an equitable society in South Africa (Lourens, 2016; Walker & Fongwa, 2017b). However, despite formulation of several policies (e.g. National Youth Commission Act [No. 19 of 1996]; White Paper on National Youth Service), inequality remains a major problem in the education system (Motala, 2017; Theron, 2016) and labour market (Van Broekhuizen, 2016). Calls have been made to decolonise the education system to improve the production of human capital to redress the past inequalities (Musitha & Mafukata, 2018). However, the departure point for policy-makers should be the improvement of the quality of the education system before considering decolonisation.

Regardless of the inequalities, as in the rest of the world, HE has an obligation to meet the human resources demands of the labour market. The South African Government, through its investments in education, expects HEIs to contribute immensely to human capital development and skills needs of the country (Lourens & Fourie-Malherbe, 2017). However, despite being a priority, not all universities have engaged with graduate employability (CHE, 2016). Previous studies have indicated that it is not only the HE that contributes to graduate employability, but several determinants such as subdued economy, high unemployment rates, race, university type, education system and socio-economic status (Ismail, 2017; Lourens, 2016; Lourens & Fourie-Malherbe, 2017; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016).

Several employability studies that have been conducted in South Africa, e.g. Archer and Chetty, 2013; Bezuidenhout, 2011; Ismail, 2017; Ntikinca, 2014; Rogan M. , Reynolds, du Plessis, Bally, and Whitfield, 2015; Rogan and Reynolds, 2016, have adopted a quantitative

research approach. On the other hand, some qualitative studies have been conducted, (e.g. Kirstein, 2016; Lourens & Fourie-Malherbe, 2017; Magagula, 2017). However, these studies are mostly focussed on one point of data collection that is before and after graduation. To obtain a better understanding of the student experiences, one must understand the processes students go through before and after graduation. Hence, the need to understand the issue of employability on two fronts, the tertiary and post-tertiary experience, which was advocated for in this study.

Consequently, to gain an understanding of the experiences of the students, before and after graduation, in overcoming these challenges, a longitudinal qualitative methodology was applied. A longitudinal qualitative methodology allowed the researcher to explore the changes that occur over time through ethnographic and interview techniques (Li & Zizzi, 2017). This methodology allowed the research participants to share their experiences without restrictions for better understanding of the phenomenon (Levitt, et al., 2018). The study aimed at understanding the perspectives of the students towards their transition and experiences from higher education into the labour market hence a longitudinal qualitative approach was employed.

1.5. Justification for the study

As noted earlier, it is mostly Black students who obtain their qualifications through HDIs that struggle in the labour market (Van Broekhuizen, 2016). Consequently, this study focussed on one of South Africa's HDIs to understand the concept of employability from the perspective of the students. The South African university system is comprised of three types of universities, namely: traditional universities, universities of technology and comprehensive universities (Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). Traditional universities are deemed to be mainly concentrated on the impartation of knowledge to students while overlooking the practical aspect (e.g. Rhodes University and University of Fort Hare) (de Villiers, Van Wyk, & Van der Berg, 2013). These institutes are divided into HDIs and HAIs. Many HDIs are significantly disadvantaged with regards to institutional capacity, education quality and socio-economic backgrounds (Van Broekhuizen, 2016). This study therefore focused on the students enrolled with an HDI due to their struggles in securing employment on graduation. Previous studies have indicated that graduates from HDIs had poor chances in the labour market than graduates from HAIs (Rogan & Reynolds, 2016; Van Broekhuizen, 2016; Walker & Fongwa, 2017b). This study thus sought to understand the experiences of students enrolled with a HDI in the rural areas of South Africa.

Previous studies on the concept of employability have mainly focused on competencies and skills that students have to acquire to be employable. The aforementioned studies have a consensus that universities are stressing on the skills that employers do not deem necessary (e.g. Botha & Coetzee, 2017; El-Fekey & Mohamad, 2018). Furthermore, previous studies that have been conducted on graduate employability have concentrated on whether graduate employment is a growing or a significant problem. Notably, no study has studied employability during the year of enrolment and post-completion of a qualification (Clements & Kamau, 2017; Lourens & Fourie-Malherbe, 2017). Moreover, empirical studies exploring how students and graduates are managing their future careers and employability are lacking. The study therefore explored the experiences of students before and after graduation to understand how prepared for the world of work were there graduates.

1.6. Research method

1.6.1. Research Design.

A qualitative longitudinal research design was adopted for this study. The study followed 30 students from 2016 to 2017 in order to understand their experiences of employability as students and as job-seekers in the labour market. As the main aim of this study was to investigate the transition of students from HE into the labour market, a longitudinal approach was deemed ideal as the researcher tried to understand the lived experience and changes to this over time (Calman, Brunton, & Molassitos, 2013; Vogl, Zartler, Schmidt, & Rieder, 2018). Longitudinal data is regarded to essential if "the research purpose is to measure social change: they allow a diachronic analysis of the incidence of conditions and events" (Ruspini, 2000, p. 1). As the issue of graduate employability is multifaceted, a qualitative approach was adopted in order to gather in-depth information about the concept. A longitudinal study also allowed the researcher to take into account students' expectations. Expectations have a significant impact on insights as well as contentedness with outcomes (Hendricks, 2014). According to Farall (2006), there is no definition on the longevity of the studies nor is there any literature guiding how long should interview intervals be. Hence, these decisions were determined by the researcher.

1.6.2. Population.

The population comprised of students who were in their third year of undergraduate study in 2016 at an HDI. The students were sourced from the Faculty of Management and Commerce. The research population for the proposed study included male and female students.

This is the actual research population which the study utilised, and thus the total sampling frame. The population constituted of all the Faculty of Management and Commerce students regardless of race, gender, and social or economic background as long as the students met the criteria.

1.6.3. Sample and Sampling Method.

The participants for the study were identified using non-probability sampling. A non-probability sampling method "refers to any kind of sampling, where the selection of elements is not determined by the statistical principle of randomness" (Ulin, Robinson, Tolley & McNeill, 2002. p. 31).The sample for this study was gathered using purposive sampling with members of the target population, thus meeting practical criteria such as geographical proximity, willingness to participate and easy availability. Purposive sample can be regarded as an accidental sample as the sample can be selected by being situated or spatially close to where data collection is being conducted (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). The researcher used a sample that was easily accessible, relevant to the study and convenient.

1.6.4. Research Participants.

Using a student database from the participating university, the researcher sent out a generic email to 105 final year undergraduate students in the Faculty of Management and Commerce. A total of 30 students voluntarily indicated availability and participated in the study. The criterion that was used is that the participants were third year (final year) undergraduate university students. In order to participate in the study, the participants had to be willing to contribute to the study and provided a transcribed consent after being debriefed of the objectives of the study. The participants were followed over two years (2016-2017). Owing to the social composition of the university most participants were from poor socio-economic backgrounds.

1.6.5. Data Collection Techniques.
1.6.6. Instruments

The data was collected through a series of face-to-face and telephonic unstructured interviews that were conducted with the participants at times that were convenient for them. The study also used focus groups to gather the data. This process allowed the researcher to understand attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and opinions of the students with regards to employability. Focus groups allowed the researcher to obtain multiple perspectives of

employability at the same time (Christie, 2016; Plummer, 2017). Furthermore, focus groups allowed for the data to be collected in a social setting which made people share their views freely (Paterson, 2017), and more responses were generated through the atmosphere that was created (Reddy, 2016). Focus groups also enable participants to share personal issues and ways to solve the problems (Duggleby, 2005). A total of two focus group meetings were conducted; initial meeting was when the participants were final students and second meeting was when the participants were job-seekers. This allowed the researcher to gain the perspectives of the participants as students and as graduates, and to understand the changes that had occurred over time.

The researcher also utilised online debates (Modica, 2012) and archival sources (Hook, 2013) to gather the data. Multiple data collection methods ensured that the researcher reached data saturation (Levitt, et al., 2018). Data saturation is determined by triangulation (Denzin, 2012). Triangulation comprises of using more than one method to mobilise multiple sources of data. This allowed for the better understanding of the concept from multiple perspectives. Together with interviews and focus groups, online debates and archival sources were used to confirm or inform the data (Levitt, et al., 2018). Data collection methods combination allowed the researcher to explore "individual subjectivity and collective belonging" (Madison, 2005, p. 26).

1.6.7. Recording data.

A tape recorder was utilised to record the interviews and focus group meetings, with the consent of the participants. The researcher-maintained security and confidentiality of the data that was collected (Neuman, 2003). The tapes, transcriptions and observation notes were kept anonymous and stored in a safe place (Hess-Biber & Leavy, 2004). During this process, the participants' rights were considered and maintained (the right to privacy, right to anonymity, right to fair treatment, and right to protection from discomfort and harm).

During the focus groups sessions, there was a facilitator, note taker and a technician. The facilitator guided the group through the discussion ensuring that focus is kept on the discussion topics. A note taker observed and recorded notes of the discussion. The technician was responsible for electronically recording the discussions. A transcript of the discussions was created from these recordings. Online discussions allowed participants to engage with each other despite the differences that could have existed such as geographical locations and work schedules (Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2015; Wilkerson, Iantaffi, Grey, Bockting, & Rosser, 2014)

1.6.8. Data analysis.

The study followed Labov's fully formed oral narrative that comprises six stages, namely, abstract; orientation; complicating action; evaluation; result or resolution; and coda (Labov, 1972; Gay, 2013). Each of the stages addresses the underlying questions:

Table 1- Labov's Structural Analysis Model

a. *Abstract*	What is the story about?
b. *Orientation*	Who, what, when, where?
c. *Complicating Action*	Then what happened?
d. *Evaluation*	How or why is this interesting?
e. *Result* or *Resolution*	What finally happened?
f. *Coda*	What is the relation to the present context?

Source: Chinyamurindi (2012).

Due to the large amounts of data that was collected through narrative interviews, this structural analysis helped in sorting the data. To reconstruct the narratives a three-levels of meaning making strategy, as used in previous studies (Chinyamurindi, 2016a, b; Harry, Dodd, & Chinyamurindi, 2017), was followed. Identification of key episodes and themes was made easy by utilising a structured analysis. As the experiences of the participants were not confined to one-time frame, this structural analysis allowed for the understanding of the individual experiences in the past, present and future. As the defining feature of qualitative studies is the absence of numbers (Levitt, et al., 2018), this study utilised semi-quantification terms (e.g. *several, many, most*) to present findings. Semi-quantification allowed for the underlining of constancies and idiosyncrasies within the findings (Neale, Miller, & West, 2014).

1.7. Ensuring credibility and quality of data

To ensure credibility and quality of research data, the researcher included and consulted with research supervisors to assist with data collection and analysis. The credibility of the study was improved by utilising direct quotations of the participants (Levitt, et al., 2018). Furthermore, the data credibility was improved by maintaining a chain of evidence, using multiple sources of evidence and reviewing the data with key informants (Vogl, et al., 2018).

Moreover, the quality of the data was enhanced by having employability subject matter experts involved in the data collection and analysis – investigator triangulation (Gramer, 2017).

Furthermore, using different data collection methods ensured that data saturation was achieved (Denzin, 2012; Hadi, 2016). Triangulation offers benefits such as variety of research data, innovative ways of understanding a phenomenon and challenging or integrating theories (Denzin, Triangulation 2.0, 2012; Gramer, 2017). Using different data collection methods compensated for limitations that each method has individually and exploit the benefits of each. In addition, the researcher had frequent debriefing sessions with his research supervisors which broadened the vision of the researcher through the supervisors' perceptions and experiences (Levitt, et al., 2018).

1.8. Ethical considerations

An ethical clearance was sought and obtained from the participating university's research ethics committee. The ethical clearance number is CHI151SHAR01 (refer to Appendix A). After being provided with all appropriate information, participant ability along with complete understanding, voluntariness in participation as well as the liberty to decline or withdraw at any time during the research process without supplying any reason, each participant submitted a written informed consent form before partaking in the study. In this study, high standards of ethics and fairness were upheld. Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that interview recordings and transcripts were only accessible to the researcher and supervisor. Anonymity in this research was ensured by using pseudonyms instead of participant's names. At all times, the participants were shown honesty, respect and fairness. The researcher did not attempt to delude or mislead the participants at any time. The well-being of others was of main concern; therefore, the researcher avoided and minimised any harm that could have befallen research participants, ensured data and participant anonymity, whilst maximising on the potential benefits they received by participating in the study.

1.9. Delimitations of the study

The purpose of demarcating a study is make it more manageable and focused. Due to the logistical constraints of covering the entire South Africa, this study only focused on one university within the Eastern Cape Province. This study was not funded, hence the focus on only one university. Furthermore, the study was limited to students who were in their third year of undergraduate study in 2016. The study focused on this group of students as they were the ones preparing to make the transition from HE into the labour market.

1.10. Outline of the study

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

This chapter provides a background of the study in relation to the problem that led to the research. The chapter includes statement of the problem, research objectives and questions, significance of the study, conceptual and theoretical framework.

Chapter 2: Graduate employability

This chapter provides a literature review of the concept of graduate employability.

Chapter 3: School to work transition

This chapter provides a literature review of university to work transition.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Design

This chapter describes the research methodology that was applied in the study. This includes research methods, techniques and sampling procedures.

Chapter 5: Research Findings

In this chapter the research findings were outlined.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Findings

In this chapter the research findings were discussed in relation to the existing literature. Furthermore, limitations and implications of the research were discussed, recommendations were made from the discussion. Moreover, recommendations for further studies are made and finally, the research conclusion is provided.

Chapter Two: Graduate employability

2. Introduction

This chapter reviewed the concept of graduate employability. The main focus was to investigate the concept of graduate employability as it has been discussed in empirical literature and theories. HEIs are facing challenges such as increased number of students, globalisation, student diversity, constant changes in the world economy and high demand of quality education by stakeholders. Given this, HEIs have an obligation to produce graduates who can meet the skills requirements of prospective employers. Employers want graduates who can contribute to the organisation upon being hired. Subsequently, employers are reluctant to hire graduates basing solely on the level of education.

Many graduates consequently remain unemployed due to only having a qualification without work experience or skills. Graduates are therefore precluded from demonstrating their capabilities in the labour market due to a lack of skills and experience. Over the past years, many employers worldwide have expressed their concern on the skills that the graduates were bringing to the workplace that are regarded to be inadequate. Consequently, due to the pronounced mismatch of demand and supply of skills in the labour market, graduate employability discourses have increased worldwide.

To identify the main discussions and theories on the issue of graduate employability the following question was addressed: what has been learnt in the previous decade about graduate employability? Furthermore, the review looked at what has not been covered in the issue of graduate employability? The above questions are addressed by looking at empirical literature and advocated theories. A reflective discussion of graduate employability is also provided.

2.1. Theories applicable to graduate employability

In the last century, many studies have discussed and contributed to the subject of graduate employment (Adrian, 2017; Altbeker & Storme, 2013; Archer & Chetty, 2013; Blackmore, et al., 2016; Magagula, 2017). Most research on employability in the post-millennium has largely focused on graduate employability (Maharaj, 2015; Paterson, 2017). The issue of graduate employability is a major concern for several stakeholders such as the society, students and government (Baldry, 2016; Campbell, 2018; Hooley, 2017; Kraak, 2015). Subsequent to the growing concern on graduate employability by employers; questions and

concerns have been raised on who is responsible for developing employable graduates (Paterson, 2017). It remains a contentious issue between employers and universities about who is responsible for development employable graduates.

Due to the raised concerns, the current research on graduate employability looked at three graduate employability theories to understand the concept of employability from different perspectives. The theories were the consensus theory and conflict theory (Brown, et al., 2003) and human capital theory (Becker, 1975; Gillies, 2015). The theories were chosen as they offer altering relationship between higher education, employment and open labour market.

A perception has long been established that graduates, as a result of the acquired higher education, are expected to possess general skills and attributes (Artess, et al., 2017; Kirstein, 2015; Paterson, 2017). As many countries are becoming increasingly knowledge-driven economies, several parties such as business and political leaders expect graduates to be equipped with knowledge and skills from higher education to enhance their competitiveness in the labour market (Musitha & Mafukata, 2018; Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013). However, due to increasing employment competition and globalisation, national governments are no longer able guarantee the absorption of all the graduates in the labour market (ILO, 2018; Magagula, 2017; Van Broekhuizen, 2016). The South African government is attempting to curb the issue of unemployment by offering several people opportunities to further their studies by awarding bursaries (CHE, 2016). This has only led to an increase in the number of students who are enrolling in higher education. Despite an increase in the opportunities for further studies, graduates continue facing the same challenge of unemployment (Baldry, 2016; Ismail, 2017). Successful governments regard higher education as the driving mechanism for careers that are satisfying and for social mobility (Artess et al., 2017). Policy-makers are of the opinion that through education it will be possible to eradicate poverty in various countries.

It remains a debate between HEIs and employers on who is responsible for producing graduates that are employable (Tan, 2014). Any employability conceptual approach, therefore, clearly must provide an understanding of the relationship that exists between HE, labour market and employment. Brown, et al., (2003) identified consensus and conflict theories as the two principles which have competing interpretations of this relationship. Therefore, to address the discrepancies that exist between different stakeholders, these two theories and human capital theory were adopted for this study.

2.1.1. Human Capital Theory.

Several studies have been conducted on and utilising human capital theory (e.g. Booth & Katic, 2011; Gillies, 2015; Rauch & Rijsdijk, 2013; Ntikinca, 2014). To have a better understanding of human capital theory it is essential to primarily understand what human capital is. Human capital can be defined as the "skills and knowledge that individuals acquire through their investments in schooling, on-the-job training, and other types of experiences" (Rauch & Rijsdijk, 2013, p. 925). Human capital describes the inner resources that human beings possess which can be used to generate positive outcomes in the labour market (Jog, 2015). Inner resources are viewed as factors which can lead to economic productivity but can also be described as the knowledge and skills that an individual possess (Tan, 2014). Some of these inner resources are in-born abilities. However, the most important perception about these inner resources is that some of them can be acquired through education, which is the departure point for human capital theorists (Jog, 2015). Advocates of the human capital theory are mostly concerned with how individuals obtain human capital (Gordon, 2013). Employers have increasingly valued employability skills such as communication, teamwork as well as other interpersonal skills which are part of human capital (Artess, et al., 2017). By attaining high level education it is expected that individuals will be employable however without relevant skills the employability of the individuals is reduced regardless of the level of education.

The human capital theory was initially developed to understand the economic value of education (Becker, 1975). The advocates of the theory support the improving of social and economic values through higher education (Becker, 1975). The theory espouses that individuals, through education and training, obtain life skills and knowledge to become productive workers. This argument is supported by White (2016) who suggests that there is a positive relationship between workplace productivity and education or training an individual obtains. White further argues that workplace productivity of an individual is determined by the level of education or training one obtains; the higher the education or training obtained, the higher chances of being successful in the labour market (2016). Thus, from this perspective, a mere higher education qualification or some of form of training will be enough for an individual to be productive in the labour market.

The human capital theory typically reflects that stable employment can be achieved through education and skills (Gordon, 2013). Reddy, Bhorat, Powell, Visser, and Arends, (2016) explained that "education has long been viewed as a determinant of long-term economic growth and well-being" (p. 318). The development of people's skills and education is believed to result in high performance in the workplace, decrease rate of unemployment, poverty risk

and allow individuals to earn higher earnings (Cai, 2013; Neary, Dodd, & Hooley, 2015). Hence, from the above, it can be assumed that graduates must be well-prepared, through attaining education and training, in order to be competitive in the labour market.

By virtue of this theory, graduates are expected to possess employability skills which are obtainable during higher education studies. The skills and knowledge will allow the graduates to be productive in the open labour market soon after being hired. The basic proposition of the theory is that education and training are important in determining the productivity potential of a graduate. Lourens (2016) also indicated that education and training provide individuals with subjective contentment as well as financial benefits in the long run. Subsequently, there is an increase in the investment in education and training as many people expect to secure employment soon after graduation (Artess et al., 2017). In South Africa, the high education investment against poor education quality appears to intensify the incapability of the labour market to support the growth of the economy (Melaphi, 2015). The main focus has been on increased access to university for all individuals neglecting the quality of the education.

Humans are self-interested actors who are rational and attempt to maximise their usefulness (Tan, 2014). One activity that individuals can adopt to enhance their usefulness is education. Education does not only benefit the individual, but with gains in economic productivity and entrepreneurship abilities it benefits the community at large (Jog, 2015). Hence, education is regarded as an investment because of the positive returns that are expected. However, investments in higher education do not always pay off (Tholen, 2015). Employment is affected by several other factors, especially in South Africa, that have to be considered such as socio-economic background and inequality (Altman, Mokomane, & Wright, 2014; Graham & De Lannoy, 2016; Kundaeli, 2015). As much as education is important, in a country like South Africa, which is still plagued by the effects of apartheid, we need to understand the other factors are causing graduate unemployment besides education.

Investments in education are expected to improve the standards of living of people living in poverty (Lourens & Fourie-Malherbe, 2017). The advocates of the human capital theory are of the assumption that people are utility exploiters and when making decisions to invest in education they take a lifetime perspective (Artess et al., 2017). Due to education investment, students expect higher salaries for entry level positions (Hendricks, 2014; Holford, 2017). However, in general, people who are well educated occasionally launch their careers earning lower earnings than those who will be less educated, but swiftly surpass the earnings of less educated and enjoy higher earnings for the rest of their working lives (Magugula, 2017;

Van de Rheede, 2012). People who are well educated and have employability skills and are willing to continuously learn are the ones who enjoy upward career mobility.

The human capital theory, based on the above, generally indicates that education and skills result in securing steady employment, being productive and job satisfaction, which will lead to a reduction in unemployment, scourging of poverty and higher earnings. Increasing people's skills therefore is believed to increase their likelihood of obtaining employment in the labour market.

Critique of the Human Capital Theory

It is however a complex task to ascertain how education and training influence the employability of an individual. The period an individual takes to obtain education and training does not determine the quality of the education and training obtained (White, 2016). The number of years spent on obtaining a qualification therefore cannot be utilised to determine how an individual will perform in the world of work (Cai, 2013). An individual can attain a three to four year qualification, but without proper skills and abilities will not succeed in the labour market. A qualification only acts as a foundation upon which skills can be developed.

Moreover, cognisance should be given to the fact that the type of education an individual acquires is largely determined by the family background and socio-economic status of the individual (Hooley, 2017). A well-established family background and socio-economic status can enable individuals to access occupations which could have been difficult to access (Behtoui, 2015; Crawford, et al., 2016). Therefore, because of these socio-economic differences, people do not have equal access to the job market, regardless of holding relatively the same skills and experience (Jackson, 2014). These inequalities are more pronounced in South Africa as graduates who come from poor socio-economic backgrounds have limited or no access to the labour market due to a lack of social capital (Graham, et al., 2016; Ismail, 2017). Hence, despite having the required qualifications, graduates without influential social capital are likely to struggle to secure employment. The researcher concurs with the view that obtaining a qualification is no longer enough in this contemporary world. There are many other factors that have to be considered which affect both employability and employment, e.g. social capital, racial inequalities. These differences in South Africa are mainly a result of the legacy of apartheid. Therefore, to enhance employability and increase employment opportunities it is imperative to first deal with the inequalities that exist between different races. However, by doing that the government should not create a sense of entitlement for any race.

Furthermore, in comparison to the labour market skills demands, an individual may be poorly educated (Holford, 2017; Van de Rheede, 2012). The skills acquired can become

outdated. Moreover, attainment of the same level of education does not necessarily mean that people function on the same level as abilities and skills play a vital role (Artess, et al., 2017). Thus, it is not entirely about the educational qualifications attained, but the abilities possessed by an individual (Shivoro, et al., 2018; Tomlinson & Holmes, 2017). Consequently, the mere attainment of an educational qualification will not lead to securing employment in the job market. Some of the qualifications being obtained by graduates are mainly theoretical qualification without adequate (non-existent) practical skills. Hence, we find that most the graduates lack the skills that are in demand in the open labour market resulting in unemployment.

The existence of unemployed graduates contradicts the espoused positive relationship between investment in education and high productivity. Investment in education does not guarantee employment (Cai, 2013; Christie, 2016). There are several other factors that need to be taken into consideration such as socio-economic status and family background, especially in South Africa where issues of racial and social inequalities continue to prevail (Kundaeli, 2015; Maila & Ross, 2018; Motala, 2017; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). There is a positive relationship between education and employment, however the relationship should not be considered in isolation. The several factors as mentioned above should be considered as those factors play a major role in determining labour market outcomes of the graduates.

The human capital theory, despite the criticisms, shares much in common with the consensus theory in the employability discussion, which will be explained in the next section.

2.1.2. Consensus Theory.

Education is perceived as a mobility and prosperity route in the globalising world, and employability is regarded as an issue of the supply side (Gordon, 2013, Paterson, 2017). Globalisation therefore creates the likelihood, for those nations that invest in education and skills of their populace, for high-wage economy and high-skill, and thus investment in human capital is encouraged (Becker, 1975). The consensus theory advocates regard technological advancement as a cause for occupational up-skilling (Bell, 1974) productivity increment (Gordon, 2013) while turning occupations into footloose.

According to this theory, "the globalisation of financial markets, advances in communications technology and the growth of transnational corporations, all signify a need to move away from the traditional mass production of standardised goods and move instead towards a new competition based on innovation and creativity" (Brown, et al., 2003, p. 112). Social change is now being driven by technology and wealth will be created from human

capital. Consequently, capitalist economies are shifting towards knowledge-driven economies (Artess et al., 2017). Drucker (1993) suggested that production was no longer about capital, labour or natural resources but focus has been shifted on knowledge. This suggests that 'fat bankrolls', natural resources and big factories are not more important than knowledge (Brown, et al., 2003).

Due to the intensifying demand for well-educated personnel, societies have responded by increasing public and private investment in human capital as well expansion of higher education institutions (Rich, 2015). This has been undoubtedly the case in South Africa as the government tries to redress the past imbalances by increasing access to higher education for all people from different backgrounds (Bhorat, et al., 2016; CHE, 2016). Many people, in the post-apartheid era, have access to higher education as the government tries to eradicate poverty through education (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2018; Nkosi, 2015; Van Broekhuizen, 2016). However, the issue in South Africa is now on the quality of education that people in disadvantaged communities are being exposed which leaves a lot to be desired.

The consensus theory postulates that instilling of generic skills at the university level will enhance graduates' employability and subsequently assist them in their career progression in the labour market (Selvadurai, et al., 2012). The universities are expected to incorporate generic skills into curriculums to enhance employability of graduates (Hooley, 2017; Mncayi, 2016). Such an inclusion should be prioritised by universities since theoretical knowledge alone is no longer sufficient in the labour market. However, many traditional universities in South Africa focus mainly on the theoretical component of the qualifications (de Villiers, Van Wyk & Van der Berg, 2013; Magagula, 2017; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016), with many students, especially black students, obtaining their qualifications through traditional HDIs struggling in the labour market (Van Broekhuizen, 2016). Despite an increase in access to higher education, graduate unemployment remains a major concern in the country. The theory postulates that technological advancement has resulted in the demand, by the economy, for extended periods of education and formal training as more careers require professional, scientific and technical skills (Gordon, 2013). Generally, this theory shares the belief, with human capital theory, that universities are responsible for producing employable graduates as employability is a supply-side issue.

Critique of the Consensus Theory

Despite the valuable views on how to develop employability skills, consensus theory comes with criticism as well. It neglects the fact that individuals develop their employability skills at the expense of others (Brown, et al., 2003). Furthermore, employability is postulated

as a skills-based problem that should be addressed according to the skills demands of employers, while universities and graduates have the sole responsibility to enhance employability. The major weakness of the consensus theory is that it perceives employability as a problem for the supply-side, which individuals can secure suitable employment after acquiring the right skills (Brown, et al., 2003). Given the poor quality of education, universities are failing to produce employable graduates, hence employers have to be involved in the production of employable graduates.

This theory ignores social congestion. It makes groundless assumptions about the meritocratic context of education and labour market (Brown, et al., 2013). Meritocracy discourses have weak foundations (Christie, 2016). Class origins are very closely linked to educational attainment and occupational destinations (Crawford, et al., 2016). This is no different in the South African context as the labour market outcomes and educational attainment continue being determined by factors such as race and socio-economic background (CHE, 2016; Ismail, 2017; Van Broekhuizen, 2016). As long as the policy-makers do not improve on the quality of the education from primary to higher education, the legacy of apartheid will continue determining the labour market outcomes.

Other concerns that have been raised against the consensus theory are "over-education" (Christie, 2016, p. 6), poor educational quality (Crawford, et al., 2016) and increased skill discrepancy within the labour market (Baron-Puda, 2018). Taking this into consideration it advocates that a high-skilled and –waged economy as envisaged by governments is unlikely to materialise. Although high-skilled and –wage occupations have been developed, they are still limited and mostly restricted to a social elite (Brown, et al., 2003). Such concerns undermine the expectations of knowledge-based economy and the consensus paradigm is questioned.

Only increasing access to higher education without proper rectification of the whole education system, from primary and high school, will not result in producing employable graduates. Most of the previously disadvantaged individuals learn at disadvantaged schools and HDIs which are under-resourced. Thus, increase to access in higher education is not helpful as the students graduate without receiving adequate education and training which decreases their employability. Furthermore, students are enrolling for post-graduate qualifications, which is not bad for the development of the country, but these individuals are receiving education quality that is of sub-standard at HDIs. The students lack the skills to transfer the theoretical knowledge into the real world or to develop new knowledge. Education is indeed important but there has to be a balance between theoretical and practical knowledge. The development of an employable graduate is thus not the sole responsibility of the HEI. Several role players such as

the government, employers and the community have to provide environments that enable the development of employable graduates, especially for previously disadvantaged individuals.

In the next section a different alternative explanation of the discussion of employability is suggested by the conflict theorists.

2.1.3. Conflict Theory.

The conflict theory rejects the notion that we are heading towards a knowledge-based economy. Tomlinson (2012) notes that higher education expansion and increase of graduates does not clearly reflect high-level skills demand of employers. Ainley and Allen (2010) argue that human capital of individuals is not enhanced by increasing educational credentials. Qualifications are demanded simply to act as a screening tool to limit access to employment as it is not a true reflection of what skills and knowledge one possesses to perform a job – a process called 'graduatisation' (Allais, 2017; Ainley & Allen 2010). An individual can be a holder of a post-graduate qualification but it does not mean that the person is employable as employability is about the skills that person possesses.

The conflict theory suggests that various stakeholders play a role in the production of graduates who are employable (Brown, et al., 2003). It is not solely the responsibility of HEIs. However, employers and academia conflict about the responsibilities. Employers are of the opinion that the academia is not equipping graduates with the required generic skills to compete in the job market (Paadi, 2014). On the other hand, the advocates of conflict theory suggest that employers are obligated to provide graduates with opportunities to gain work experience rather than directing all the responsibilities on HEIs.

Therefore, this means that HEIs should embed their curriculums with programs such as internships, while on the other hand, employers need to offer development opportunities to the graduates (Baron-Puda, 2018; Botha & Coetzee, 2017; Lenard & Pintaric, 2018). Internships play a major role in preparing the graduates for the world of work (Artess, et al., 2017; Clements & Kamau, 2017; Maharaj, 2015). Employers however prefer to employ graduates on a 'plug-in-and-play' basis rather than having to invest in training of the new graduates (Moolman, 2017). Employers believe individuals should be responsible for their own training and careers (Brown, et al., 2003). As employers are no longer willing to create employment opportunities, individuals have the responsibility of creating their own employment opportunities by improving their employability.

In an environment which is plagued with high unemployment rates and a lack of employment opportunities it becomes difficult for the individuals to enhance their

employability. Furthermore, because of a lack of social capital individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds are unable to source out the best jobs in the labour market which are usually secured by people from advantaged backgrounds. Basically, social class plays a significant role in the labour market outcomes of graduates. Hence, we cannot ignore the complexities of geographical location and social class on the issue of employability as the conflict is caused by the competition for the best jobs which results in inequalities.

The above discussed theories provide contradictory theoretical bases for the changing relationship between higher education institutions and labour market with regards to graduate employability. Advocates of the consensus theory state that provision of generic skills at HEIs enhances graduate employability and subsequently allow them to progress in the labour market. On the other hand, conflict theory researchers opined that HEIs were not solely responsible for the development of generic skills. The advocates argue that development of graduates' employability skills is an equal responsibility for employers as well. In order to develop employable graduates' employers and universities need to work in cooperation.

Furthermore, both the conflict and the consensus theory have limitations in the development of generic skills by graduates. Generic skills are not only developed at the university, but pre-university environment should be put into consideration such as family and society. For graduate unemployment in the South African context, one should consider factors such as race and higher education institution as these factors are likely to predict graduate labour market outcomes. These factors will be dealt with in the next sections.

Although the theories are contradictory, both agree that before entering the labour market graduates need to have relevant skills to be considered employable. Having relevant skills may not guarantee employment, but initial employment of graduates is enhanced. Trends and challenges in the global labour market have a reflective effect on higher education. Global economies are becoming more knowledge driven, hence the need for employees who have relevant skills such as openness to learning and changing as well as emotional intelligence. Graduate employment is thus not only affected by graduate employability, but several other factors have to be considered. It is however important to understand the concept of graduate employability as it is the foundation for employment.

2.2. Graduate Employability

Many countries are considering employability as a core issue and paying more attention to "the role of higher education in developing employability" (Huang, Turner, & Chen, 2014, p. 177; Marshall, 2018). Regardless of the increased attention on employability, the concept

has various descriptions all over the world. In the literature, several stakeholders, including policy makers, continue to argue about what is employability as they understand the concept differently (Artess, et al., 2017; Hooley, 2017). There is however a need to initially understand the difference between employment and employability. Rich (2015) described employment as a labour market status of an individual, while employability refers to the acquired attributes and readiness to compete in the labour market. An individual can be employable but remain unemployed (Artess, et al., 2017; Walker & Fongwa, 2017). It is thus important to consider the unemployment rates in the country in order to understand the reason why graduates are struggling in the labour market. This is so because the employability places a significant role in determining labour market outcomes of graduates. Hence, it is important for higher education to support graduates for career development and progression. This allows the citizenry to have a better livelihood and social mobility (Holford, 2017). Through attaining employability skills individuals will have better chances of securing employment in the labour market.

To unravel employability concept complexity, several definitions to describe employability have been suggested. Some of the definitions are as shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Graduate Employability definitions

Authors	Definition of employability
Hillage and Pollard (1998)	"Employability is about having the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment if required" (p. 1).
Yorke (2006)	"a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy" (p. 3).
Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007)	Employability is the capability of obtaining and keeping some fulfilling work. It includes having the set of skills, knowledge, understanding, and personal attributes which make people more likely to choose and secure jobs in which they may be satisfied and successful.
Bridgstock (2009)	They are the soft skills that employers expect graduates to have; such skills ensure graduate employability.
McLennan and Keating (2008, p. 3)	"Work ready – with a set of skills, knowledge, and experience to move seamlessly into work after university. Career ready – with transferable skills and knowledge to manage their own way through the changing world of work, and Future ready – with skills and capabilities to continue to learn, contribute, and be adaptable as citizens of the changing world and their communities"
Coetzee and Esterhuizen (2010)	"Employability refers to those proactive career behaviours and abilities that allow people to obtain or generate work through optimal use of both occupation-related and career meta-competencies" (p. 3).
Shivoro, et al., (2018)	The concept of employability is comprised of two prime characteristics: "subject or discipline-specific skills, and transferrable skills" (p. 219).
Baron-Puda (2018)	"The employability of an individual is understood as a composition of many factors, including educational background, work and life experience, behaviour, motivation and other personal attributes" (p. 107).

However, there is still no consensus with the definition of employability. Four main elements emanated from the definition by Hillage and Pollard (1998) namely; employability attributes (knowledge, skills and attitudes); deployment (career management skills); presentation (marketing oneself to get employment); and personal and external circumstances (Goodman & Tredway, 2016). However, the definition overlooks the fact that employability is primarily determined by the trends in the labour market not only by individual attributes. Thus, economic conditions play a major role in determining employability (Hooley, 2017). Employability is a concept that cannot be discussed in isolation of other factors such as labour market trends and social-economic backgrounds as all these factors affect how employability is developed.

Yorke (2006) suggested the most influential definition of graduate employability which he described as "a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy" (p. 8). From this definition several models were developed such as CareerEDGE Model and Understanding, Skills, Efficacy and Metacognition (USEM) as well as pushing for the revision of curriculum to include employability attributes (Artess et al., 2017).

According to Mason, Williams and Cranmer (2006) the definition by Yorke is popular as employability is not only about securing employment but personal motivation, acquiring adequate attributes as well as business rationale that will make graduates to add value to the organisation soon after being hired. The definition by Yorke indicates that employment is not only determined by employability but by other factors. In addition, the definition expresses that employability is an element that is developed throughout an individual's working life, not entirely developed by higher education. Furthermore, in the development of employability skills is affected by several other factors in the South African context such as quality of education and HEI type.

The concept of graduate employability has been widely discussed worldwide. Although different definitions have been suggested by many authors, a mutual ground can be established. According to Tomlinson (2012) the concept refers to the competencies that graduates need to obtain employment. Employability does not stop when a graduate is employed but it is an ongoing developmental process (Walker & Fongwa, 2017). Cole and Tibby (2013) support the view by stating that securing employment is only a part of employability. This study thus looked at employability as the competencies that enable graduates to secure employment in the

labour market. It is also included that employability is not a once-off thing, but something that has to be continually developed throughout one's working life.

A prominent researcher on the employability topic in South Africa, Coetzee (2012), articulates that graduateness is a predictor of employability and work readiness; graduateness is the ability demonstrated by a graduate of set generic meta-skills and personal attributes, while employability is ability to secure and retain satisfactory work (Jackson, 2016). In line with above discussion Coetzee (2012) expresses that employability comprises features such personal agency, self-sufficiency as well as self-directedness in the workplace. This suggests that South African graduate attributes understanding is more or less similar to the rest of the world.

The above definitions indicate that employability is not only about employment, but it includes the development of a combination of skills, understanding, as well as personal attributes; which will allow graduate to secure and retain employment. Employability is considered as an ability to secure and retain some satisfying employment. In order to achieve the perceived demanded employability, it is important for graduates to have an understanding of the concept of employability. Thus, higher education institutions have the responsibility of instilling students with employability attributes and generic skills before graduation.

A lack of employability is usually raised as an argument for explaining graduate unemployment. Employers are of the view that the graduates lack the relevant skills to compete in the labour market. This study thus sought to understand the perceptions of the students towards employability. The aim was to understand the students' experiences and if they had developed employability skills within higher education. But to first have a profound understanding of employability the researcher looked employability models that were developed from Yorke's (2006) definition of the concept.

2.2.1. Employability Models.

The literature contains several debates on the concept of graduate employability and still on-going as well as numerous models have been developed. In the following sections graduate employability's two prominent models that focus on employability on an individual level will be discussed.

2.2.1.1. Understanding, skills, Efficacy beliefs and Metacognition (USEM) Model.

The USEM model was introduced by Yorke and Knight (2006) and it has become a broadly recognised employability model and has been applied in several studies e.g. Archer and Chetty, 2013; Artess, et al., 2017; Kundaeli, 2015; Lourens, 2016; Reddy, 2016; Wright and Jeffries-Watts, 2017. The acronym USEM represents four inter-related perceptions of employability, namely; Understanding, Skills, Efficacy belief and Metacognition. Criticism was raised against initial employability models for dividing development of skills from disciplinary knowledge (Turner, 2014). The limitations were addressed in the USEM model by incorporating the development of generic skills and disciplinary knowledge context (Turner, 2014). Employability is developed through attaining subject-specific knowledge and generic skills. Because of the ever-changing labour market trends generic skills are important for individuals to adapt to various environments.

Employability is viewed to be influenced by four inter-related components of the model as stated above. Understanding refers to accumulating in-depth content knowledge and is perceived as the main product of higher education. Skills component involves being alert and responsive to specific circumstances than focusing on traditional skills. Efficacy beliefs focuses on students' views of personal qualities toward development. Metacognition focuses on the capacity to self-regulate and reflect on learning (learning to learn) (Yorke & Knight, 2007). The model is depicted in Figure 1 below.
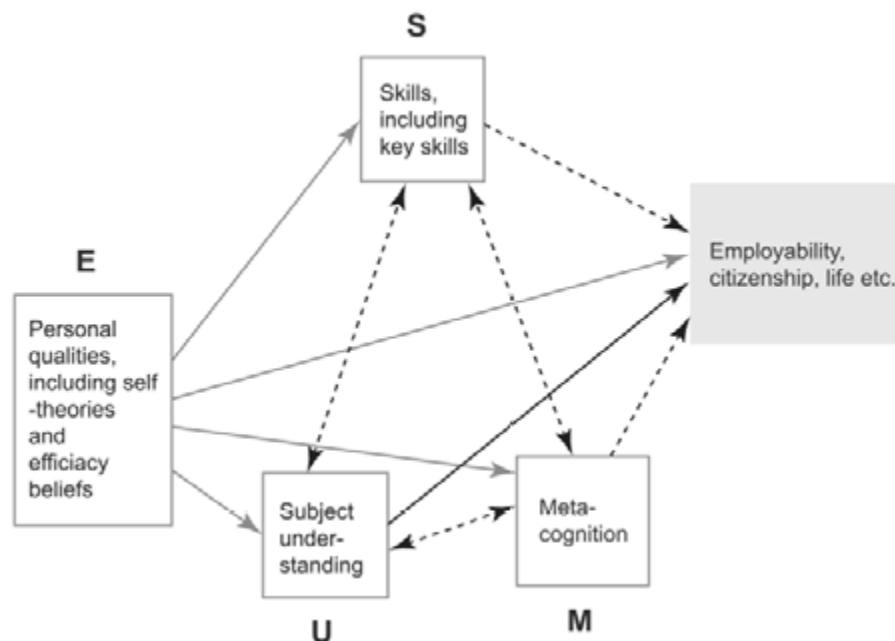
Figure 1: The USEM Model of Employability (Yorke & Knight, 2006, p. 5).

The USEM model encourages reflecting on the curriculum, how efficacy belief and metacognition could be developed through assessment opportunities, and how graduate's ability of transferring content knowledge into the workplace is contributed to by efficacy belief and metacognition. The components of the model combine together elements of learning and personalities, while incorporating processes and skills for self-reflection to develop into an employable graduate.

This model is distinctive in that it believes in flexible self-theories in contrast to fixed self-theories (Yorke & Knight, 2006). Individuals with flexible self-beliefs believe that abilities such as intelligence can be developed and are not fixed (Yorke & Knight, 2006), therefore they regard mistakes as a learning curve to utilise in the future (Turner, 2014). Consequently, new challenges do not affect them as they approach them with confidence because of their abilities (Turner, 2014). This model was developed for the academia for the embedment of employability skills into the curriculum to enhance graduate employability. Although the model was developed in the United Kingdom, it is applicable in the South African context as it deals with the introduction of employability skills in the curriculum.

However, due to the model's complexity it has not been used extensively in practice (Shawcross & Ridgman, 2013). Despite being widely adopted by various employability scholars, the model does not fully describe what is meant by employability to the lay people such as students and parents (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). In addition, definition of employability by Yorke and Knight (2006) postulates that a graduate will possibly remain in one employment over the course of their working life. It overlooks the fact that graduates can move across different occupations in the open labour market and will require a variety of knowledge and skills to move between occupations (Artess, et al., 2017; Baron-Puda, 2018). Furthermore, not only does the USEM model look at academic research-driven views of employability, it also overlooks government and employers' perceived needs (Paterson, 2017; Shawcross & Ridgman, 2013). In order to enhance graduate employability, it is imperative that the academia collaborates with employers to understand the skills needs of the labour market. Failure to do so will only result in the HEI producing graduates that lack the relevant and in demand skills, which will in turn increase graduate unemployment or underemployment. Consequently, the model has not been utilised extensively in practice because of its limitations.

2.2.1.2. CareerEDGE Model.

The CareerEDGE model was developed to overcome the limitations presented by the USEM model (Dacre Pool and Sewell, 2007). Many employability scholars have adopted this model as well and it has become popular amongst researchers (Blackmore, et al., 2016; Kundaeli, 2015; Lourens, 2016; O'Leary, 2016). As shown in figure 2, CareerEDGE model is made up of two sections, namely; CareerEDGE as well as Reflection and Evaluation. CareerEDGE is made up of learning career development; work and life experience; degree specific knowledge, understanding and skills; emotional intelligence and generic skills (Dacre Pool, 2016).

Figure 2: The CareerEDGE Model (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007, p. 280)

Overlooking or missing any element of the model will result in significant negative effect on graduate employability (Dacre Pool, 2016). The designers of the CareerEDGE model claim that the model is simple and can be understood by everyone with ease, hence addressing the USEM model's limitations (Dacre Pool, 2016). In support of this the UK's Higher Education Academy also adopted the CareerEDGE model citing that the employability model was broader and approachable for students and it encompasses factors such as self-esteem, emotional intelligence and self-confidence (Eden, 2014). The model does not only provide methods on how an individual can improve their employability, but it is also regarded as a great instrument to transfer knowledge (Dacre Pool, 2016).

The above factors play a critical role in the enhancing employability. Career development learning allows the graduates to be aware of job opportunities which they can

apply for through various mediums. Also, it covers the development of emotional intelligence which is an important psychological factor when dealing with other people. Graduates need to be aware of their own emotions as well as the emotions of other people, as forming relationships is something that is inevitable in one's life. The model also points out that a person requires work and life experience, generic skills and degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills. All these factors are expected to be developed while in HE. The model explains the concept of graduate employability to encourage individual employability skills development as the students will not exactly what the concept entails.

However, criticism has been raised against the CareerEDGE model. The main focus of the model is on the supply side dimension; hence it has been criticised for being a narrow conceptualisation of employability (Green, et al., 2013). The model neglects the broader context as it only focuses on the transferable employability skills that individuals possess (Green et al., 2013). Moreover, the CareerEDGE model is described at a certain time as a 'snapshot' of graduate employability (Smith, Ferns, & Russell, 2014).

While on the hand the importance of opportunities for students to reflect on and evaluate the learning experience process is emphasised in the Reflection and Evaluation. This section is fundamental as it leads to the development of vital links of employability namely; self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy (Dacre Pool, 2016). These factors act as drivers to employability development. However, the model overlooks the effect that the institution has on the development of employability. The university reputation affects how the graduates engage in continued employability development. The perceptions of graduate employability are influenced by the university reputation.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to an individual's general perception or feeling about themselves (Turner, 2014). A projection of an individual's confidence in own ability to succeed is an important characteristic of self-esteem. As an individual with self-esteem, one values themselves and realistically evaluate themselves (Ismail, 2017). These realistic evaluations reflect areas needing improvement thus promoting lifelong learning process. Basically, an individual has to be true to oneself with regards to abilities in order to be successful in education and career.

To be successful in their academics one needs self-esteem (Lourens, 2016; Turner, 2014). Furthermore, as per educational psychologists, an individual's level of achievement is greatly influenced by self-esteem (Baron-Puda, 2018; Coetzee, 2012; Dacre Pool, 2016; Artess, et al., 2017). When addressing issues of self-belief, one has to put them in context (Turner,

2014). Central to self-belief development is the belief that it is possible to improve one's ability (Kundaeli, 2015; Turner, 2014). Context allows for a balanced focus on the abilities and what is lacking (Archer & Chetty, 2013; Turner, 2014). Turner (2014) argues that individuals tend to descend to internal or external locus of control. Individuals with external locus of control believe they have no control over life events while those with internal locus of control believe they are in control (Bezuidenhout, 2011; Turner, 2014). Academic achievement has been linked to locus of control, and if a student has external locus control they will be at high risk of dropping out of school (Tomlinson, 2017; Turner, 2014). An individual's academic success is dependent on how one perceives oneself however without initiative to apply the abilities an individual might not reach their potential.

Self-efficacy

An individual's belief in their own abilities to achieve goals through planning and execution of actions is referred to as self-efficacy (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). This determines the feelings, actions, thoughts and motivation of people (Magagula, 2017). An individual, to deal with situations, uses own judgement, which is usually developed through prior experience (Clements & Kamau, 2017). According to Turner (2014) a self-efficacious person perseveres, undertake challenging tasks, and in learning environment experiences less anxiety and stress. Performance of an individual is significantly affected by self-efficacy and predicts performance better than actual competencies (Tomlinson, 2017). Furthermore, self-efficacy is important for achieving academically and contributing positively in the society (Turner, 2014).

Self-efficacy can be improved through mastery and vicarious experiences as well as social persuasions (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Magagula, 2017; Turner, 2014). The mastery experiences include activities such as CV writing, applying for jobs and experience in the workplace. Vicarious experiences involve a successful graduate addressing students and this allows the students to identify with former students who have achieved in their respective areas.

The discipline studied should allow for the development of self-belief of students (Turner, 2014). Archer and Chetty (2013) support this argument in their study of UNISA graduates. The graduates indicated that studies and employment had vastly contributed to their self-efficacy, employment and meta-cognitive skills. Several employability models however have not used the development of skills embedded approach to develop efficacy beliefs (Turner, 2014). Furthermore, in the HE the how and where of developing self-efficacy beliefs has not been well indicated (Turner, 2014). Indeed, in Yorke and Knight's (2006) model self-belief appears, however in the HE it is not intricately portrayed as a wound (Turner, 2014).

Furthermore, self-efficacy is something that is not quantifiable or measurable (Turner, 2014). It is thus a subjective component which is contingent on the motivation of an individual.

Self-confidence

Several graduate employability studies have self-confidence as a common element (Pitan & Atiku, 2017; Shivoro, et al., 2018; Tomlinson, 2017; Wright & Jeffries-Watts, 2017). Turner (2014) describes self-confidence as "the belief in one's ability to achieve one's goals" (p. 595). Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) further explain that the way in which an individual behaves and projects self-efficacy to the exterior world portrays self-confidence. According to Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) self-confident people are self-assured and have a sense of presence. Self-confidence can be regarded either as a concept specific to a situation or a trait. Educational activity cannot improve or develop self-confidence as a trait because it remains constant over time (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007), while specific situational concept is improvable in all given situations. These concepts are comparable to fixed and flexible self-theories which are found in the USEM model by Yorke and Knight (2006). Individuals with flexible self-theories are of the perception that abilities are flexible and can be developed, while fixed self-theorists perceive abilities fixed and cannot be enhanced (Louis, 2011). Turner (2014) found that HE had played major role in the development of self-confidence in students, these findings are in support of flexible self-theories. Previous studies argue that employability is positive affected by self-confidence (Crawaford, et al., 2016; Turner, 2014). Although indicating that self-confidence may be developed through HE, no suggestion of how and where to develop self-confidence exist (Kundaeli, 2015). It is an individual choice to become self-confident through learning. It cannot be imposed on a person that you have to be self-confident. Hence, HE is there to act as a catalyst to the development of self-confidence, but it does not mean that a person becomes self-confident after HE. It is concluded that both models, i.e. USEM and CareerEDGE models, indicate that there are various factors which are involved in the development of employability. Hence, the employability concept should not be considered in isolation.

2.2.2. The concept of graduate employability.

Graduate employability is a concept that affects not only the individual, but the society at large. Many individuals who desire to be employable choose the pathway of higher education (Lourens, 2016). Graduates' employability remains a major concern as a result of universal change of the relationship between labour market and higher education (Tomlinson, 2017). The changing relationship is caused by an oversupply of graduates compared to the number of jobs

that are available and skills demands (Artess et al., 2017; ILO, 2018). As a result, competition for employment is rife in the labour market. Employers are searching for graduates who are employable, hence without employability skills it is difficult to make the transition into the world of work.

In the 21st century many economies are ever changing as a result there is an increase in demand for highly qualified and skilled employees. Success in the workplace is no longer guaranteed by an educational qualification therefore the need for employees to be well equipped with the adequate attributes (Chetty, 2012; Goodman & Tredway, 2016). As was espoused by the former United Kingdom Prime Minister, Tony Blair, graduates' focus has to shift to employability for life (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006). According to Yorke (2006) employability that lasts for the working lifetime should be developed while an individual is still enrolled for their university studies. Employers are however of the view that graduates enter the labour market without the adequate attributes to contribute effectively to the organisations (Goodman & Tredway, 2016; Pitan & Atiku, 2017). Employers are reluctant to employ graduates because of the time and investment needed to train the graduates when they enter the labour market because of a lack of employability skills.

Graduate employability is a relational concept that takes into account factors linked to anticipated and actual employment (Tomlinson and Holmes, 2017). In a number of previous studies, it has been noted that the concept of graduate employability is related to graduateness (Holmes, 2013a; Jackson, 2014), graduate attributes (Botha & Coetzee, 2017), graduate employment rates (Ismail, 2017), graduate identity (Jackson, 2014, 2016). Many terms have been used to describe graduate attributes; such as core, attributes, competencies or generic, which are used interchangeably, thus adding confusion surrounding the concept of employability.

Graduate attributes can therefore be described "as the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the university" (Bowden, Hart, King, Trigwell, & Watts, 2000 p. 37). Cleary, Flynn, Thomasson, Alexander, and McDonald (2007) further explained graduate attributes as "not discipline-specific, but are intended to reflect broader aspirational, social, ethical or humanitarian characteristics that a society desires of its university graduates" (p. 12). These are regarded as generic skills that graduates need to succeed in the labour market. Having subject-specific skills alone can be detrimental when attempting to move within the labour market hence the need for generic skills which can be transferrable in various contexts e.g. communication skills.

Subsequently, many government and employer policies have been on the production of work-ready graduates who have graduate attributes (Brown, et al., 2003; Tomlinson, 2017). According to Yorke and Knight (2007) international governments are emphasising that HEIs produce quality human capital for the benefit of the economy of the country. The need for student development has coincided with the calls for knowledge-driven economies which expect graduates to possess appropriate skills, dispositions, creativeness and knowledge to be able to manage the difficulties of the economies that are ever-changing (Motala, 2017; Wright & Jeffries-Watts, 2017). However, graduate employability remains a major problem in various countries which is affecting the socio-economic development especially for developing countries.

As a result, many people now have access to higher education which has resulted in increased numbers that compete for graduate level jobs (Van Broekhuizen, 2016). Hence, the need for individuals to develop employability attributes to be able to compete in the job market. In South Africa, likewise, employers are desperate for employable graduates (Botha & Coetzee, 2017; Ismail, 2017; Lourens, 2016). Accordingly, for the economic development of the country, it cannot be denied that commerce degrees are significant (Altbeker & Storme, 2013). Hence, the need for graduates who have both subject-specific skills and generic skills. However, this remains a contentious situation as graduates within South Africa, especially from HDIs, are lacking relevant skills to transfer in the labour market.

Several studies have investigated the link between higher education and employability (e.g. Crawford, et al., 2016; Moolman, 2017; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). Higher education is believed to be responsible for the development of skills and abilities among students for the advancement of graduate employability (Baron-Puda, 2018; Tomlinson, 2017). Academics have become aware of the need to instil employability skills during studies hence the re-assessment of curriculums. However, in the South African context, Walker and Fongwa (2017) argued that "for a society with so much inequality and social injustice, any university curriculum and pedagogy that focuses on skills and employability without an active focus on issues of exclusion, social responsiveness and democratic citizenship limits the potential of universities in contributing to human development" (p.130). The researcher is of the opinion that a focus on the development of employability skills will allow the students to be able function not only as employees but also as employers. Having these skills will give the students self-confidence in their abilities. In this current state, issues such as exclusion are of concern because graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds are reliant on other people to offer them opportunities. It is difficult for them to create their own opportunities due to the poor education

which is not preparing them adequately. It appears that the students are being prepared to become employees, rather than entrepreneurs, but with inadequate skills.

Employability of graduates depends on exhibiting attributes which are perceived as significant by the employers (Ismail, 2017). Graduate employability is not only the professional specific knowledge, but an individual's capability to demonstrate wider general abilities such as interactional and critical thinking skills (O'Leary, 2016). The knowledge, skills and abilities that graduates possess which is outside their disciplinary knowledge that are acquired by virtue of finishing any undergraduate degree are called generic graduate attributes (Lourens, 2016). These generic skills are applicable in various contexts. But graduates are lacking these essential skills to be employable which has resulted in the graduates struggling in the labour market.

Previous studies are in agreement that graduate employability can be enhanced through the development of both generic and discipline-specific skills (Artess, et al., 2017; Lourens, 2016; Paterson, 2017). Consequently, graduate attributes should be viewed as personal dispositions and not mainly seen as knowledge and skills. Such dispositions will enable individuals to continuously apply the skills and knowledge they would have gained. When graduates are well equipped with generic employability attributes they will be geared to be able to deal with the demands of the world of work and they would continuously learn in their lifetime (Coetzee, 2014). Due to being ill-equipped the graduates are failing to cope with the demands of the world of work.

Many governments around the world have recognised the importance of graduate employability (Artess, et al., 2017; Maharaj, 2015; Tymon, 2013). Subsequently, higher education systems are increasingly expected to revise their curriculums to incorporate impartation of graduate attributes to develop graduate employability (Jackson & Wilton, 2016; Tomlinson, 2012; Tymon, 2013). In South Africa it is no different as they have been calls to revise the curriculum (Goodman & Treadway, 2016; Kirstein, 2016). However, calls have been made in South Africa to decolonise the curriculum (Heleta, 2016; Lebeloane, 2017). The process of curriculum decolonisation remains a grey area. However, it has been described as the ending of the Western models of academics and incorporation of the South African perspectives (Le Grange, 2016; Molefe, 2016). Musitha and Mafukata (2018) argue that decolonisation of the curriculum will result in human capital development to eradicate the rate of poverty in the country. Jansen (2017) reasons that such developments will be difficult to implement in South Africa due to a lack of Black South African theorists of education, Black Professors in the education system and PhDs.

Curriculum decolonisation will only work if the country has Black South Africans academics who are contributing to the development of knowledge in the country. The number of Black South Africans who are graduating with doctorates remains very much limited. Doctoral students are discontinuing with their studies because of reasons such as lack of funding, indecision about career aspirations and challenges in family, personal or social life. Furthermore, the HEIs, especially HDIs, are lacking lecturers who are doctoral holders. Most of the Black lecturers who have doctoral qualifications are from other African countries. Therefore, decolonisation of the curricula at this stage is not something that the country as a whole is prepared to embark on.

Governments are making substantial financial investment in higher education as the human capital development is dependent on higher education outcomes (CHE, 2016; Holmes, 2013b; Magagula, 2017). With such huge financial investments, governments expect that higher education outcomes, which are employable graduates, will develop the economic and social growth of the country as well as redress past imbalances (Magagula, 2017; Mncayi, 2016; Tomlinson, 2012). HEIs are therefore expected to continually produce employable graduates to yield a great economic return on investment for the benefit of the whole country (Bridgstock & Cunningham, 2016). HEIs are perceived by communities as the place for professional and vocational skills training. As a training place HEIs have an obligation to contribute to the human capital of the labour market.

Students enrol for higher education perceiving it as a step towards preparation for getting a better job (Jonck, 2017), especially for graduates from poor-socio economic backgrounds (Crawford, et al., 2016; Magagula, 2017). Students expect that their employability (ability to compete in the labour market) will be improved. Employability however is not a guarantee to securing employment, but it increases an individual's competitiveness and opportunities to secure employment in the labour market (Baron-Puda, 2018). The process begins by obtaining a degree qualification. However, contemporary employers require other graduate attributes to be considered for employment (Yorke & Knight, 2007). Various stakeholders such as employers, higher education funding bodies, government and professional bodies need more than discipline-specific knowledge, and those market requirements are expected to be met by graduates (Artess, et al., 2017; Shivoro, et al., 2018). Higher education thus has the responsibility of producing graduates that are employable in the open labour market.

Many countries, such as Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, have put emphasis on the concept of graduate employability (Altrawneh, 2016; Blackmore, et al., 2016; Tran, 2015).

South Africa is no exception as evidenced by similar objectives outlined in various policies. The Education White Paper 3 and the Council on Higher Education have stated that students should have access to quality education for the development of knowledge, skills and competencies that will make them employable in the job market (CHE, 2016). According to Nzimande (2011) students in South Africa enrol for higher education with substantial differences; that is, academically, socially, economically and culturally, subsequently it is important that all students are fairly empowered through the curricula irrespective of background. Thus, in order to prepare students for the job market, it is imperative that the curriculums are re-designed. At this stage it is important to develop more graduates that have the necessary employability skills through redesigning of the curriculum but not through decolonisation of the curriculum.

Many students all over the world perceive a degree as a means to secure and sustain employment (Artess, et al., 2017; Jackson, 2013b). In South Africa, it is no exception as it has been found that students enrolled for further education to improve the probability of career success as well as employment prospects (Archer & Chetty, 2013; Mncayi, 2016). In the event that tuition fees remain payable, many students are expected to be motivated to continue enrolling for higher education (Watts, 2006). However, in the past years South Africa has been coupled with student demonstrations in demand for free education (DHET, 2018; Lebeloane, 2017). Nevertheless, some students may benefit from education investments, however not all graduates are fortunate enough to benefit (Tomlinson, 2012). The actuality is that a mere qualification is no longer enough to employment in the labour market (Jackson, 2013; Tomlinson, 2012; Tymon, 2013), and after graduation many students face difficulties in securing employment (Altman, et al., 2014; Holmes, 2013a; Mncayi, 2016; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). Indeed, education has to be affordable for all the citizenry. However, the first issue that has to be addressed is the quality of education that the students are obtaining at various institutions. There is no point in receiving free poor education quality. This will only exacerbate poverty among the poor families in the country. Hence, there is a need to be able to distinguish between priorities to develop effective human capital.

Knowledge-based economies are characterised by decreased employment opportunities, continuous need for employability and up-skilling as well as technology changing rapidly which affect graduate employment (Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013; Tomlinson, 2012). Furthermore, organisations explicitly and systematically discriminate among graduates by selecting those with particular educational characteristics (Holmes, 2013b; McCowan, 2016). Therefore, graduates not only have to compete with other graduates, but with

experienced people for scarce jobs (Archer & Chetty, 2013; Axelrad, Malul, & Luski, 2018). Consequently, without employability skills the graduates will always be at a disadvantage in the labour market.

The concept of graduate employability is important to many investors, however there is little consensus on the meaning of the concept. Several theoretical approaches as illustrated in the literature review have suggested varying explanations to the concept of graduate employability, how graduate employability can be developed and improved. Although the explanations vary they concur that graduate employability is important to secure employment in the labour market. Accordingly, graduate employability or employability in this study refers to the graduates' process of seeking and securing or creating employment as well as the factors impacting the process.

2.2.2.1. Factors that determine graduate employability: Theoretical Perspective: Basic employability skills

Basic employability skills are skills or core competencies which are easily transferable. They are often referred to as soft skills or generic skills (Lourens, 2016) and employers expect graduates to have such skills to ensure successful employment (Bridgstock, 2009). In order to function effectively in the workplace employees are expected to have soft skills such as teamwork skills, basic communication skills, problem solving skills and intellectual capacity (Allais, 2017). In addition, graduates' basic skills are regarded as important and the basic skills include computer literacy, quantitative literacy, ability to search and access information and ability to use information (Kirstein, 2016; Shivoro, et al., 2018; Tymon, 2013). These basic skills are important as they can be easily transferred into different environments.

From the above it is clear that to enhance graduate employability individuals need to have relevant soft (generic) skills. Such skills will enhance the competitiveness of the students in the labour market. Previous studies suggest that graduate unemployment remains prevalent as there is a mismatch between the skills required by the employers and the skills possessed by the graduates (Baron-Puda, 2018; Jonck, 2017; Mncayi, 2016). As a result of lack of soft skills graduates take longer to secure employment, especially graduates from HDIs (Mncayi, 2016; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016; Van Broekhuizen, 2016). The graduates will have obtained the formal qualifications, but the education and training will not be meeting expectations or job requirements in the labour market. It is thus imperative that degree-specific knowledge be developed simultaneously with soft skills while in university to improve one's competitiveness.

Graduates are also expected to have good intellectual ability and knowledge in order to meet the workplace demands (Edayi, 2015). A graduate can possess such skills by attaining a basic understanding of the labour market trends, research skills, willingness for continued education, and construction of logical arguments (Campbell, 2018; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Reddy, 2016). There is a significant difference that exists between the skills acquired by graduates and the employer skills expectations. Employers prefer to hire graduates who will show innovativeness and a will to learn (Edayi, 2015). However, most of the graduates are not well equipped with these skills to be competitive in the job market (Griesel & Parker, 2009; Lenard & Pintaric, 2018). As a result of the imbalance, questions are raised on the supply-demand of graduates, that is, from HEIs into the labour market. Graduate employability can be improved by incorporating career counselling and development into the undergraduate programmes for better awareness (Dacre Pool, 2016; Lourens, 2016; Theron, 2016). Increasing awareness among students will assist in the improvement of employability skills as the students will know what is expected from them as graduates.

Graduates are further expected to be having workplace skills. Under this attribute graduates are expected to make a shift from the theoretical aspect of studies and into the practical aspect of the workplace (Coetzee & Potgieter, 2014; Edayi, 2015; Moolman, 2017). The shift to the practical aspect of employment from the theory can be endorsed by attributes which include planning ability, completion of tasks, developing practical solutions and problem-solving abilities. Previous studies concluded that graduates are failing to meet the needs of the employers and subsequently several graduates are failing to obtain and sustain employment (Baron-Puda, 2018; O'Leary, 2016). Graduate unemployment remains a constant in the country as a result of a lack of employability skills.

Personal skills are the other skills that graduates are expected to have. These skills include qualities such as self-motivation, negotiation skills, flexibility, and emotional intelligence, readiness for workplace change, innovative, openness, conscientiousness and sense of identity (Coetzee, 2012; Dacre Pool, 2016; Jackson, 2016). Employers expect graduates to possess some of the personal skills in order to be successful in the workplace and adapt easily to the workplace dynamics (Botha & Coetzee, 2017; Kirstein, 2016). Students are graduating from universities with only theoretical subject-specific knowledge and employers are unwillingly to spend more money on the development of the graduates. The employers expect the graduates to be equipped with the relevant skills while in university.

Higher education institutions have been shown, to a certain extent, to assist graduates to acquire the listed attributes to enhance their employability (El-Fekey & Mohamad, 2018;

Griesel & Parker, 2009). Graduates have been helped by universities to possess attributes such as cultural intelligence, time management skills and team building skills, for example having to work in groups made up of different cultures, writing exams and tests in a set time and being required to submit before deadlines (Wood, Psaros, French, & Lai, 2015). Accordingly, considering the activities that graduates go through at school, one can argue that graduates are indeed acquiring a certain amount of the required workplace attributes (Oluwajodu, et al., 2015). However, the skills are not adequate to secure employment in the labour market. The students should proactively be involved in their own development to improve and create their own marketable identity.

To enhance employability, graduates need to actively involve themselves in the development of the skills as well as having a learning attitude (Clements & Kamau, 2017; Tomlinson, 2017). If graduates possess such skills, employers will employ them as the employers are desperate for graduates who will effectively contribute to the goals of the organisation (Jackson & Wilton, 2016). Due to the ever-changing labour markets, locally and globally, graduates must always be prepared for such trends and meet the employers' needs always. Employers and universities need to work in collaboration and strive to develop the existing curricular to meet the needs of the employer by incorporating specific attributes that are required in the labour market.

Conceptual factors of graduate unemployment

Race

Graduate employment outcomes continue being affected by racial inequality in South Africa (Heleta, 2016; Magagula, 2017). Hence, it is important to address the issue as it will always affect the competitiveness of graduates in the labour market. During apartheid time South Africa received much international coverage because of the policies that were discriminatory (Lourens, 2016). Following the 1994 democratic election, South Africa developed policies to improve service accessibility to other races that were previously marginalised (National Youth Development Strategy, 2007). This has resulted in an increased access to higher education for people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Since the attainment of independence, the landscape changed significantly as many Black people gained access to higher education institutions (Theron, 2016; Van Broekhuizen, 2016). However, despite the increase in the number of Black graduates and change in landscape, a higher percentage of White graduates are bound to obtain employment soon after graduation as compared to Black graduates (Graham & De Lannoy, 2016; Mmesi, 2015). In South Africa generally, Whites have always had a higher probability of being employed than

Black people (CHEC, 2016; Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017). Such differences are mostly attributed to poor education quality that is being obtained by the Black people.

Most of these Black people reside in areas where they do not have easy access to employment opportunities which result in unemployment (Magagula, 2017; Mlatsheni, 2014; Mnacyi, 2016). In South Africa the provinces that have the highest unemployment rates are Free State, Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga, these provinces are all rural provinces (Walker & Fongwa, 2017). Due to the remoteness of the employers many graduates that reside in rural areas struggle to gain access into the labour market (Mncayi, 2016; Graham, et al., 2016; Graham & Da Lannoy, 2016; Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017). A limited access to the labour market results in the graduates failing to gain an understanding of the skills that are needed by employers.

Graduate unemployment is further contributed to by the lack of financial resources to fully explore the labour market (Mlatsheni, 2014; Mncayi, 2016). Other researchers have attributed high unemployment rates among black graduates to the increase in number of enrolments at African universities, especially at HDIs, as well as a high proportion of students graduating with qualifications in fields with employment prospects that are low (Baldry, 2016; Koen, 2013 as cited in Edayi, 2015; Magagula, 2017; Van Broekhuizen, 2016). The fields have low prospects of employment. Africans enrol for these fields as they will not be qualifying for fields such as engineering courses which are in greater demand as they do not qualify (Van de Rheede, 2012). According to Du Toit (2003) approximately 97% white youths who were economically active and held qualifications in business, management and commerce fields were in employment. However, only 53.3% of African youths with qualifications in the same fields managed to procure employment. Du Toit believed that such a huge difference was caused by African youths who specialised on fields such as marketing and human resources management which are not in demand in the labour market as compared to fields such as economics and finance.

On the other hand, Van der Berg & Van Broekhuizen (2012) are of the opinion that the revelation that some segments of the graduates, in particular from previously disadvantaged backgrounds, struggle to obtain employment is a misconception. In addition, Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen (2012) believed that the rate of unemployment among black graduates had decreased. Altbeker and Storme (2013) argue that although white graduates make up the majority of the labour force, soon they will be surpassed by black graduates because of an increase in employment prospects. Many employers are now navigating towards equality in the workplace (Oluwajodu et al., 2015). However, although the unemployment rate is low, it

is important to explore the root cause of the graduate unemployment. People from disadvantaged backgrounds are failing to develop employability skills due to living in marginalised areas of the country. They lack labour market information and knowledge.

Age

Employment prospects are significantly affected by age. Young people across the world are faced with complex challenges to employment (ILO, 2018). There are two categories of graduates – younger (15 years to 24 years) and older (25 years to 35 years) (Edayi, 2015). The category of young graduates was found to be the least likely to obtain employment as compared to the old category (Axelrad, et al, 2018). Employers hardly demand young graduates trying to avoid the risk of hiring a young graduate who is inexperienced and requiring extensive training (Ismail, 2017). Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen (2012) indicated that the young graduate unemployment has risen over the past decade, the percentages are somewhat lower than the non-graduate unemployment rate.

Younger graduates often have unrealistic employment expectations, the youths expect to earn higher earnings as soon they secure employment (Karakuş, 2018); Tomlinson, 2017). Further to that, younger graduates are susceptible to losing their jobs as they are considered cheaper to dismiss than a person who has worked for an extended period (Axelrad, et al., 2018). Previous studies have shown that most graduates that are unemployed are young graduates (Graham & De Lannoy, 2016; ILO, 2018; Melaphi, 2015). Most of the unemployed graduates are recent graduates who do not have work experience. Significant job discouragement characterises the South African youth labour market which often leads to long-term unemployment incidences (Magagula, 2017; Mncayi, 2016). These trends can be discouraging and frustrating to young people as young graduates are struggling to secure and sustain employment (Graham & De Lennoy, 2016). This will not only affect the young people, but the economy at large as the skills possessed by the young people might become obsolete.

Field of Study

One of the most critical aspect to consider when discussing about graduate employability is the field of study (Bhorat, Mayet, & Visser, 2012). Usually there is a mismatch between what the graduates' studies and the requirements in the job market (Bhorat & Goga, 2013). In certain qualifications such as engineering, graduates are imparted with job specific attributes which are easily transferrable to the labour market, thus employers will know exactly what the graduates will be bringing to the organisation (Mncayi, 2016). Hence, employers' assumption of the value of the degree determines the graduates' level of experience.

On the other hand, qualifications in fields such as social sciences that are more generic in nature, only indicate to the employers that the graduates have traits which can help them succeed on the job (Moleke, 2009). Consequently, employers consider young graduates who possess commerce-based qualifications as more suited than those who have qualifications in arts and humanities (Edayi, 2015). Instead of concentrating on competencies possessed by an individual, most employers are concerned more about the nexus between a young graduate's qualification and the ability to perform productively on the job. As a result, students who graduate with arts and humanities qualifications face difficulties to secure employment, they have a higher probability of remaining unemployed in the business world (Walker & Fongwa, 2017a). Studies have indicated that general degrees make up the greatest number of graduates in the labour force in comparison to the degrees that are demanded by the labour market (Ntikinca, 2014). Thus, the economic development of the country is halted by the mismatch that exists between the labour market and higher education.

Conversely, the incorporation of internships into fields such as medical sciences put the graduates at a better stead to obtain employment soon after graduation (Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). Furthermore, Yin (2013) expressed that graduates from fields such as education, humanities and arts have less chances of employment as compared to graduates from the fields of medical science and engineering. Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen (2012) reiterated that an uninformed qualification will lead to lower employment prospects for graduates in South Africa.

In previous surveys that were conducted between 1995 and 2002, October Household Survey (OHS) and Labour Force Survey (LFS), the findings underlined that graduates who had studied for qualifications in business, commerce and management as well as teachers or other public sectors suffered from high levels of unemployment as compared to graduates who had done other qualifications in other fields (Van der Berg & Van Broekhuizen, 2012). A qualification an individual obtains influences the kinds of employment one would apply for, and it is usually same field of qualification.

It is difficult to determine which universities have the highest unemployment for the group as commerce students in tertiary institutions make up a huge proportion of the total student population. In a study by Pauw, Oosthuizen, & Van der Westhuizen (2008) it was highlighted that most of the Economic and Management Science graduates secured employment upon completion of their studies, but only 10% remained unemployed after graduation from the commerce students. As such we can assume that many of the commerce graduates who remain unemployed had completed diplomas and certificates (Edayi, 2015).

Even though employment prospects for graduates who possess qualifications within the social sciences and humanities field of study are lower, studies have noted that the enrolment remains high (Walker & Fongwa, 2017a). In a study by Moleke (2010) it was observed that graduates from social science and humanities field were demanded by public sector hence the public sector drove the demand for these graduates. However, the mismatch that exists between supply and demand for skilled people also constraints the public sector. Bhorat et al., (2012) pointed out that the public sector mostly advertises professional jobs within education and health.

Bhorat et al., 2012 further argued that graduates who acquired more general qualifications struggled to secure employment as compared to graduates who focused on specific fields such as medicine and engineering. Nonetheless many students still enrol more general qualifications. Thus, questions are raised whether graduates actually receive adequate career counselling (Chinyamurindi, 2016b) and guidance before making a course selection, even the subjects that students select at school which will in turn limit their options (Oluwajodu, et al., 2015).

According to Sha (2006) many students choose general fields as they reckon it will be easier to be admitted into the programmes, easier for the family to support and students find it much easier to pass the modules. Furthermore, other students find satisfaction in doing the courses as they state that they have passion for it and on the other hand some students believe that the general course will lead to employment. Pauw et al., (2008) noted that graduate's high unemployment rate is probably caused by inadequate labour market preparation (lack of employability skills). From the above it can be seen that career guidance and counselling is lacking both at schools and tertiary levels. The outcomes and pathways of graduates are different for all the fields of study, with certain fields the graduates will take longer to secure employment than other graduates from other fields.

In a study by CHEC (2016) it was found that graduates with qualifications in education had a high number of employment as compared to graduates in science, engineering and technology as well as those who have humanities, commerce and business. Despite low employment prospects for certain degrees, students must not be pressured into enrolling for degrees with higher prospects of employment (Morrissey, 2013). Morrisey argues that students should be given an option to pursue a career of their choice, probably they will be good in those careers.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

Tertiary institutions in South Africa continue to be plagued by the legacy of apartheid (Lourens & Fourie-Malherbe, 2017). This is despite the merger of advantaged and disadvantaged institutions. The mergers are likely to impact the ability of graduates to secure employment in terms of education quality and how employers perceive these institutions (Baldry, 2016). Generally, the education provided by HDIs is perceived as of poor quality in comparison to HAIs (Van Broekhuizen, 2016). Oluwajodu et al., (2015) indicate that employers are willing to spend more resources on graduates from certain universities as they trust the education provided at those institutions. Hence, graduates from HAIs have higher prospects of employment than HDIs graduates (Walker & Fongwa, 2017a), because of the perceived employability skills of the graduates from HAIs.

Graduates from HDIs take a prolonged period to be absorbed into the labour market and this has been attributed to the alleged inferior quality of education offered by HDIs (Makiwane & Kwizera, 2009 cited in Magagula 2017). Baldry (2016) supports this argument by stating that education quality from HDIs is the main cause of unemployment. HEIs are perceived as one of the major stakeholders in the development of employable graduates, and their main responsibility is to come up with strategies to improve graduates' attributes for future employers (Magagula, 2017; Van Broekhuizen, 2016). Development of graduate employability attributes has been a topic for discussion over the years among policy makers who strive to enhance the skills of graduates to meet the needs of the labour market (Walker & Fongwa, 2017b). The way in which higher education prepares students for post-tertiary live is extremely important (Holmes, 2013a). Other universities are producing graduates that are employable while others are failing to do so. This is more pronounced in the South African higher education environment in which there are historically disadvantaged and advantaged institutions (CHE, 2016; Van Broekhuizen, 2016). It has been noted that a number of graduates from HDIs were graduating with qualifications that had lower employment opportunities.

According to Knight and Yorke (2003) in the United Kingdom higher education have been bestowed the responsibility of ensuring that the graduates are employable, thus employers should look beyond the degree class. In South Africa several calls have been made for the higher education to ensure it responds to the economic and social needs of the country to build a strong relationship and align economic development needs with higher education. As the country is building towards a knowledge-based economy it is imperative that higher education produce highly skilled graduates to meet the economic needs (Motala, 2017). However, HEIs are failing to recognise the importance employability skills among graduates (Bunney,

Sharplin, & Howitt, 2016). As shown by HEIs which are focussing on the theoretical component of various qualifications.

In a study by Bhorat, et al., (2012) using data from the Human Resources Sciences Research Council Graduate Destination Study among seven South African universities, it was concluded that graduates from HDIs were mostly like to be unemployed than graduates from HAIs. Rogan and Reynolds (2016) also reported that the type of higher education institution which one studies at will determine how they will subsequently face the labour market. Higher education, therefore, plays a major part in how the graduates experience the labour market and they have a significant role to play to ensure employability of graduates.

Skill or education mismatches

Mismatches can be categorised into two: skills mismatch and qualification mismatch. Qualification mismatch refers to when graduates hold low or high levels of qualifications than what is required by the employers, while skills mismatch is when a graduate is equipped with a lower or higher skill to perform a job (Mncayi, 2016; Christie, 2016). Sometimes the mismatch can be a result of the field of study completed by the graduate (Walker & Fongwa, 2017b). Due to the rise of the mismatches, questions have been raised on the responsibility of HEIs and their effectiveness in producing sufficiently skilled graduates. Some of the graduates consequently struggle to secure employment. Skills mismatch has been believed to be caused by the prolonged period qualified people take to secure employment (Walker & Fongwa, 2017a). A prolonged period searching for employment will result in the qualification becoming obsolete (Axelrad, et al., 2018). Youth graduates left school with high employment expectations because of the acquired knowledge, however they will be lacking adequate attributes to secure and meet their employment expectations and subsequently lead to a prolonged period of job search (Graham & Da Lannoy, 2016; Mlatsheni, 2014; Mncayi, 2016). Thus, higher education is not equipping graduates with the relevant skills that are needed in the labour market which has caused a mismatch. For example, the private sector in South Africa was struggling to fill in about 80 000 vacancies while an estimated 600 000 university graduates were unemployed (The Economist, 2012). A prolonged search for employment forces the young graduates to end up in vulnerable and informal employment (DeLuca, Godden, Hutchinson, & Versnel, 2015; ILO, 2018). According to ILO (2018) an estimated two thirds of young graduates are underemployed or underutilised in developing countries. Graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds end up being underemployed due to desperation to secure employment and a lack of adequate employability skills.

Furthermore, previous studies have indicated that Curriculum makers are not well concerned about the relevance of skills and competencies which graduates attain (Bunney, et al., 2016; Jackson, 2015). In other studies, it is highlighted that the mismatch is caused by a lack of work experience (Altbeker & Storme, 2013; Baron-Puda, 2018); qualifications that are irrelevant (Moleke, 2009) and inclination toward matured graduates than young graduates (CHEC, 2016; Oluwajodu et al., 2015). This was also supported by Hanapi and Nordin (2014) in a study in Malaysia in which they found that employment prospects of graduates were worsened by a lack of relevant qualifications and adequate attributes. Achieving good academic grades is no longer a guarantee for employment (Razak, Yusof, Syazana,, Jaafar,, & Talib, 2015). Having a degree is a requirement in the contemporary labour market, but it is no longer a differentiator (Brown, et al., 2013). The skills mismatch hypothesis theorises that higher education system is not producing the skills that employers deem necessary. On the other hand, expectations of those who manage to acquire the skills are raised. Therefore, higher education institution has been called to demonstrate that the education quality and outcomes are in line with the demands of the employers in the labour market (Coetzee, 2012). By aligning the needs of the employers and the curriculum it will help in producing employable graduates as per the demands of the labour market.

Geographical Location

As the rest of the world, South African employment prospects are also affected by the geographical location. The South African provinces often have unequal employment prospects (Mncayi, 2016; Graham, et al., 2016). Rural areas have higher unemployment rates because of lack of employment prospects as compared to urban areas (Ranchhod and Mlatsheni 2016; Mncayi, 2016). In all the nine provinces in South Africa, Eastern Cape has the highest unemployment, followed by Kwa-Zulu Natal and the North West Province which are all rural province (Stats, 2018). Most of the people who are employed are in the economic powerhouses of the country namely Western Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal (Stats 2018). These are urban areas and considered to be the country's economic hubs, many employers are situated in these areas which ultimately makes it easy for graduates to access the job market. Individuals from the rural areas are mostly likely to be unemployed due to remoteness of employers (Mncayi, 2016). In other words, a secluded place leads to high costs of employment search, and subsequently result in unemployment. According to Mncayi (2016) this is true considering that a province like Eastern Cape is underdeveloped and most of its population is unemployed. Universities which are in the rural areas mostly attract students from immediate surrounding areas who will struggle to settle their school fees (CHE, 2016). Subsequently, this leads to

problems with the curriculum as the necessary developmental needs such as lecturing quality improvement are not met, thus the university will not be able to attract academically ready students (DHET, 2016). Furthermore, many Black South Africans are unable to access quality higher education due to being based in rural areas where foundational schooling is of poor quality (Maila & Ross, 2018). Thus, the geographical location plays a major role in determining the graduate labour market outcomes. Most rural areas are dominated by Black people as the legacies of apartheid are still evident in the country (Magagula, 2017). The majority of these Black people have limited access to employment opportunities leading to a high unemployment among these people (Mncayi, 2016). This has resulted in high migration rates from rural areas to urban areas in search of employment opportunities (Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017). This kind of migration is likely to result in vulnerable or informal employment for the migrants (ILO, 2018). Graduates are searching for areas in which it will be possible for them to gain employment and develop a career identity hence the increase in the migration from rural areas into the urban areas.

Employment search activities

Graduate employment status is significantly influenced by lack of information on available employment opportunities, job requirements, and inability to apply for job openings (Graham & Da Lannoy, 2016; Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017; Mncayi, 2016). Graduates are expected to have skills such as writing and verbal skills, interpersonal and communication skills when searching for employment (Wood, et al., 2015). The graduates have to demonstrate such skills to enhance their chances of securing employment (Chhinzer & Russo, 2018). Most students assume that obtaining a degree will result in the development of such skills (Adrian, 2017). These are soft (generic) skills which can be applied in various work environments. However, graduates are reportedly lacking such skills resulting in a struggle to secure employment (Artess, et al., 2017; Baron-Puda, 2018). South Africa is no exception as it has been suggested that unemployment remains high because of a lack of job search skills (Melaphi, 2015; Mlatsheni, 2014; Mncayi, 2016). Most students in the disadvantaged communities have limited access to the labour market which makes it difficult for them to understand the requirements of the labour market. The students end up being discouraged from applying for employment because of the costs that involved in making job applications.

Lack of sufficient labour market information

Graduates remain unemployed at times due to lack of prevailing employment opportunities and appropriate information (Mncayi, 2016). Constantly graduates are not well informed about the job market trends and no proper guidance on the process of job application,

and as unemployment persists, discouragement among graduates often sets in (Maswangayi, 2015; Mlatsheni, 2014; Newman & De Lannoy, 2014). Young graduates are likely to suffer discouragement from unemployment than the older cohort of graduates (ILO, 2018). Failure to secure employment after several attempts is likely to cause discouragement and depression among the job seekers (Magagula, 2017; Mlatsheni, 2014). Furthermore, due to discouragement, young graduates can turn to prostitution for survival, crime and use of drugs (Jolly, 2016; Maswanganyi, 2015; Mokgohloa, 2006). As a result of discouragement, some graduates end up being underemployed as they resort for low paying jobs.

2.3. History of Higher Education in South Africa

The South African higher education system has been historically highly fragmented (van Broekhuizen, 2016). Prior to 2004, South Africa had 21 general academic universities and 15 technikons. The main role of the universities was the development of knowledge and training of students in scientific and scholarly fields to prepare them for various professions; while technikons focused on application of knowledge (CHE, 2016). Higher education has also been fragmented in terms of funding, governance and quality of education delivered by different parts of the education system (CHE, 2016).

The administration of the institutions under apartheid was tasked to eight racially demarcated government departments (van Broekhuizen, 2016). However, the departments were allocated significantly different amount of funding and resources as well as the developmental support (Motala, 2017). Such policies further fragmented higher education system into two categories which are categorised as HAIs (White universities) and HDIs (Black universities) (van Broekhuizen, 2016). Inequality was not only unique in higher education but throughout the whole education system (Theron, 2016). The legacy of apartheid continues playing a significant role in the quality of education that different races are receiving.

The HDIs were established to train Blacks for employment in occupations of low-level as well as to serve the White people (Heleta, 2016). According to StatsSA (2018) skilled occupations are dominated by White and Indian/Population, while Black African and Coloured men were mostly employed in semi-skilled and basic skilled occupations. In addition, it is noted that Black African women were more vulnerable in the labour market, and dominated the basic skilled occupations, while on the other hand most white and Indian/Asian women occupied skilled occupations.

After the attainment of independence in South Africa in 1994, a number of significant changes were implemented on the higher education policies. The main change that was effected

was the amalgamation of the 36 universities and technikons into 11 traditional universities, six comprehensive universities and six universities of technology (CHE, 2016), as outlined in the table below. The number of public HEIs was reduced from 36 to 23 HEIs. Some technikons merged with general academic universities and some HAIs amalgamated with HDIs. In order to restructure the higher education landscape new institutions were formed through mergers, at present there are 26 public universities and over a hundred private institutions (CHE, 2016; Walker & Fongwa, 2017a, b). As a result of the mergers the higher education sector is now made up of traditional universities, comprehensive universities and universities of technology (Van Broekhuizen, 2016). The current categorisation of universities in South Africa is outlined in Table 2.

Table 3: *Current Higher Education Classification in South Africa*

Institution	Type	HAI/HDI
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	Technology	HDI
University of Cape Town	Traditional	HAI
Central University of Technology	Technology	HAI
Durban University of Technology	Technology	HDI
University of Fort Hare	Traditional	HDI
University of the Free State	Traditional	HAI
University of Johannesburg	Comprehensive	HAI
University of KwaZulu Natal	Traditional	HDI
Sol Plaatje University	Comprehensive	HDI
Sefako Makgatho Health Science University	Traditional	HDI
University of Mpumalanga	Comprehensive	HDI
University of Limpopo	Traditional	HDI
Nelson Mandela University	Comprehensive	HAI
North West University	Traditional	HDI
Rhodes University	Traditional	HAI
University of Pretoria	Traditional	HAI
University of South Africa	Comprehensive	HAI
University of Stellenbosch	Traditional	HAI
Tshwane University of Technology	Technology	HDI
University of Venda	Comprehensive	HDI
Vaal University of Technology	Technology	HAI
Walter Sisulu University	Comprehensive	HDI
University of Western Cape	Traditional	HDI
University of Witwatersrand	Traditional	HAI
University of Zululand	Comprehensive	HDI
Mangosuthu University of Technology	Technology	HDI

Source: Van Broekhuizen (2016): Comprehensive: Comprehensive University; Technology: University of Technology; Traditional: Traditional University; HDI – Historically Disadvantaged Institution; HAI – Historically Advantaged Institution.

The mergers were initiated to reconfigure higher education landscape so that institutions will not be classified as historically white or black institutions as well as replacing the division between technikons and universities (CHE, 2016; Walker & Fongwa, 2017). However, regardless of the significant policy changes, the South African higher education system is still divided into historical disadvantaged and advantaged institutions. Subsequently, many HDIs are still significantly at a disadvantage with regards to institutional capacity, education quality and socio-economic backgrounds (van Broekhuizen, 2016). Thus, HAIs and HDIs are still performing significantly differently not only in terms of graduates produced but in other measures of performance (Baldry, 2016; Oluwajodu et al., 2015). Graduates from HDIs are struggling in the labour market due to a lack of employability skills. These graduates are exposed to poor education quality which is affecting the development of employability skills.

Post-apartheid era has seen an exponential growth of student numbers in the public universities from half a million in 1994 to almost a million plus 90 000 in the private institutions (CHE, 2016). Subsequently, demographics of students at higher institutions are also changing as many Black students now have access to higher education, as shown in Table below. This is an effort by the government to redress the past inequalities (Walker & Fongwa, 2017). However, despite the increase in black students, the participation rates between White and Black students still differ significantly, in 2013 African students comprised of 16% while white students amounted to 55% (CHE, 2016). The current students' enrolments by race are outlined in Table 4.

Table 4: Public university headcount enrolment increase by race

Race	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
African	662,123	689,503	679,800	696,320	701,482
Coloured	58,692	61,034	60,716	62,186	61,963
Indian	52,296	53,787	53,611	53,378	50,450
White	172,654	171,927	166,172	161,739	152,489
Total	953,373	983,698	969,154	999,358	975,837

Source: Higher Education Data Analyser, 2018

From the above it is evident that the number of Blacks students enrolling for higher education have been increasing while the number of White students had been decreasing.

However, prior education and race play a major role in skewing the success rates of students. The White Paper of 2013 acknowledges that South Africa education is characterised by a low participation with high attrition (CHE, 2016). Inequality is not only among students but the staff as well. Black academics representation at senior leadership university level and at faculty level has been slow and modest, in 2013 there were only 17 753 Black academic staff compared to 26 847 White academic staff (CHE, 2016). Due to such low levels of Black academics it will take long for the curriculum to be decolonised (Jansen, 2017). The country has to first improve the quality of the education system before thinking of decolonising the curriculum.

The policy changes were generally supported by many South African universities, and the policies mainly affected the following areas of higher education endeavour; academic and enrolment planning, quality assurance and funding (CHE, 2016). The success of the policies can be attributed to the relationship that exists between Department of Education (now Higher Education and Training) and higher education sector (CHE, 2016).

In the post-apartheid era South African higher education has become more unpredictable. However, contradictorily, higher education has contributed more to the achievement of national objectives of transformation, quality and equity in the education sector (CHE, 2016; Van der Westhuizen, Greuel, & Beukes, 2017). Higher education can argue that it has achieved a national department, integration system, increase in African students, and better funding opportunities for students, improved access to higher education for students from all races, improved research output and international recognition (CHE, 2016). Indeed, access to higher education has significantly increased, universities must now ensure that student performance, and success and throughput rates are improved (DHET, 2018). This can only be done through improving the education system to enhance the employability of students.

Despite several achievements by higher education as stated above, the legacy of apartheid continues to influence the education sector in a negative way as well the challenges and stresses posed by poor socio-economic backgrounds are playing a vital role on the quality of the education system in South Africa (Botha & Coetzee, 2017; CHE, 2016; Maila & Ross, 2018). Many policies have been formulated to react to the imbalances of the past such as inequality and reduce unemployment amongst others, however this has proven not to be an easy feat (Van Broekhuizen, 2016). Without detracting from achievements by South Africa since 1994, it remains a fact that South African mass is facing immense difficulties: education quality that is poor, high rates of unemployment and high levels poverty (Musitha & Mafukata, 2018; Van Breda, 2018). The problems faced by Black students have not gone away despite the mergers between HEIs to become more multiracial universities in their student populace.

The HDIs remain dominated by Black students, while White students remain concerted at HAIs with no or little entry into HDIs. Regardless of higher education system being considered as a major role player in equitable social development there are still many discrepancies.

South Africa has not yet been able to deal with the negative effects of the apartheid system (Edayi, 2015; Lebeloane, 2017). Subsequently, only a small number of the population controls the bulk wealth of the country and huge gaps between the poor and the rich continue to exist (Mncayi, 2016). In addition, not only does South Africa face inequality in terms of wealth, but in areas such as education and employment as well (Van Broekhuizen, 2016). A survey that was conducted in 2011 through a Gini index[1] scored South Africa 63.4 making it the most unequal nation worldwide (Lourens, 2016). Inequality in South Africa remains a major problem and as a result leaving the poor behind (Van Zyl, 2016; Walker & Fongwa, 2017a, b). Inequality has resulted in people from disadvantaged backgrounds feeling inferior which also inhibits how students apply themselves in the labour market.

To deal with past imbalances among graduates, the democratic government introduced and adopted several policies. The policies were formulated to deal with the challenge of graduate unemployment that is faced by the country. The affairs of young graduates in South Africa are being shaped by procedures laid out in polices such as the National Youth Policy (2009-2014) and the National Youth Commission Act (1996). These policies are providing young graduates with opportunities to be trained through skills programmes for sustainable economic development of the republic (National Youth Development Agency, 2009). The policies are in existence but it appears that the policies are not being implemented for the benefit of the target population.

In the context of socioeconomic development in South Africa, CHE describes the role of higher education as: Higher education's social and public value is related to the links between itself and societal needs: developing a citizenry capable of participating effectively in democratic processes; producing intellectuals who can engage the most intractable problems of society and so develop the ability of citizens to participate politically, economically and socially; and producing high-level skilled graduates and new bases of knowledge to drive economic and social development, and to enhance the overall levels of intellectual and cultural development (2016). Thus, it is imperative that higher education produce highly competent and skilled graduates to successfully address the goals of transformation and reconstruction.

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[1]"The Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution…thus a Gini index of 0 represents perfect equality while an index of 100 implies perfect inequality" (The World Bank, 2014, para. 1).

However, social factors such as geographical location, race and class, continue affecting the levels of preparedness of the graduates, thus it is important to consider the implications they have on employability.

Despite having 23 public universities in South Africa, only four universities, namely; University of Cape Town (UCT), University of Witwatersrand (Wits), Stellenbosch University and University of Kwa-Zulu Natal; make into the top 500 universities in the world (Times Higher Education, 2017). None of the universities is an HDI, indicating that the education offered by HDI is of low quality. Higher education in South Africa is overwhelmed by the lack of entrepreneurial nature, high rates of student drop-out[2] and unemployment among graduates (Motala, 2017; Van Zyl, 2016). Dropping-out has been attributed to a lack of financial resources mostly for students from poor socio-economic backgrounds (Van Zyl, 2016). Dropping out can be can caused by other various reasons such as poor living conditions, under-preparedness, and incorrect qualification choices (DHET, 2018). As a result of proper career guidance and counselling, students from disadvantaged communities end up dropping out of their university studies.

Studies have highlighted that graduates from HDIs struggle in the labour market than graduates from HAIs (CHEC, 2016, Mncayi, 2016, Rogan & Reynolds, 2016; van Broekhuizen, 2016). The findings reflect a continuing legacy of apartheid that created inequality between HDIs and HAIs. Employers view graduates from HDIs as less capable or inferior than graduates from HAIs who are perceived as the most competent and qualified (Ntikinca, 2014). The recently held fees must fall demonstrations in 2016 reflect that the country is still unequal. Davids and Waghid (2016) indicated that fees must fall demonstrations did not start in 2015, but since 1994 when HDIs as such University of Fort Hare and Cape Peninsula University of Technology protested. However, their protests were not given due consideration. Nonetheless, recent fees must fall movement included both HDIs and HAIs, and the protests sparked solidarity marches in London and New York. The authors argued that the level of media coverage reflects the inequality that still exists in South Africa. Consequently, due to the inequitable perceptions from employers and the world, the labour market outcomes for HAIs and HDIs graduates remain unequal. To redress the past imbalances the government formulated several legislations.

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[2]In a study by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in South Africa showed that about 40% students drop-out while in the first year; on the other only 15% can graduate in the prescribed times (MacGregor, 2007).

2.3.1. Legislations Governing Graduate Employment in South Africa.

The future higher education development was set by the adoption of the Constitution which stated that higher education was a national responsibility[3]. The Constitution also includes a Bill of Rights, which is the cornerstone of democracy in South Africa, that "everyone has the right to further education, which the State, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible". Since the attainment of independence many people who were previously disadvantaged now have access to higher education (CHE, 2016), however a lack of adequate attributes still causes high unemployment paradox. The government, in an attempt to curb and redress the inequalities in the labour market, accessibility of training and provision of equal opportunities, introduced several legislative measures. The legislative measures introduced include Employment Equity Act (EEA, 1998), Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (BBBEE, 2003), Skills Development Act (1998); Labour Relations Act (LRA, 1995). These legislative measures create an element of entitlement among the people from disadvantaged backgrounds. The perception that has been created is that with a mere qualification a person should secure employment. The legislatives neglect to address the need for employability skills.

Graduate labour market outcomes and the future of previously disadvantaged youth continue being driven by the legacy of apartheid. Hence, the government adopted several policies in order to meet the needs of the youth (graduates) from different backgrounds. The policies that have been formulated include National Youth Policy and National Youth Development Policy Framework amongst other policies to oversee the development of youth in South Africa. Policies are being developed but they are not benefitting the people which are they are intended to benefit. No effective institutions are being developed to help the marginalised individuals to develop employability skills. The policies need better implementation strategies to achieve their set goals.

Since the attainment of independence in SA in 1994, policy makers have embarked on a journey to achieve equality. In July 1997 an Education White Paper 3 was formulated stating the principles which were to be followed by Higher Education in order to the redress the past imbalances and transform the country through higher education. The principles include focusing on the learning needs of diverse people as well as meeting the demands of the open labour market for economic development (DHET, 1997).

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[3]South African Government (1996) South African Constitution, Schedule 4, Part A.

The principles were re-stated by the Minister of Higher Education and Training in November 2013 when the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training was released (DHET, 2013). As such the Higher Education system is expected to make a contribution towards a democratic SA through non-racial, equitable as well as non-sexist education. Thus, the South African society perceives the higher education as an integral role-player in the democratisation of the country (CHE 2016), as the economy of the country has become knowledge-driven.

Higher Education is expected to contribute to the economic development of the country as emphasised in the 2013 White Paper (DHET, 2013). This principle supports the Higher Education goal outlined in the National Development (National Planning Commission (NPC), 2011) which emphasises that more skilled workers were needed to be produced through the expansion of Higher Education. As the global trends, the South African Higher Education system is also under pressure to meet human capital needs of the labour market. Thus, in SA, as the rest of the world, Higher Education is expected to contribute to the social and economic development of the country by providing employable graduates.

Employability of citizens was identified as one of the millennium development goals (MDGs). This points out that socioeconomic development is dependent on employability of individuals. A number of sub-Saharan African countries have concentrated on funding primary school sector as a response to the UNESCO millennium goals, but in South Africa the key to social and economic development is regarded as higher education (CHE, 2016). Higher education is the key but the development of students starts from primary education hence the need to invest more in basic education.

The Skills Development Act (No 97 of 1998)

The Act stipulates that employers should utilise the workplace to offer new labour market entrants' opportunities to acquire experience in the labour market, a place to learn new skills as well as offering employment opportunities to those people who struggle to secure work (Skills Development Act, 1998). All this is done to better service delivery by the government to all people.

According to the Skills Development Act (1998), *"an employee could either be any person, excluding an independent contractor, who works for another person or for the state and who receives, or is entitled to receive any remuneration; or any other person who in any manner assists in carrying on or conducting the business of an employer."* The Act ensures that the workplace becomes a place where skills are developed and improved. This Act focuses

on areas such as developing employees while at work and when unemployed and growth of skills through a framework.

The National Youth Commission Act (No. 19 of 1996)

This policy was drafted as one of the policies that were introduced to meet the needs of youth, in particular of previously disadvantaged youth. The government released the need to create and develop opportunities for the advancement of youth in South Africa. Thus, policies such as National Youth Policy 2000, National Youth Development Policy Framework 2002-2007 and National Youth Commission Act 19 of 1996. The National Youth Policy 2009-2014 culminated from the processes by the above mentioned polices.

Therefore, National Youth Commission was formulated to set out the principles and guidelines to meet the needs of youth development. This is stated in the Act as *"…it is imperative that South Africa recognizes the role that youth played and will still play in society, and since the youth in South Africa constitutes an energetic, creative and the largest sector of our population, and given the challenges this sector faced and continues to face; … it is necessary to redress the imbalances of the past and to create a national youth policy aimed at empowering the youth and allowing them to realize their full potential through optimal access to opportunities."*

The National Youth Development Policy Framework (2002-2007)

The youth have been affected by the racial inequality which continues prevailing in South Africa. According to the NYDF (2007) the youth played an insignificant role in the nation's affairs, subsequently the youth's privileges as well as rights are said to have been violated. Thus, the NYDF states that "*represents an important milestone towards an integrated and holistic approach to youth development for the advantage of the young women and men specifically and for South Africa as a whole*".

Hence, this policy was formulated as a guidance on how to develop, design and implement programmes for youth development. The main purpose of the policy is to align the goals of the nation of development and reconstruction with youth development. Youth development interventions are an integral part of the challenges and transformation of South Africa. The NYDF strives to ensure that youth development across all sectors is resolved. In order to reach full potential as individuals as well as active members of the community, all young women and men receive opportunities that are meaningful.

The National Youth Policy (2009-2014)

Many governments across the world are drafting youth policies to address the 21st century changes that young people are experiencing. The aims and objectives of the National Youth Policy include identifying gaps in the current policy and propose strategic policy interventions designed to fill them, thus speeding up further development of youth; defining the targets of the new interventions; addressing the continuous needs of the youth by focusing on areas where supplementary action is required; ensuring mainstreaming of youth development in programmes run by different key role players; positioning policy implementation in the context of institutional responsibilities and processes; mapping the process through which progress on policy implementation will be assessed; and specifying the monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the purposes of accountability and continuous improvement of interventions (NYP, 2009).

One of the main objectives as stated in the policy is to enhance the capacities of young people through addressing their needs, promoting positive outcomes, and providing integrated coordinated package of services, opportunities, choices, relationship and support necessary for holistic development of all young people particularly those outside the social, political and economic mainstream (NYP, 2009).

All the youth from different categories are covered by the policy, categories such as youth with disabilities, school-age youth and unemployed youth. Local governments have developed programmes in accordance with the needs of the different categories. Governments invest in the youth as they are the nation's future leaders. In order to realise the return on investment it is important for the youth to be empowered so that they can contribute meaningfully to development of the nation (NYP, 2009).

White Paper on National Youth Service (NYS)

The South African government has adopted youth policies as an initiative to involve the youth in the rebuilding as well as development of the country. The objectives of the policy are to facilitate the provision of work experience for young persons with a view to their employment; to encourage participants to develop a sense of responsibility and service to the country; and self-respect and respect for authority; to promote among participants, values of discipline, democracy, citizenship and corporation (National Youth Service Act, 1998).

In order for the undertakings to be successfully preserved, a board was formed for the following responsibilities: to develop and monitor orientation, training, approved placement and employment programmes for participants; provide placement and employment opportunities for participants and assist in the development of approved employment projects;

monitor and evaluate the implementation of the plans and programmes of the National Youth Service and to make to the Minister such recommendations as it thinks fit in respect thereof (National Youth Service Act, 1998).

The youth categories include higher education students, unemployed youths and further education and training students. Youth development is ensured by this programme as different government departments will incorporate the programme to ensure viability. However, it should be noted that all the graduates cannot be accommodated by the government. On the other hand, the private sector has stringent employment conditions. The conditions are very restrictive to the new graduates who are considered under prepared for the labour market.

A White Paper on Higher Education (1999) was drafted to form the basis for higher education transformation. The important roles that the White Paper stipulated for higher education in a knowledge-driven economy were: acquiring and applying novel knowledge, training and producing highly skilled individuals and human resources development (Ntikinca, 2010).

Despite several interventions by the government and private sectors, graduate unemployment remains a problem in South Africa (Mandyoli, Iwu, & Nxopo, 2016). Higher education is still affected by the problems of apartheid and new emerging difficulties. The position of the youth in the country has not yet substantially improved despite an array of interventions and several policy discussions since the 1990 as the youth continue facing the challenges and inequality in the education system and labour market (Graham & Lannoy, 2016). Should the situation remain unchanged, it is expected that frustration and exasperation among youth will increase. The country must, as stated by the National Development Plan, "find ways to reduce alarming levels of youth unemployment and to provide young people with broader opportunities. Failure to act will threaten democratic gains' (NPC, 2011, p. 16). It appears that the government is more concerned with equality of opportunity. It is neglecting the other aspect which is equity in outcome. It is important that everyone in the country has equal opportunities to develop, but to eradicate poverty the government has to also look at equal outcomes.

2.4. Graduate unemployment in South Africa

Most developing countries are facing the problem of graduate unemployment and many of these countries have been reported to be failing to alleviate problems of unemployment (Baldry, 2016; Campbell, 2018; Tran, 2015). South Africa is no exception as concerns have been raised about the ever-increasing number of graduates who are failing to secure employment (Botha, 2015; Kundaeli, 2015; Magagula, 2017). Previous studies have noted that

the perceived benefits of higher education in the comparative labour market could be declining (CHEC, 2016, Baldry, 2016; Kraak, 2015). The perceived benefits could be declining because of a lack of employability skills among the graduates being produced these days.

In this contemporary world, to be competitive in the labour market, education and skills have become a pre-requisite. However, education and training systems have been widely observed as failing to produce graduates who can meet the labour market demands (Hanapi & Nordin, 2014). In order to increase graduate employability calls have been made to invest and restructure the education system that is inadequately performing (Kumo, Reilander, & Omilola, 2014; van Broekhuizen, 2016). New labour market entrants are not being fully absorbed in the labour market despite the growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rates (Burger, 2016). According to the World Bank (2014) South Africa has GDP of US 349.8 billion dollars and is regarded as an upper middle-income economy, but the country continues to experience high rates of unemployment, inequality and exclusion. In 2017 the GDP decreased by 0.7% as the country moved into recession (StatsSA, 2017). The economy of South Africa is reported to be at a standstill as the GDP was at 1.0% in 2017 and 1.2% in 2018 (Schwab, 2018).

Previous findings (e.g. Baron-Puda, 2018; Botha & Coetzee, 2017; de St Jorre & Oliver, 2017) indicated that graduates did not possess the required skills in the labour market and lacked knowledge of the labour market realities, particularly undergraduates. As a result of this skills mismatch many graduates, especially from HDIs, remain unemployable. Unemployment is most prevalent among HDIs graduates (van Broekhuizen, 2016; Walker & Fongwa, 2017). This may be caused by employers who are of the perspective that graduates from HDIs are generally less productive (Rogan & Reynolds, 2016; van de Rheede, 2012). Subsequently, many Blacks and Coloureds are facing the highest unemployment rate than other race (Matsilele, 2015). Graduate unemployment is being caused by a perceived lack of employability skills among Black graduates by the employers.

Black graduates continue being vulnerable than their white graduates' counterparts (Mncayi, 2016; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). An assertion of the above was shown in a study by CHEC (2016) on the pathways from university to work. The study confirmed that highest unemployment rates was among black graduates at 19%. Furthermore, only 35% of black graduates were employed in the private sector than 61% of whites. Such employment statistics confirm the existence of discriminatory trends in SA. This is further supported by previous findings ((Graham & De Lannoy, 2016; Mmesi, 2015; Oluwajodu, et al., 2015) which suggest that graduate unemployment is a main issue for Black youths who face adverse social as well as living conditions.

Investments in higher education are widely expected to yield significant economic returns for both private and social levels (Tomlinson, 2017). Due to pervasive skills shortage in South Africa there is inexplicably high demand for skilled labour (Bhorat, et al., 2016; Lourens, 2016). According to van Broekhuizen (2016) a number of studies that have been conducted since 2000 have raised concerns that a significant problem is emerging in South Africa which is graduate unemployment. In a study by Bhorat (2004) using data from October Household Survey (OHS, 1995) and Labour Force Survey (LFS, March 2002) findings revealed that tertiary educated individuals' unemployment had increased by 139% between 1995 and 2002. Furthermore, the study highlighted that the unemployment rate was greatest among holders of degrees and post-graduate qualifications, over the 7-year period the unemployment rates had increased by 114% and 280% for Whites and Black graduates respectively (Bhorat, 2004).

A number of studies that have been published since 2004 have supported Bhorat (2004)'s substantive findings (DPRU, 2006; Pauw, et al., 2008; Kraak, 2015). Findings of the DRPU (2006) revealed that race groups acted as a determinant of graduate employment and unemployment significantly. The study suggested that Black graduates faced higher levels unemployment which was ascribed to "poor quality (or perceived poor quality) of many higher education institutions in conjunction with the poor performance of the historically disadvantaged formal schooling system" (DRPU, 2006, p. 18). Several studies are in support of the findings that race plays a major role on the employability of graduates in the South African context, with most studies relying on descriptive analyses and using countrywide demonstrative labour force statistics to draw conclusions. The figure below shows the South African unemployment statistics trends from 2008 to 2017.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
		2008				2009				2010				2011				2012				2013				2014				2015				2016				2017		
Less than matric	26,9	26,1	26,5	25,0	26,5	26,6	28,8	27,8	29,0	28,6	29,7	27,9	28,9	29,8	29,0	28,2	29,2	29,2	29,8	29,2	29,2	30,0	29,1	28,1	29,5	30,3	30,4	29,1	30,8	29,6	29,6	28,5	31,3	31,2	31,8	31,2	33,1	33,1	32,7	31,2
Matric	24,0	23,8	24,0	23,1	24,9	25,3	25,6	25,6	26,5	27,7	26,6	25,8	27,5	28,2	27,1	25,2	26,9	26,3	26,6	25,1	27,1	26,7	25,8	25,6	26,4	26,1	25,9	24,8	27,0	25,6	27,2	25,5	27,6	27,3	27,0	27,1	27,5	27,9	28,7	27,5
Graduates	5,4	3,3	3,2	2,8	3,4	3,7	4,2	4,7	5,3	4,9	4,6	3,6	4,4	4,3	4,1	5,3	5,5	4,9	4,9	4,4	5,5	5,3	5,5	5,4	7,0	6,2	5,1	5,2	6,6	6,0	5,2	5,1	6,1	6,5	7,6	7,0	7,3	7,4	5,4	6,6
Other tertiary	10,4	10,2	10,3	8,9	10,4	10,2	11,3	11,3	12,2	12,4	12,3	11,4	10,9	11,5	11,9	10,9	11,6	12,0	11,2	12,2	11,9	12,2	12,4	12,9	14,0	14,2	13,8	12,4	16,9	15,2	15,3	15,6	16,6	16,0	17,3	15,8	17,8	17,0	17,8	17,0
RSA	23,2	22,6	22,8	21,5	23,0	23,2	24,5	24,1	25,1	25,1	25,4	23,9	24,8	25,6	25,0	23,8	25,0	24,8	25,2	24,5	25,0	25,3	24,5	24,1	25,2	25,5	25,4	24,3	26,4	25,0	25,5	24,5	26,7	26,6	27,1	26,5	27,7	27,7	27,7	26,7

Figure 1: Unemployment rate by education status, Q1: 2008 to Q4: 2017, StatsSA (2018) Quarterly Labour Force Survey.

StatsSA (2018) indicate that the graduate unemployment rates have been low. However, the main concern is that the rate remains being high. Despite the absolute size being relatively small, it shows graduate unemployment has increased over time because of the percentage increase. High graduate unemployment rates have been reported in South Africa. However, despite the skills shortage in South Africa graduates are struggling to secure employment (van Broekhuizen, 2016). This is in contrary to findings of previous studies which noted that a person's educational level determines his or her probability of securing employment (Edayi, 2015). The level of education does not determine how employable an individual is, it is the skills that determine how employable a person is, hence the need for employability skills.

Furthermore, contemporary studies are pursuing to ascertain how graduate employment and unemployment possibilities are affected by higher education institution type and quality. A study by Bhorat, Mayet, & Visser (2010) using data from the Human Sciences Research Council's (HSRC) Graduate Destination Study of seven South African universities findings showed that graduates from historically disadvantaged institutions' labour market prospects were inferior as compared to historically advantaged institutions graduates. Branson, Leibrandt, & Zuze (2009), likewise, using Cape Area Panel Study (CAPS) data found that in the Western Cape Province the type of higher education institution an individual completes

their study had a substantial effect on the outcomes which they subsequently faced in the labour market.

Considering global changes in the labour market, South African employment picture and the need for highly skilled graduates, it is apparent that higher education quality needs attention. In South Africa today, unemployment is among the greatest challenges that are faced by the country (Mncayi, 2016). Due to increased access to higher education, graduate labour force continues to rise. However, graduate unemployment, despite the increase in graduate labour force, appears to be rising together with overall South African unemployment rate (Edayi, 2015). Hence, the economy will potentially be damaged by graduate unemployment, thus it is important to study graduate unemployment. Graduate unemployment results in a waste of scarce human capital. Persistence of graduate unemployment may cause graduates skills to be outdated and eroded, and in the long term affect the economy. Thus, in order to develop the economy, it is important to explore possible causes of graduate unemployment (Edayi, 2015). One of the causes of graduate unemployment being lack of employability skills hence the need to look at graduate unemployment.

Graduate unemployment challenge in South Africa can be linked to the growth trajectory of the country. The country's trajectory has been characterised by growing inequality and high levels of poverty since democratisation in 1994. The 2009 global recession also impacted on these socio-economic trends and this result in the contraction of the economy and substantial retrenchments in both sectors, private and public. Hence, two aspects of exclusion exist in the South African labour market; poverty has caused low participation rates and unemployment rates that are high among young people, in particular HDIs graduates.

In addition, South African labour market is faced with critical problems which involve scarcity of employment opportunities in rural areas, high unemployment rates for women and despite skills scarcity a skill-intensive economy (Edayi, 2015; Lourens, 2016; Magagula, 2017). The problem of lack of skills problem experienced in South Africa can be attributed to the consequences of apartheid (Horwitz, 2013). There is evidence of skills mismatch in South Africa. As discussed earlier, graduates are accumulating expertise in fields that not necessarily in demand in the labour market such as nursing, teaching and humanities.

Employers are reluctant to hire graduates as they consider graduates to be lacking necessary attributes for entry-level positions. Thus, in South Africa the heart of graduate unemployment is the poor education system (Jansen, 2017; Mlatsheni, 2014). Education is the centre for graduate unemployment, however in South Africa graduate unemployment is not

only caused by education (Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). Several other factors such as race, field of study and socio-economic status play a role in the labour market outcomes of graduates.

In a survey conducted by Pauw et al., (2008) some firms explicitly expressed that new graduates' education was of low quality, whilst other firms suggested that an improvement of the education quality would result in more graduates being hired. Firms in the survey conducted by Pauw et al., (2006) expressed concern about graduates from HDIs with regards to workplace readiness as well as soft skills. A key shortcoming that was cited by firms was a lack of soft skills such as communication skills (English) for HDIs graduates. Due to a lack of such skills the graduates continue being unsuccessful in the recruitment stage. Several studies have well-documented the need for graduates to have soft skills as well as communication skills to improve employment opportunities (Goodman & Treadway, 2016; Shivoro, et al., 2018). Therefore, graduate labour market success is dependent on individual having the adequate generic skills such as communication (Dacre Pool & Qualter, 2012). Employers reported that they look for generic skills when first time labour market entrants are being interviewed (Artess, et al., 2017). A lack of these skills it will result in graduate unemployment rates increasing.

In the past it was widely perceived that having higher education qualifications will place an individual at an added advantage when competing in the labour market than those individuals with lower education qualifications (Mncayi, 2016). However, due to mismatches between the needs of the employers and the skills of the graduates, many graduates do not always benefit from the so-called advantage (van Broekhuizen, 2016). Employers have indicated that a qualification is required but it insufficient on its own for an individual to secure employment (Archer & Chetty, 2013). A qualification is important but without employability skills it is difficult for the graduates to secure employment.

According to StatsSA (2018) the overall number of individuals who are unemployed increased by 33 000 in the third quarter of 2017 and the number of unemployed persons decreased by 330 000 in the fourth quarter of 2017. The official overall unemployment rate is currently estimated to be 26.7% (fourth quarter of 2017) which is a decrease from 27.7% (third quarter of 2017). Unemployment rate increases were recorded in seven of the nine provinces. The highest increases were recorded in Eastern Cape, Kwa-Zulu Natal and North West (StatsSA, 2018), all these provinces are mostly rural provinces. As discussed earlier, rural provinces have high unemployment rates. Further to that the youth unemployment percentage stood at 32.4%.

	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White		Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White
		Male					Female		
■ Q4:2016	28,5	29,8	15,2	12,0		35,2	28,8	20,4	10,6
■ Q4:2017	27,1	31,3	21,3	8,2		34,7	34,3	21,7	14,4
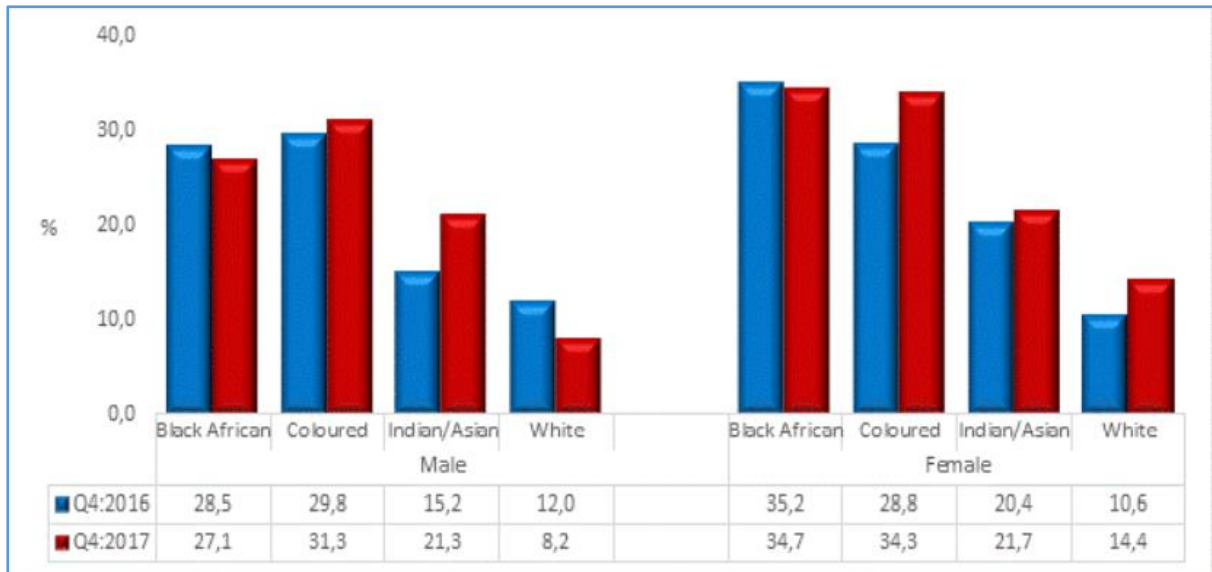
Figure 2: NEET rates for youth aged 15–24 years by population group, Q4: 2016 and Q4: 2017 (StatsSA (2018) Quarterly Labour Force Survey)

Such high levels of unemployment are a cause for concern, hence both policy makers and researchers must pay attention. From the above statistics it is evident that mostly Black youth between the ages of 15- 24 years were not in education, employment or training (NEET). Most the university graduates are part of this group (youths).

The media reports truly reflect the reality of graduate unemployment in SA as many graduates are reported to be taking it to the streets to find employment after not receiving any response to 'hundreds' of employment applications (Madibogo, 2016). In the beginning of 2017 unemployed graduates around Eastern Cape in South Africa took part in a protest named #HireAGraduate. The main reason behind the protest was to get the attention of the government and private sector so that the parties could play a role in the employment of the graduates. Some of the signage during the protests read as follows "any job will do, just need a job". Most of the graduates were from HDIs; Walter Sisulu University and University of Fort Hare; and most of them were Black graduates, indicating that Black African graduates are still struggling to secure employment in the labour market.

Various studies have looked at the graduate unemployment levels that continue to rise globally (Baldry 2016; Botha 2015; Botha & Coetzee, 2017, Van Broekhuizen, 2016). Graduate unemployment average rate for OECD countries in 2014 was at 7.4 percent (OECD, 2015), while graduate unemployment rate for students from African universities was at 25 percent (Kigotho, 2016; McCowan, 2016). The inequality in chances of securing employment in South Africa are further entrenched in the uneven public-school system quality. Most

schools where Black African learners attain their foundational education have been reported to be underperforming (Bhorat, et al., 2016; Maila & Ross, 2018). As a result of underperformance of the schools, the students are ill-prepared for higher education which makes it difficult for them to enhance their employability skills.

Children from poor socio-economic backgrounds who are enrolled at schools that are ill-managed and under-resourced easily fall behind with their learning (Graham & Da Lannoy, 2016). Such educational backlogs and prevalent grade repetition cause school dropout (Spaull, 2015). Labour market access is also shaped by other inequalities at the individual and community levels. Geographical location is a barrier to graduate employment as those located outside the major cities have to spend more money and time searching for employment (see Graham, et al., 2016). Employment is further affected by factors such as limited social capital and limited access to information (Graham & Da Lannoy, 2016). Graduates may end up not being active employment seekers due to financial restraints. The process of searching for employment is costly coupled with low likelihood of securing employment in the context of mass unemployment, graduates end up being discouraged to continue with job search (Matsilele, 2015; Mlatsheni and Ranchhod, 2017). Most graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds are living in poverty and it is expensive for them to constantly apply for employment as most employers are based in different towns and cities from the rural areas where the graduates are residing.

The problem of graduate unemployment is a universal issue as both emerging and developed countries face the same problem. Unemployment is apparently an intractable problem. It is complicated as it is driven by structural factors of the labour market, education system and individual, household as well as community level. Graduate unemployment is intensified by factors such as race, institution, field of study, lack of access to networks and employers, perceptions of the employers of the employability and quality of graduates, lack of generic skills and work experience as well as economic trends. It is further affected by factors such social capital, geographic location and limited access to information. The researcher looked at graduate unemployment because employment is a result of having employability skills. These unemployment statistics gave the researcher an idea of the unemployment trends in the country. Although the unemployment is caused by several other factors, employability is regarded as one of the most important factors. Given the recent #HireAGraduate protests, it thus important to understand if these graduates are employable or they are just mere qualification holders.

2.5. Graduate labour market trends and challenges.

Graduate labour market is an arena where different people and groups are attempting to gain control and advantage over others (Tholen, 2015). Having employability skills can lead to some power in the labour market and extensive benefits which are not reliant on status in the labour market (Hooley, 2017). According to Britton, Dearden, Shephard, and Vignoles (2016) labour market position is not dependent on how well an individual increases their employability, but employability positions an individual for success in the labour market.

Graduates that are produced by higher education institutions are affected by various local and international challenges such as unemployment rates, quality of higher education and requirements of the labour market. Subsequently, the perceived gap that exists between what graduates have to offer and requirements by employers is contributed to by these challenges. Higher education has been deeply affected by global recession (Axelrad, et al., 2018; Magagula, 2017). Due to the rising of unemployment rates and the pressure businesses are facing, graduates will be entering the job market at the worst possible time. As a result, competition in the job market has intensified and the need for well-equipped graduates has arisen (ILO, 2018; Mok, 2016; Mulaudzi, 2015). Organisations that are collaborating with universities by providing activities such as internships will probably lessen such activities as they opt to prioritise their main business. As a result of the worldwide recession that erupted in 2008, several labour markets are still facing a number of challenges (ILO, 2018). The challenges have resulted in the inability of the labour market to absorb all the graduates which has led to increased unemployment.

There is still an enormous global skills deficit, and the world economy is unlikely to sufficiently develop within the next few years to close the deficit and cater for all the people who are expected, during this period, to enter the job market (CHE, 2016; ILO, 2018). In a bid to reduce exportation of skilled labour to developed economies, emerging and developing countries, such as India, South Africa and China, have developed a strategy to boost local demand by increasing the wages to match productivity. Despite efforts to boost the economies, these countries are still vulnerable to the weakening of the global market (ILO, 2018). As the global market is weakening, employers need graduates who are employable and able to contribute to the company soon after being hired rather than having to invest in the training of graduates.

In 2010 South Africa joined Brazil, Russia, India, and China which are known as the BRICS Bloc (Bothwell, 2016). The global relevance and economic emergence of Africa has been nourished and elevated by the BRICS membership. According to Nkoana-Mashabane

(2013) developing economies and emerging markets, particularly in the case of Africa, will be significantly impacted by the BRICS' significant growth potential. If South Africa is to achieve economic growth despite the challenges that the country and continent are facing, it is of importance for the country to view and understand its BRICS membership within context (Nkoana-Mashabane, 2013), as the rest of the continent, South Africa is no exception to challenges of inequality, unemployment and poverty.

Continued increase in the Africa's youth population has resulted in the continent facing socio-economic and demographic challenges. In addition to the increase of youth population, under-employment and high rates of unemployment, African countries have to deal with education and training systems that is irrelevant and education quality that is of poor standard. Hence, in order to have socio-economic development that is sustainable the education and training systems have to be revised to meet the demands of the labour market.

To reduce high unemployment rates among the youth, relevant stakeholders should see to it that the youth are furnished with the relevant skills to be competitive in the job market (Tomlinson, 2017). In support of the above view, Spowart (2012) regarded it as absurd to have a country importing professionals while the country has high unemployment rates and graduates who are unemployed. Due to the mismatch between employers and graduates, there is high youth unemployment that exists despite the private sector having many job vacancies (Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017). In order to address the misalignment, it is imperative that secondary and higher education systems be developed, prioritisation of vocational training as well as improving the quality of education offered by public institutions (Lourens, 2016). Any country that wishes to improve its socio-economic has to prioritise making secondary and tertiary education relevant to the private sector.

In a report by the Foundation for Australians (2015) it stated that about 60 percent of students by the time of graduation will be out of jobs as the students are being educated for jobs that do not exist yet. This is in support of other studies who indicated that there is misalignment between the labour market demands and acquired higher education qualifications (Kigotho 2016; Rogan & Reynolds 2016). As a result of the disappointed experienced in the labour market, many graduates will secure employment in roles that are not related to their chosen field of study (Karmel & Carroll, 2016) often they will be underemployed.

In a research undertaken at Curtin University it was discovered that students from low socio-economic backgrounds, that are disabled, and who are from overseas, will not secure employment within four months after graduation (Richardson, Bennett, & Roberts, 2016). Furthermore, some programs have less employment opportunities as compared to other

programs (Victoria Graduate Outcomes, 2016). As a result, many graduates struggle to secure employment after graduation. The major reason for graduate unemployment has been indicated as the misalignment between skills demanded by employers and skills possessed by graduates. However, in SA graduate unemployment is not only affected by the misalignment, but by other factors as discussed in the following section.

2.5.1. Graduate labour market trends in South Africa.

The relationship that exits between higher education and economic development is complicated and restricted, it is not straightforward or casual. In South Africa, Altbeker and Storme (2013) believe it is not true that possessing a university degree no longer guarantees job market success. The implications originate from a study of Department of Economics of the University of Stellenbosch's unemployment data. The study's findings highlighted that university degree holders that were unemployed were few (under five percent in 2011). The low levels of unemployment were attributed to people who moved between jobs.

The researchers further explained that public and private employers in South Africa were in desperate need for educated and skilled workers. In addition, the findings highlight that graduate employment had grown in the private sector and decreased in the public sector. The authors concluded that the prospects of employment of an individual are enhanced by the obtaining any post-school qualifications. Further to that, graduates' unemployment rates are likely to differ, due to perceived or real differences in the degree quality, for graduates from different universities. This study was conducted at HAIs which is regarded as one of the best not only in South Africa but the whole of Africa. Employers have been reported to prefer graduates from HAIs hence better chances of employment for students from this HEI. Furthermore, the study was conducted in one of the largest economic hubs of the country, i.e. Cape Town, meaning the graduates had better chances of employment than those in the rural areas of the country.

StatsSA (2018) asserts that among the young participants in the labour market in South Africa an estimated half of the population were unemployed. Young people have skills deficit coupled with a lack of workplace experience and subsequently weakening the county's capability to upsurge its domestic share of added value. Considering the need for educated and skilled employees, global labour market changes, and the South African job market picture, thus particular courtesy has to be given to quality of higher education. Basic education quality is considered to be very poor by the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (Maila & Ross, 2018). As a result of the poor education quality the youth are dropping out of school, making uninformed subject choices, achieving poor grades and unpreparedness

for higher education (Jaffer & Garraway, 2016; Van Zyl, 2016). Students register for degree qualifications just for the sake of having a degree because of uninformed subject and career choices.

Consequently, South African universities are affected by the quality of school leavers that are produced by the basic education system. Hence, higher education institutions have the responsibility to redress the entrants' under-preparedness in order to produce graduates that can compete on a global level (Lebeloane, 2017; Maila & Ross, 2018). In the disciplines perceived to be central for socio-economic development, universities are said to be failing to produce graduates that are skilled, this is despite universities having more enrolments than vocational training sector (CHE, 2016). The DHET has an explicit strategy which encourages that skills are linked to career development, sustainable employment, career progression and career paths (DHET, 2013). Most universities however are concerned more with the impartation of theoretical knowledge.

In the job market, as far as entry-level positions are concerned, limitation is not the number of graduates being produced but the quality of education obtained by these graduates. This implies that universities are producing a great number of graduates, but the graduates are lacking the relevant skills to compete in the job market at the highest level. Subsequently, higher education universities are expected to promote generation of knowledge and innovation to produce the relevant skills for economic growth. In the wake of the global recession that erupted in 2008, it is imperative for South Africa to be able to compete on a global level, hence the need to produce more skilled graduates. In the economic development of the country business degrees are important, hence HEIs have to urgently revise their curriculums to include the impartation of generic skills in the programs (CHE, 2016). Generic skills will allow the graduates to be able to adapt to various environments in the labour market.

The South African labour market is characterised by an economy that has slow or zero growth and high unemployment rate which are some of the challenges that are faced by new graduates. What is more concerning is that 53.6 percent of the youth between the ages of 15 and 24 are not in training, education or employment (Trading Economics, 2016). Despite graduate unemployment rate being low, the rate has doubled as stated above. In South Africa employment outcomes are still determined by race and class (Baldry, 2016). Several policies such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and Employment Equity Act (EEA) have been introduced to curb the consequences of apartheid such as labour market racial inequalities.

As articulated by Baldry (2016) race is the strongest predictor of employment in South Africa while second strongest predictor is socio-economic status. Subsequently, efforts by

policies such as BEE (Department of Trade and Industry [DTI], 2016) and EEA (Department of Labour (DOL), 2016) to redress the past inequalities brought about by apartheid to develop a more equitable South African labour market are invalidated. Questions are therefore raised on how graduates, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds that include Blacks, Indians and Coloureds, transit from higher education into the labour market and what are the enabling factors for the graduates to make the transition effective. All this is significant as it indicates that Black, Indian and Coloured students continue being disadvantaged by the remnants of apartheid

Previous studies have noted that students who hailed from disadvantaged communities were regarded as not prepared, not privileged and not traditional (O'Shea, 2015), thus their networks and resources are perceived as insufficient as well as deficient. Most employers focus on what the graduates do not have instead of what they have. Furthermore, findings of previous studies (Norodien-Fataar, 2016) have established that graduates from disadvantaged communities make sense of the alleged disadvantaged context and utilise resources and social networks to thrive in school and enrol for higher education. This sentiment is supported by the National Development Plan which plans to enrol 1.6 million students in public universities by 2030 (Reddy et al., 2016). Increasing the number of enrolments in university without improving the education system will only increase unemployment due to a lack of employability skills because of poor education quality especially in disadvantaged communities.

In many countries worldwide, students that hail from lower socio-economic status that are in higher education are a minority (Crawford, et al., 2016; Gregg, Macmillan, & Vittori, 2016), while in South Africa majority of the student population is made up of disadvantaged students (CHE, 2016; Walker & Fongwa, 2017). Thus, rather than overlooking disadvantaged students' networks as well as resources as irrelevant in the higher education environment, recognition of the networks and resources could assist policy makers to understand how these students accumulate such networks and resources, and also form the basis for higher education institutions to support disadvantaged students in their transition onto the labour market. Much effort is inserted in improving higher education access and success for previously disadvantaged students, however during the transition into the labour market they do not receive adequate support. Hence it is important to understand about the previously disadvantaged students. Graduate employability is not only the responsibility of higher education, but various stakeholders have to play a significant role to improve the employability.

2.5.2. Improving graduate employability: South Africa.

High rates of graduate unemployment in SA indicates that responses by HEIs to address the issue of employability have been inadequate. An analysis of the HE programs to enhance employability shows that the measures have been rather isolated and slow (Govender & Taylor, 2015). The HE curriculum transformations to improve employability of graduates have been regarded as inconsistent (Maharasoa & Hay, 2001 as cited in Magagula, 2017). Nevertheless, there have been proactive responses such as the "World of Work Programmes, Wits" and "Alumni Entrepreneurship Workshop, UKZN" (Bodhanya, 2017; Lunsky, 2017). This shows that the strategies have been isolated and slow. Furthermore, most of the strategies were implemented for graduates, and not for students. This study will look at what the top ranked universities are doing to enhance employability of their graduates.

The UKZN has the oldest Student Counselling and Careers Centre. The role of the centre is "to cater for the educational and personal needs of current and prospective students". The centre aims to develop the psycho-social, academic and vocational needs of the students. The centre also offers internships in programs such as Industrial and Educational Psychology.

The top ranked South African university in the world, University of Cape Town also has a career services centre. The centre throughout the years has been hosting many career expos. This gives the students an opportunity to network with various prospective employers. In the year 2016 over 269 employers were part of the careers expos. In 2017, the university had 10 career expos lined up for the academic year to increase the network between graduates and employers.

At the Wits University, through the counselling and careers development unit, they have a programme called Graduate Recruitment and Journey to Employability. The programme assists the students and graduates by offering services such as career counselling and assessment, recruitment and employability awareness, and life coaching. Furthermore, it ensures that students are aware of the job search process as well as adjusting in the world of work. In addition, the institution holds career exhibitions where students are given an opportunity to engage with various employers (Lunsky, 2017). Such events are possible as the university is located in an urban area where there are numerous employers.

Stellenbosch University has a centre for student counselling and development, which is regarded as the second oldest South African initiative of its kind, after the UKZN's Students' Counselling Services. The main function of the centre is "to provide psychological services, development services and career planning services to current and prospective students, where possible, in order to promote a well-informed, psychologically healthy community" (Naude,

2017). Just like what is done at Wits University, the centre invites employers for career exhibition. This allows the students to know about the latest labour market trends and recent career information as well as opportunities. In addition, the centre also conducts follow up research to find out which students will find work after graduation. Such events play a major role in the development of employability skills. However, looking at those institutions it is clear that those are the best universities in the country and in Africa. Moreover, those institutions are located in the economic hubs of the country which makes it easy for them to invite various employers. It is therefore important to understand performance of the lowly ranked universities which are in the rural areas.

In previous research conducted by the Central University of Technology (CUT) highlighted that students needed a series of skills training interventions in order to enhance their employability in the labour market (Spies & van Niekerk, 2007 cited in Mulaudzi, 2015). However, the study fails to indicate the number of students who actually attended the training workshops and who managed to secure employment after completing studies. This indicates that data was only collected at one point, no consideration was made for the transition of the graduates into the labour market.

Nel & Neale-Shutte (2013) conducted a study in which they asked graduates to identify ways to improve graduate employment. The responses included provision of assistance to students for ease transition between university and work; utilisation of competent and experienced lecturers; lecturers that are approachable; incorporation of practical component into the programs; utilisation of latest technology to deliver lectures; smaller classes for better understanding and improvement of the content of the programs. Furthermore, Nel and Neale-Shutte (2013) highlighted that programs should have experiential or work-based learning as a compulsory component; teaching of entrepreneurial skills; first year students should be advised about the labour market trends and career guidance should be a must for students. The quantitative study focused on Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University graduates.

In several previous studies (Botha & Coetzee, 2017; Lourens & Fourie-Malherbe, 2017; Magagula, 2017) it is argued that to secure employment in the labour market, young graduates needed to develop social networks or capital. These studies indicated that chances of employment were enhanced by having relatives or friends already in the labour market. Having such people will make the process of searching for employment easier and fast. Social capital is not something that most people from previously disadvantaged backgrounds have as usually the students will be the first to graduate in their families and family members will be unemployed.

In a study by Kouh (2013) it is argued that for young graduates to make a valuable contribution not only in the workplace but community at large, it is important for them to apply the knowledge they would have acquired in school. The study was conducted in the Western Cape where it was discovered that programmes such Environmental Internship Programme (EIP) would enhance the employability of graduates. Many of the graduates who went through the programme were able to secure permanent employment in the private and public sectors (Kouh, 2013). Hence, it is imperative that graduate programs incorporate such training.

The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013) states that "while some expansion is needed in the university sector, the DHET's main focus will be on improving quality and building appropriate diversity within the sector. The aim is to ensure that a wide range of high-quality options are provided throughout the system, as well as improving articulation between higher education institutions and between universities and other post-school institutions". This was also supported by CHE (2016) who proposed curriculum reform to enhance graduate employability through quality teaching. However, process is happening at a slower rate as no changes have been implemented in the curriculums.

In collaboration with the HSRC led consortium (University of Cape Town and University of Witwatersrand), the DHET (2012) introduced the Labour Market Intelligence Partnership (LMIP) project to "establish a credible institutional mechanism for skills planning" (DHET, 2010). When the LMIP project was launched in 2012, Nzimande stated that it provides "a scientific basis to set up systems for reliable data indicating skills need, supply and demand in our labour market in a manner that will enable our country, including government and businesses, to plan better for the human resources development needs of the country" (Bhorat, et al., 2016, p. 14). The planning for skills has been done but it is not being merged with the curriculum of the universities to develop employability skills.

However, the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training indicates that "although South Africa has put in place a range of ambitious measures to improve skills planning, the system has neither produced information about skills needs, nor increased the quality of provision in areas needed by the economy" (DHET, 2013). Despite measures being put in place to enhance the skills development of graduates, there is still a mismatch between what the demands of the labour market and the university outputs. The major challenges being faced by the South African government in meeting their objectives are poverty, inequality and unemployment. The effects of apartheid legacy continue to bedevil the community, in particular the African population group (Reddy et al., 2016). The legacy of apartheid will

remain a major issue but the policy-makers have to improve the quality of the education and create more employment opportunities to redress the imbalances.

The skills challenge faced by South Africa has been well documented in strategy documents such as National Skills Development Strategy III, White Paper for Post-School Education and Training and Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa. All the documents mention the risks that are associated with the mismatch between skills supply and demand and education and training systems that are supplying poorly skilled personnel (DHET, 2013; NPC, 2011). Thus, in response to the concerns, a skill planning approach that is co-ordinated and structured was decided upon (Reddy et al., 2016). The state, not the market, has the onus of leading economic development, employment facilitation and determining the skills required by people to secure productive and decent employment (Reddy et al., 2016).

In an initial attempt in trying to solve the skills misalignment, government analysed the supply and demand of skills and thereafter published scarce and critical skills. The DHET published the *Lists of Occupation in High Demand* for 2014 and 2015 (DHET, 2016) as well as the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) published the *Critical Skills List* (DHA, 2014). However, publication of scarce or critical skills does not lead to the development of the skills. More is required from the various stakeholders to develop employable graduates, rather than relying on expatriates.

To improve the skills development, the South African government introduced policies as shown in the table below:

Table 5: Skills Development Legislation

Policy	Mission
South African Qualifications Authority Act (1995)	To improve the quality of learning
Skills Development Act (1998)	To improve relevance of learning
Skills Development Levies Act (1999)	To fund skills development
National Skills Development Strategy (2001)	To improve workplace skills
National Qualifications Framework Act (2008)	To more effectively combine the education and training system
Sector Education and Training Authorities	✓ To develop and implement sector skills plans ✓ Learnerships ✓ Internships ✓ Short Courses ✓ Funding

Source: Van Rensburg, 2010.

Due to structural unemployment and skills shortage, the government introduced a Human Resources Development (HRD) Strategy. The first HRD strategy was launched in 2001 (Department of Education [DoE], 2010). The strategy was adopted to exploit human resources potential of the country by acquiring skills and knowledge (DoE, 2010). To redress the past inequalities several policies and administrative changes have been drafted as well as HEIs re-organisation.

Archer and Chetty (2013) conducted a study on employability of graduates in South Africa, focusing on University of South Africa (UNISA) graduates. However, it is important to note that UNISA is an open distance learning university which is unique in that it offers part-time, non-traditional and predominantly older population programs. Furthermore, prior to enrolment and graduation most of these students will be already employed. Bezuidenhout (2011) also conducted a study using a sample from UNISA, students from the College of Economic and Management Science, with the aim of developing a graduate employability measure. Thus, both these studies (Archer & Chetty, 2013; Bezuidenhout, 2011) context might not be applicable to South African universities that are more traditional. In addition, both studies applied quantitative techniques as they collected data through surveys.

At the University of Witwatersrand, the problem of graduateness in the School of Construction Economics and Management became explicit after a review (Business Day, 2010). Thereafter, without considering the experiences of students or employers, the programs and curriculums were revised, and professional councils, for instance SACQSP (2013) and SACPCMP (2012) recommended the process (Mtebula, 2014). Construction degrees play a major role in addressing the infrastructural, spatial and social needs of the country (Lunsky, 2017). Subsequently, schools such as School of Construction Economics and Management have the responsibility of producing graduates that are work ready. The programs they offer are often referred to as professional degrees and thus, maybe other academic programs such as social sciences should ensure graduates are prepared for the world of work (Mtebula, 2014). This university is based in the economic hub of the country hence it is easier for the students to improve their employability through interaction with various employers.

Edayi (2015) conducted a survey study using Department of Labour and other companies that work with unemployed graduates it was established that most of the graduates only considered looking for a job after graduation. In addition, despite not having anY experience, the graduates had unrealistic expectations for salary (Kouh, 2013). This is also supported by Swartz, Harding, and De Lannoy (2012) who postulates that graduates expect higher salaries because of their qualifications alone. Furthermore, most of the graduates

indicated that they did not receive adequate information on career opportunities, career planning as well as modalities of labour market. The study established that HEIs were not assisting students with career counselling and guidance. Moreover, graduates are not being educated of the importance work experience before expecting high salaries.

The issue of graduate employability responsibility has various opinions. In a study by Kundaeli (2015) most of the participants; i.e. employers and graduates, believed that the individual had the primary responsibility to ensure they are employable. However, others cited that the HEIs were responsible for providing students with opportunities for development and resources to be work ready. Kundaeli (2015) further indicated that due to the financial investment in education, some of the graduates felt that it was fair for universities to be responsible for employability.

2.5.3. Improving graduate employability: International.

Many HEIs are addressing the agenda of employability in different ways, some institutions have adopted effective measures to assist graduates with making the transition from tertiary education into the labour market (Govender, 2008). As noted by Bowers-Brown and Harvey (2005) who argue that "there have been numerous approaches to improve the employability of students such as embedded skills, additional core-skills, work experience and evaluation of what has been learned". Furthermore, there is no agreement to what constitutes employability as well as which attributes are required to enhance graduate employability (Brigdstock, 2009). Graduate employability is a core concern for many countries it is thus imperative to understand what the concept entails in order to produce employable graduates.

In a study by Kinash, et al., (2015) it was indicated that there were discrepancies between actual strategies and perceived strategies that were adopted by graduates to enhance their employability. This study highlighted that contrary to students' beliefs that their employability will be enhanced by engaging in part-time work, higher education and employers were of the opinion that this strategy was not helpful for careers. These stakeholders argued that part-time work took away valuable time from other strategies such as extracurricular activities which could expose the students to more authentic work experience. Kinash et al., (2015) mentioned that such activities were perceived by employers as improving the skills of the students such as teamwork and leadership. However, in this survey the students did not associate extracurricular activities with employability.

Kinash et al., (2015) suggested twelve strategies that can be used to enhance employability of graduates as shown in table below:

Table 6: Strategies to enhance employability

Careers advice and employment skill development	Preparation of CVs and resumes, self-reflection, engaging in networking opportunities and job interviewing practice
Engaging in extracurricular activities	Extracurricular community engagement is claimed to enhance a graduate's employability by combining experiential learning, course work and possibly community service
Work experience, internships and placements	Provision of formal, supported practical opportunities in the work place. Highly valued as develop students' technical skill-based capabilities and informs their career decision-making.
Networking or industry information events	May facilitates successful transitions between higher education and employment, provide direct networking opportunities with employers.
Professional association membership or engagement	Direct engagement between employers and graduates
Volunteering or community engagement	Strongly value linked so can transform a person personally, for example increase courage, resilience and recognition of one's impact on others
Part-time employment	Learn industry skills as well as soft skills such professionalism.
Capstone or final semester projects	This would involve a presentation or oral at which a student would demonstrate their learning acquisition (knowledge) and experience.
International exchanges	Broadens cultural understanding and internationalisation of the curriculum.
Mentoring	Social learning and engagement between students and employers
Graduate profiles development	Portfolios and records of achievement.
Social media networks	Networks such as LinkedIn can be used to improve employability.

Source: Kinash et al., (2015).

In order to improve employability many of the respondents of the survey used or planned to use work experience, placement and internships (Kinash, et al., 2015). However, these strategies are associated with a financial burden. Most of the respondents chose the first seven strategies as the most important strategies (Kinash, et al., 2015). Employability is not a once off activity, but it is a continuous process that needs to be refreshed throughout an individual's working life (Yorke, 2006). Higher education institutions worldwide face the challenge of producing graduates that are employable.

International universities such as Auckland University of Technology (AUT) offers students various services to improve their employability. The university offers career counselling and employability workshops to their students. In addition, students' involvement in employability, leadership and volunteering activities are recognised by being awarded the Edge Award which is run by the institution. Furthermore, at AUT there is a career hub which is an employability lab and provides students with information on where to get employment, workplace experience and part-time work; book appointments with a career counsellor or specialist; gain access to graduate recruitment service and register for employability workshops (Kinash, et al., 2015). The employability of students is improved by embracing a number of the above-mentioned strategies.

Similarly, in a study by McDonald and Grant-Smith (2015) it was established that 60% of final year students engaged in part-time work for personal training and to gain work experience to enhance their employability. The main finding of the study was that graduates managed to be reasonably ready for the world of work for entry-level positions (McDonald & Grant-Smith, 2015). Bond University in the Australia formed the Career Development Centre to improve the employability by offering support and services to the students, graduates as well as employers (Kinash, et al., 2015). In other studies, it is highlighted that the employability of students from low socio-economic status, disabled students and international students could be improved by developing and implementing a series of activities and programs to support the aforementioned groups of students (Richardson, et al., 2016). In addition, higher education institutions have to analyse graduate employment outcomes data to identify the programs that have the lowest employment outcomes and develop strategies to enhance graduate employment. The other strategy being implemented by Victoria University is career development learning which includes the development of "self-awareness (interests, abilities and self-reflection skills), opportunity awareness (knowing what work opportunities exist and what their requirements are), decision making skills and transition learning (including job-

search and presentation skill)" (Watts, 2006, p. 10). Such strategy enhance graduate employability skills rather than focussing on theoretical knowledge.

After receiving much scrutiny from the private and government sector organisations, higher education in Australia initiated a Review of Higher Education (Wood, et al., 2015). The review was initiated to evaluate the higher education sector in terms of meeting the needs of the economy and society. The resolution was that graduates within the age range of 25-34 years should increase to 40% by 2025 in order to have people that are highly skilled.

Furthermore, all higher education undergraduate programs should be embedded with work integrated learning (Campbell, 2018). Further to that an entrepreneurial mind-set should be drawn into the higher education programs. Many international universities in countries such as Australia, United Kingdom and New Zealand have incorporated practical component in their programs (Hooley, 2017; Tomlinson & Holmes, 2017). This allows graduates to develop not only technical and academic knowledge, but generic skills which employers are demanding (Baron-Puda, 2018). The onus is on universities to produce graduates that are employable who will be able to contribute meaningfully to the country's social and economic development plans.

Furthermore, universities should introduce career guidance which is defined as "services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self-awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample options before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services". (OECD 2015, p. 10).

The concept broadly describes the interventions which individuals could undertake to consider their future, especially the educational or occupational paths. According to Artess, et al., (2017) career guidance within higher education is typically connected to the institutional career service activities. In the table below, it displays the interventions that can be utilised by students while they are still at university.

Table 7: Career guidance approaches in higher education

Curricular	Extra-curricula	Employer engagement
Career support within the curriculum (Blackmore et al. 2015; Bradford 2013; Kumar, 2015). This can include both viewing CMS as a curriculum, which requires dedicated curriculum space (Sultana 2012; Taylor & Hooley 2014) and building career learning into the learning outcome of subject disciplines (Hooley, Hutchinson & Neary 2012).	Information and resources such as websites and career libraries (Hooley 2014; Mackay et al. 2015).	Careers fairs and employer talks (Hooley 2014; Jackson & Wilton 2016).
Personal development planning processes for students (Hooley 2014). For example, encouraging students to engage in writing and journaling to aid their career reflections (Mackay et al., 2015).	Career counselling and group career counselling (Hooley, 2014; Penttinen & Vesisenaho 2013). It is important that such counselling activities help individuals to assess their career goals and offer them feedback (Mackay et al.2015).	Employer mentoring and e-mentoring (Haddock-Miller, Rigby & Sanyal 2015; Spence & Hyams-Ssekasi 2015).
	Student peer-to-peer career support (Jones, Torezani & Luca 2012; Penttinen & Vesisenaho 2013).	Placements and other forms of work-experience (Hooley 2014; Jackson & Wilton 2016).
Professional development opportunities for academics to enhance their understanding of career management and employability (Hooley, Hutchinson and Neary, 2012; Jackson & Wilton, 2016).	Employability and careers awards (Hooley 2014).	

Source: Artess, et al., 2017

Generally, for career guidance delivery in the higher education context a multi-faceted approach is ideal (Hooley, 2014). Nonetheless, according to Blackmore, et al., (2016), it is critical to involve employers and embed the curriculum with work component. From the above it is suggested that career guidance is effective will contribute to improved retention, social mobility, employment progression and improved career management (Blackmore et al, 2016; Christie, 2016). Graduates will only be able to progress in their chosen careers if they understand what employability is and what has to be done to develop the skills.

2.6. Gaps in Literature

Calls have been made for more research in South Africa focusing on graduate employability; ways to cope with employment instability; career success predictors; career counselling and development models; longitudinal studies of graduate employability (Botha & Coetzee, 2017; Ismail, 2017; Magagula, 2017). In addition, further research is needed to determine the areas in which the university curriculum could be improved to develop employability skills and who are the most suitable stakeholders (academia, career advisers or industry) to teach employability skills (Carbone & Hamilton, 2016; Shivoro, et al., 2018). Dacre Pool and Qualter (2013) articulated that several graduate employability models have been formulated, however empirical research is very limited. Furthermore, most of the previous employability studies are based on surveys, these studies use lists of skills and attributes that respondents had to rate (Clements & Kamau, 2017; El-Fekey & Mohamad, 2018; Jonck, 2017; Lenard & Pintaric, 2018; Pitan & Atiku, 2017; Shivoro, et al., 2018). Although some studies (e.g. Adian, 2017; Campbell, 2018; Lourens, 2017) have utilised qualitative methods, studies of employability during the year of enrolment and post-completion of a qualification are limited (Clements & Kamau, 2017). In addition, most of the studies that have been conducted may not be a true reflection of the South African context as the contexts are different. Most studies have been conducted in United Kingdom as well as some parts of the world (Baron-Puda, 2018; Campbell, 2018; Chhinzer & Russo, 2018; Tomlinson, 2017). This is study thus focused on the South African context to understand about the concept of employability.

However, it should be noted that, according to Hooley (2017) "the size and structure of the graduate labour market means that increasing graduates' employability will not necessarily lead to enhanced employment opportunities" (p. 2). The number of graduates outweigh the number of graduate jobs available, and employability is a way to increase an individual's employment prospects. Although a lot of information has been written on graduate employability, research on how to increase youth employability in South Africa through

strategically engaging in tangible, practical and efficient actions is limited. Moreover, the perceptions of students towards graduate employability are not widely covered in the literature (Donald, 2017). Students are the most important role players in understanding the graduate employability hence the need to understand their perceptions.

The study focused on graduates from HDIs as it has been highlighted in the literature that students from HDIs struggle to secure employment. Furthermore, the study explored the reasons why graduate employability at HDIs is not well-developed as was shown in the literature. Moreover, from the literature the following model was suggested on how to improve employability.

2.8. Graduate Employability Model (GEM) – How to improve employability

From the literature the following model is suggested on how to improve employability of graduates.

Figure 3: GEM: Source: Author own creation

Quality Education - In order to improve graduate employability in South Africa the education quality has to improve. Not only higher education, but more especially foundational education for people that reside in the rural areas. By developing the foundational education, it allows the students to adapt well to the higher education environment and not lag behind due to taking long to grasp concepts. As long as the teachers and lectures are incompetent the issue of employability will remain a major concern. The authorities have to ensure that the schools

and universities in disadvantaged areas have all the adequate resources for the enhancement of the education quality.

Skills Development – Due to the ever-changing labour market trends degree specific skills and knowledge are no longer enough. Universities must assist graduates in developing generic (soft) skills such as professionalism and communication skills. Generic skills will help the graduates to be able to adjust to different environments. Graduate employability is not a one-dimension concept. In addition, the HE curriculum has to be developed to include both theory and practical. As much as the theoretical knowledge is important, it is not sufficient without practical training to ensure graduate employability. This can be through internships or work placements. Universities and employers have to work in collaboration in order to employability of graduates. This can be through career expos or fairs where different employers come to present their companies to the students. Such events will improve networking between the graduates and employers and will provide relevant labour market information to the students, especially for those who live in secluded areas. Having knowledge about the different careers an individual can apply for, generic and specific skills, networking and exposure in the labour market will increase self-confidence and self-esteem of individuals

Career Counselling and Guidance - It is also imperative to offer career counselling and guidance to the school learners, students and graduates. The services have to be before enrolling for higher education, first year of higher education and final year of higher education. This allows the students to make informed decisions about their subject choices while in high school and qualification choices in higher education. Many students, especially in the rural areas, make uninformed decisions which leads to difficulties in higher education. By benefitting from these services an individual will be able to know the needs of the career a person intends to follow. However, the services will benefit more if they are conducted on an individual level than on a mass scale.

Labour Market Information – The labour market trends are always changing meaning that the demands of the employers are also changing on a constant basis. It is important for students, graduates and employees to keep abreast of all the changes that will be occurring through education and career self-management. Having knowledge of the labour market trends allows the individuals to enhance their employability as they will be having the knowledge of what exactly is required. It also encourages continued professional development for graduates and employees. Employability is not a once-off event. In order to remain employable, one has to continually develop employability skills. Considering that the demands

in the labour market are always changing it is important for individuals to always develop themselves hence the model shows that it is a continuous process that never ends.

2.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this literature investigation was conducted within a context in which employability of graduates is perceived as a graduate developmental process for an individual to be able to secure and retain employment. Many of the higher education institutions worldwide are adopting various strategies such as career guidance to improve graduate employability. In South Africa it is mostly the top universities that are mostly HAIs, which are embarking on such initiatives. Despite calls to revise the curriculum, many of the institutions in South Africa, especially HDIs have not heed the call. Consequently, most of the graduates that are produced by HDIs are perceived by employer as not work ready, which leads to an increase in graduate unemployment or underemployment. In the following section the discussion will focus on how the graduates experience the transition process from university to the world of work.

Chapter Three: School to Work Transition

3. Introduction

Unemployment has been noted to be "notoriously" high in South Africa (Burger, 2016, p. 1). The transition into labour market from university is not a smooth path, for example there are discrepancies of skills between supply and demand. The transition can lead to graduate unemployment or underemployment. The employment prospects of students are significantly affected by a poor schooling system background, especially for Black and female students, which follows them through graduation (Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). Many people invest in education in the hope that after graduation the graduates will secure employment as a return on investment. The transition of students from higher education into the labour market is not only influenced by the characteristics of the graduates but by variables such as family factors, motivation, expectations and employment goals.

Many graduates are trapped in the transition process as they struggle to secure employment. Every year a cohort of new young people transit from the schooling system into higher education in preparation to enter the labour market (Maila & Ross, 2018). The transition of students from better off socio-economic backgrounds are quite seamlessly. However, students from poor socio-economic backgrounds are trapped in the transition process for an extended period and struggle to enter higher education as well as the labour market (Crawford, et al., 2016; Graham, et al., 2016; Maila & Ross, 2018). The transition process graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds is highly characterised by several job applications that are unsuccessful. Failure to secure employment eventually causes discouragement and stress among graduates and perpetuates society inequality and generational poverty cycle among poor families (Crawford, et al., 2016; Edayi, 2015; Graham, et al., 2016; Tomlinson, 2017). The graduates are failing to make the transition into the labour market because of a lack of employability skills which are needed by the employers.

Individuals experience major changes through life transitions. Graduates should keep in mind that obtaining a degree no longer guarantees employment, they have to develop a graduate identity which they can market to prospective employees (Jackson & Wilton, 2016; Lourens & Malherbe, 2016). This supports the notion that graduation is a holistic process which leads to the development of a graduate (Holmes, 2013a). Labour market experience for graduates begins when the process of transition begins. The process is however marked with uncertainty, waiting and change. According to Lane (2014) it is a significant process for first time labour market entrants, but it can be stressful and traumatic (Wood, et al., 2015). The

process involves a host of social steps such as fitting into a social group, making friends as well as trying to establish oneself as a valuable addition to the organisation. The experience can lead to sensory overload, disorientation and foreignness (Lane, 2014). Without generic skills it can be difficult for the graduates to adapt in the new environment especially in a multicultural country like South Africa.

In addition, new graduates have to deal with the challenges of decreased employment prospects, declining economy and mismatch of skills and demands (Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013; Botha & Coetzee, 2017; Tomlinson, 2017). All these factors will affect the chances of graduate securing employment. The transition process is significantly affected by factors such as lack of skills and experience required, unrealistic work-life expectations, and culture change (Christie, 2016; El-Fekey & Mohamad, 2018). During the transition process some employers might favour graduates from high economic class which can intensify social inequality (Jackson, 2014; Crawford, et al., 2016). Employers might be biased towards a certain group of graduates because of their perceived employability because of the university which they attended resulting in continued ineqaulity in the country.

Students go through multiple transitions, from school to university to the labour market. The transition from school to university has been covered extensively (Wood, et al., 2015). However, the transition from university studies into the world work is less understood (Wood, et al., 2015), as well as the importance of the final year of undergraduate studies (Baron-Puda, 2018). Most students and graduates believe that higher education is responsible for producing graduates that are work-ready, yet employers are still expressing concerns about the ineffectiveness of graduates in the world of work (Chhnzer & Russo, 2018). The final year of university studies should be regarded as an opportunity to put into practice all the knowledge that was assimilated during all the years of undergraduate studies, to develop and improve one's employability (Wood, et al., 2015). When a student is the final year the expectation is that they have learnt how to apply the theoretical knowledge as well as have gained generic skills to be able to make the transition into the labour market.

Many youths face a key challenge of making an efficacious transition from youth to adulthood (Maila & Ross, 2018). The success of a transition is depended on an individual with factors such as cultural norms and socio-economic background likely to influence the transition. The main objective of the transition process is to gain independence and eventually start and support a family. Achievement of these objectives is strongly influenced by capitals such as human capital, psychological capital and social capital (Botha & Coeztee, 2017; Tomlinson, 2017). The transition from school to work is made ease and smooth by obtaining

quality education, knowing people influential people in the labour market as well as being resilient in times of adversities. The reality is however that many youth, especially Blacks, face difficulties in transition from school into the labour market for several reasons (Maila & Ross, 2018; Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017). This study therefore sought to understand how students from disadvantaged backgrounds prepared and experienced the transition process given the increased access to higher education in South Africa. Many of the graduates upon graduation experience uncertainty questioning the role of higher education on employability (Christie, 2016). To overcome the ambiguity and negotiate barriers in the labour market, it is important to understand the role of Career Self-management (CSM) (Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2015). This looks at the ability of an individual to manage their own career development which is the case in the contemporary world as individuals are expected to be the main role players in their career development.

3.1. Career Self-management

According to Okay-Somerville, and Scholarios, (2015) the process of gathering and planning career related information is referred to as CSM. Botha and Coetzeee (2017) argue that CSM provides individuals with realistic preview of labour market opportunities, as such it is critical for a successful transition from university into world of work. However, there is no consensus to what the CSM constitutes (Artess et al., 2017). Consequently, some authors have decided to define the concept by identification of sub-constructs that make up the concept (Neary et al., 2015; Jackson & Wilton, 2016). Some of the careers include career resilience, career adaptability, networking skills, self-management as well as self-reflection and awareness (Botha & Coetzee, 2017). These have been cited as skills that will have graduates placed in a better competitive position in the labour market (Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2015). However, such factors are difficult to develop for students from disadvantaged backgrounds as they are generally unaware and lack labour market information. Given that the students will be generally be the first in their families to attend higher education it limits their knowledge of the labour market. But, with increased access to higher education, disadvantaged students should be able to develop CSM skills.

In the literature there is a strong consensus that CSM can be developed through interventions that are purposeful; CSM should be developed while students are still in higher education; and a well-developed CSM will allow the students to manage their careers effectively (Jackson & Wilton, 2016; Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2015). Hence, it is important to develop CSM for continued lifetime positive outcomes in the labour market. According to Neary et al., (2015) labour market trends are always changing making it more

complex, therefore it is important to develop CSM as the complexity will need greater attributes to navigate. It is however difficult for lecturers to cater for the needs for every single student because the students will be coming from various backgrounds. Using a generic CSM intervention might benefit some of the students but some of the students will not understand.

One of the most important constructs is career exploration. Career exploration provides an opportunity to individuals to have a better person-job fit through environment exploration and career related introspection (Artess, et al., 2017; Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2015). The construct is regarded as important in coping with the process of career transition as it allows for career identity and flexibility. With career exploration individuals can make career compromises, reduce career-related psychological distress and more employment outcomes that are positive (Lane, 2014). Career exploration can be possible provided that the students have opportunities to explore the labour market. In a country like South Africa it is difficult to explore careers for individuals in the segregated areas because of a lack of opportunities.

Despite the expected benefits of CSM, there is evidence that suggests the concept is not equally distributed among students (Jackson & Wilton, 2016), as it is affected by demographic factors such as social class. CSM varies depending on the students' social groups and personalities (Crawford, et al., 2016). By gathering labour market related information individuals can develop an identity that they can market to prospective employers (Artess, et al., 2017). Individuals in the disadvantaged communities lack career-related information which causes difficulties in making the transition into the world of work. Furthermore, the opportunities for individuals in the rural areas are limited due to the areas being secluded from economic hubs. Consequently, most of these individuals are unable to develop the required skills and identity because of a lack of knowledge. As much as it is important to develop a unique identity, without opportunities, especially in the rural areas, it becomes a difficult process. The individuals thus struggle to develop their own identities which are marketable in the labour market.

3.1.1. Graduate Identity.

This is based on the notion that before graduates present themselves to prospective employers they need a workplace identity to enhance their chances of securing employment (Lourens & Malherbe, 2016). The approach does not only involve discipline or profession knowledge but attributes such as confidence, proficiency to transfer learned skills, self-esteem, and lifelong learning (Jackson, 2014; Reddy, 2016). According to Holmes (2013a) graduate identity is perceived as an identity that evolves and develops over-time. An identity is malleable

and fragile as it is subjected to change, learning and challenge, not only an identity developed at graduation. After graduation a graduate has to lead people to assign to him /her "the identity of person worthy of being employed" (Holmes, 2013a, p. 549). The onus is on the graduate to develop an identity that is marketable.

Students can develop graduate identity through interacting with prospective employers. Identity should be regarded as an emerging product of social negotiation and construction (Lourens, 2016). Graduate identity comprises of skills and attributes which allows the graduates to preserve the claimed identity (Hooley, 2017; Reddy, 2016). Graduate identity is developed through a process (Smith, Smith, Taylor-Smith, & Fotheringham, 2017). Others may support or disconfirm an individual's identity; this might lead to resistance or acceptance (Holmes, 2015). The process will lead to personal identity and social identity interrelation. Through identities individuals should be able to adjust well to different contexts. Identities are important considering the South African multicultural context. Graduates need to be able to adjust and fit-in with different cultures in the labour market in order to be successful.

Construction of graduate identity involves a complex mix of factors which include values, intellect, performance, engagement and reflection (Artess, et al., 2017; Reddy, 2016; Tomlinson, 2017). Values covers elements such as personal ethics and entrepreneurship values. Graduates are expected to display that they have engaged in all these values (Lourens, 2016). Furthermore, graduates are required to articulate cognitive abilities that were covered by the degree program (human capital) (Tomlinson, 2017). The bottom line that is considered by all employers is performance. Employers utilise all the other factors mentioned above to predict performance of an individual (Campbell, 2018). In addition, graduates are encouraged to reflect on factors such as; what have I learnt and how I can apply my learning? (Wood, et al., 2015). However, because of a lack of generic skills such as critical thinking and logical reasoning, graduates struggle to apply their learning in the labour market to develop their own identity.

Praskova, Creed, and Hood (2015) also suggested a definition of career identity as "a network of meanings in which individuals consciously link their own interest, motivation and competencies with acceptable career roles" (p. 145). In this study it was also established that career identity can be determined by career exploration and planning; a well-defined career identity leads to reduced career stress and development of positive perceptions of employability (Holmes, 2013a; Lourens & Malherbe, 2016). The findings support argument on career development "that taking initiatives in career preparation (i.e., collecting information about careers and the self; thinking about, visualizing, and planning for one's career future) is a critical motivational and adaptive strategy during the transition to adult working life. These

strategies increase knowledge about, and competency in, young adults' career choices, and enhance their awareness of who they are in terms of their future careers" (Praskova et al. 2015, p. 151). An identity allows graduates to make an easier transition into the world of work from higher education.

Individuals who reside in the secluded areas lack the information and knowledge on how to develop their identities. Graduates also end up foregoing their values because of desperation to create an identity that is acceptable in the world of work. In South Africa there are various cultures and to compete in the labour market graduates require cultural competence. Nonetheless, it is an arduous task to develop such competencies while residing in the rural areas where one culture is dominant. Previously disadvantaged individuals remain clustered in one culture making it more difficult to develop an identity that is marketable in a multi-cultural country like South Africa. Consequently, the individuals, without a well-defined career and graduate identity struggle to make the transition into the labour market.

3.2. Transition process

The expectations on return on investment are driven by, among others, academics, who state that as a South African if you manage to complete a first degree, an individual is guaranteed to obtain appropriate employment as well as high earnings for a lifetime (Hull, 2016). According to Tomlinson (2012) the process of transitioning from higher education into the labour market is complex. The transition process is regarded as complicated, and it has several pathways that can lead to employment. Those different paths have requirements as well as challenges that are also different and need to be negotiated. To enjoy and enable a smooth transition from university into the world of work, graduates need to have qualities and competencies in addition to having academic abilities (Archer & Chetty, 2013; Jackson, 2016; Smith, et al., 2017). Academic abilities alone are not enough to make the transition into the world of work.

During the transition process little clarity is available on how to make the process effective as a result many students are lost along the way (Mourshed, Farrell, & Barton, 2013). Previous studies highlight a lack of empirical data in addressing the issue of what kind of support do the students require during the transition process (Mourshed et al. 2013; Okay-Somerville & Scholarios 2015) and students' perception of their own employability (Dacre Pool, Qualter, & Sewell, 2014; Donald, 2017; Holmes, 2013b). The way the students experience the transition process is also influenced by variables such as socio-economic status, motivation and expectations (Crawford, et al., 2016). In order to understand the support that is

required by the students during the transition phase, this study looked at the experiences of the students while trying to make the transition to gain an understanding of the challenges the students faced, especially students in the disadvantaged areas.

Several debates on the purpose of higher education have been conducted and they are still ongoing and remain unresolved (Campbell, 2018). Traditionally, higher education institutions regard themselves as responsible for production, transferral and application of knowledge (CHE, 2016). Higher education in the past did not regard preparation for world of work as a main function of their existence. However, in the 21st century the prevailing postulation is that higher education is primarily expected to produce graduates that will be prepared for initial employment (Tomlinson 2017), this has been caused by changes in the labour market trends which are result of advances in technology, knowledge-based economies, competitive pressures and globalisation (Baron-Puda, 2018; Bridgstock 2009). Higher education is currently viewed by communities as a training ground where professional and vocational skills are developed and contribute to the human capital needs of the labour market (Lourens, 2016). However, this does not appear to be the case among HDIs. Graduates from these institutions are lacking the relevant skills which is resulting in unemployment.

As stated by the United Nations Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Africa Director "upgrading people's higher education and skills will increase economic opportunities that will help the youth who are the architects of tomorrow's Africa" (Kigotho 2016, p.1). However, such statements do not apply in South African context as the youths are not receiving as much support as they require (Graham & De Lannoy, 2016). Globally, being in a possession of a tertiary qualification will enhance an individual's competitiveness as compared to one who will not have such qualification (Maslen, 2015; OECD, 2015). Hence, in order to have appropriate employment and a prosperous lifespan, the principal vehicle will be higher education. According to ILO (2010) "young graduates looking for their first jobs are better prepared for a smooth transition from school to work when they are given adequate vocational education and training opportunities, including in-work apprenticeships and on-the-job experience" (p. 2). In South Africa the main focus appears to be on the provision of theoretical higher education without adequate training opportunities or internships. People from different backgrounds have access to higher education but the education is of poor quality which makes it difficult for the students to develop the required employability skills.

Over the past few decades higher education landscapes are evident of developments in the shift to mass from elite education, this reflects mind set change from exclusivity and elitism towards inclusivity and diversity (Blessinger, 2015). The inclusivity of higher education

coincided with a shift towards an economy that is knowledge-driven. Since the shift towards knowledge-driven economy higher education have faced increased pressure to ensure that they produce graduates that are employable and have the necessary skills to compete (Tomlinson, 2012). As such due to the higher education massification it seems reasonable to assume that labour market demands for skilled graduates will be fulfilled (Motala, 2017). However, this is not to be. There are two related worldwide crises, namely; a shortage of people with critical skills and high rates of youth unemployment (Mourshed, et al, 2013). Furthermore, higher education massification is not well corresponded by graduate jobs in the labour market (Artess, et al., 2017; ILO, 2018). Subsequently, this results in unemployment or underemployment of graduates.

Young graduates or adults that are entering the labour market in the 21st century are not only expected to secure employment, but to sustain and retain the employment by acquiring and constantly updating skills (Dacre Pool, 2016). On the other hand, some researchers are of the view that technical skills as well as academic knowledge in today's challenging labour market are no longer considered enough to secure employment (Campbell, 2018; Ismail, 2017). The main reason why the transition process is difficult is because of misalignment of skills and labour market demands (Bhorat & Goga, 2013). Graduates are regarded to be lacking employability skills which has led to increased unemployment among graduates.

In a highly competitive labour market the employability of graduates can be improved by combining work experience and the university curricular (Lenard & Pintaric, 2018). Studies have shown that students who possess relevant experience are most likely to secure employment within six months after graduation (McDonald & Grant-Smith, 2015). Securing employment upon graduation has become a challenge. Acquiring qualifications, abilities and skills are no longer enough (Tomlinson & Holmes, 2017) as many organisations now require work experience as a pre-requisite for employment (Shivoro, et al., 2018). Considering the way some of the university curriculums are designed it becomes difficult for the students to gain work experience before graduation.

South Africa is one of the countries in Africa and in the world that has some of the best universities. In the top 20 list of universities released by BRICS and Emerging Economies Rankings of 2015, South Africa had three universities on the list (Times Higher Education, 2017). The BRICS represents an association of emerging economies which include Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa as well as countries that are classified as emerging economies (Times Higher Education, 2017). However, despite South Africa having best universities in Africa, education quality and training system is below par (Spaull, 2015). In a survey that was

conducted by Global Competitiveness Report they ranked South African education quality on 140 out of 144 countries in 2012. In the 2017-2018 Global Competitiveness Report by Schwab (2018) it indicates that the South African primary education quality as it is ranked 116 out of 137, with the higher education system being ranked 114 out of 137.

Statistics have revealed that in South Africa only 50 out of every 100 pupils will reach grade 12; 40 will pass but only 12 will qualify for tertiary studies (Spaull, 2015). In addition, in South Africa about 40% of the students drop out of university studies in their first year, and those who complete in time only make up 15% (McCowan, 2016). Furthermore, it is estimated that most White students complete their studies in the regulated time, while Black students will take longer than the regulated time (CHE, 2016). Most of the students who struggle to complete their studies in time are from HDIs. In a study by Van Zyl (2016) it is indicated that financial reasons were the main reason for student drop-outs. However, most studies (Lebeloane, 2017; Maila & Ross, 2018; Musitha & Mafukata, 2017) argue that many of the students will not be well prepared for higher education from secondary school, and fail to cope with the demands, leading to dropping out. It has been noted that the throughput rates of students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds (African, Coloured and Indians) was significantly lower than for their White counterparts ((Department of Higher Education and Training, 2018).

In South Africa there are two different public schools that have shown different educational achievement (Kundaeli, 2016). There is an education system for the high class which is small and performs better, it only caters for 15 – 20% pupils; on the other hand, there is a poor education system that which performs poorly and caters for 75 – 80% pupils (Spaull, 2015). Curriculums for higher education in South Africa are developed using National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and in conjunction with professional bodies (DHET, 2018; Kundaeli, 2016). NQF strives to contribute towards the production of students who are employable (Moolman, 2017). In order to ensure that higher education curriculums are aligned with the labour market demands and NQF principles are established, the government formulated the Sector Education and Training Authorities (Melaphi, 2015). This was developed to assist with the development and implementation of skills plans for young people. However, not all the youths are benefitting from such a policy as it only benefits a small portion of all the youth as characterised by the unemployment rates among the youths in the country.

The transition from university to work is regarded as a normative life transition which can be difficult not only for the individual, but for the family as well (Hendricks, 2014). Walsh (2012) expressed that transition is "a shift in one's inner world and identity and a reorganization of major life role are almost inevitably accompanied by disequilibrium in one's relationships,

inside and outside the family" (p.430). Systems perspective suggest that when an individual in a system experiences a life transition, all the other members of the system will be affected. Hence, the university to school transition should not be viewed from a one dimension, graduates are influenced by the experiences, as well as the role of other individuals in their lives (Wood, et al., 2015). The behaviour of humans is influenced by other people hence the decisions of graduates are influenced by the people that surround them throughout their lives.

Family is a critical variable when exploring the students' transition. The transition process can be affected by family members who can either strengthen or weaken the process by encouraging and supporting or being insensitive to new demands and roles (Tomlinson, 2017; Walsh, 2012). Sometimes individuals may overlook transition implications on family and subsequently neglect potential family needs or support (Hendricks, 2014). Hence, it is important to understand the role that the family is playing in the students' transition process, especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds as they live in poverty and families expect them to change the circumstances.

More research is needed to investigate the transitional process of graduates from higher education into the labour market (Clements & Kamau, 2017; Paterson, 2017). Further insights into graduate employability may be provided by an understanding of the various transition processes that graduates go through to increase their employability and the factors that affect the transition process (Mulaudzi, 2015). Given the above, this study focused on the perceptions of previously disadvantaged students towards the transition process. Considering that most of the literature suggests that graduates from HDIs struggle to make the transition into the labour market, it was deemed appropriate to understand how the students themselves viewed the transition process and what could be done better to improve the experience. Several stakeholders are investing in education expecting students to make seamless transition into the labour market. However, this is not the case. The transition process is being affected by several factors which need to be addressed.

3.2.1. Cultural Capital

The dramatic change in culture from university to the world of work affects the graduates. Tomlinson (2017) defined cultural capital as "the formation of culturally valued knowledge, dispositions and behaviours that are aligned to the workplaces that graduates seek to enter" (p. 343). This is so as the university and workplace are two distinct cultural environments and for graduates to succeed they will have to adjust to the workplace culture (Coetzee, 2012; Tomlinson, 2017). Joining a new culture can lead to insecurity feelings,

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however graduates can overcome this by their desire to work hard and learn their new environment (Mashigo, 2014). In such instances that is where generic skills such as emotional and cultural intelligence come into play in order to understand other people and their cultures.

It is critical for graduates to develop a sense of belonging and to settle in their new environment if they are to succeed (Lane, 2014). Further to that, in the workplace graduates should be used to not receiving feedback as they will be accustomed to such a culture at university (Lane, 2014). Thus, it is a matter of being able to adapt to a new environment. The transition to the world of work will be difficult as the graduates will be switching a familiar environment with one that will be unfamiliar. Most graduates leave their initial employment within two years of employment, evidence suggests that this is mainly due to failure to adjust to the new environment (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008 as cited in Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2015). The graduates are ill-prepared to adapt to novel environments and end up leaving their employment.

This concept has become more important due to increased globalisation. Many careers have now become boundaryless careers (Baruch & Reis, 2015). However, despite changes in the working environment the HEIs cultures remain predominantly white (Heleta, 2016). There have been calls in South Africa to change from Eurocentric curriculum cultures to incorporate South African and other global perspectives (Lebeloane, 2017; Musitha & Mafukata, 2017). Cultural competence has however been noted as including the ability to adjust to different cultures and embracing other culturally diversity (Coetzee, 2012; Potgieter, 2012). This competence has been suggested to improve the employability of individuals (Botha & Coetze, 2017). Having cultural competence acts as an advantage to some individuals. Because of a lack of (or limited number) of Black South African owned companies that are employing graduates, it is important that the Black graduates assimilate to other cultures in order to make the transition into the labour market. However, sometimes due to a lack of cultural understanding we find that some graduates will complain of racism, indeed sometimes it will be subtle racism, but in a multi-cultural country like South Africa it is imperative to have cultural competence in order to succeed in the labour market. As has been noted in literature, the legacy of apartheid continues to prevail, individuals from previously disadvantaged backgrounds need to show resilience in order to enjoy a successful transition.

3.2.2. Lack of experience and skills.

Graduates are reported to be failing to meet the expectations of employers with regards to the required skills (Tran, 2015; Vatiswa, 2014). In another study (Zwane, Du Plessis, & Slabbert, 2014) it was indicated that many small and medium enterprises (SME) employers

regard graduates as lacking the drive to be productive and unwilling to be hands-on. Furthermore, young people are failing to secure employment in the private sector due to a lack of English proficiency (Edayi, 2015; Lebeloane, 2017). Individuals from previously disadvantaged backgrounds lack competency in English which impacts on their marks, university studies as well as after graduation (Maila & Ross, 2018; Musitha & Mafukata, 2017). Although it is beneficial to learn in the local languages in high school, it is also a disadvantage when in HE. The language of instruction that is mostly used in HE and labour market is English. A lack of proficiency in the English language is a barrier to the students' progress within the HE and transition into the labour market. Until the country is producing more doctoral Black South Africans, students must learn the English language in order to understand the concepts and be able to express themselves well in interviews.

Employers not only need the graduates to display field specific knowledge and technical skills, but also generic skills such as good communication and leadership skills (Goodman & Treadway, 2016; Shivoro, et al., 2018). Before graduates can be hired they are required to show that they will be capable of adapting to the workplace culture. Students need opportunities to gain work experience during their studies to enable them to make an effective and smooth transition into the world of work (Campbell, 2018; Moolman, 2017; Wakeham, 2016). However, because of curriculum designs that are focusing on theoretical component of the qualifications, several students are graduating without the relevant skills. This results in the graduates remaining stuck in the transition phase.

In order to obtain work experience students are engaging in unpaid internships, work integrated learning, casual work and work-based degree programs (Artess, et al., 2017; Baron-Puda, 2018; McDonald & Grant-Smith, 2015; Walker & Fongwa, 2017). Obtaining work experience adds on to the human capital of the individuals and assists in the development of a graduate identity (Holford, 2017). Furthermore, through activities such as internships individuals are able to build strong social capital through associating with influential people in the labour market (Tomlinson, 2017). Lourens and Malherbe (2017) agree that in the South Africa context it is also the same that internships can make the transition easier for the graduates. However, due to a lack of social capital (networks) some graduates are failing to secure internship opportunities (Magagula, 2017). Moreover, many individuals based in the rural areas do not have opportunities to complete internships or work placements due to a lack of (a limited number) of companies in the areas. Hence, the students are unable to develop the skills that are needed in the labour market.

3.2.3. Social Capital

Social capital has been described by Tomlinson (2017) "as the sum of social relationships and networks that help mobilise graduates' existing human capital and bring them closer to the labour market" (p. 342). These are networks which provide graduates with perceived or actual assistance in the labour market (Lane, 2014). Holford (2017) suggests that social capital provides graduates with an opportunity to access 'good' internships and take advantage of on the experience. Having social capital allows a person to benefit psychologically by drawing resources from their network (Forsythe & Walla, 2017). A previous study by Murphy, Blustein, Bohlig, and Platt (2010 cited in Lane, 2014) among emerging adults who had gone through the transition process into the world of work, indicates that social support had played a major role in the adjustment of the graduates. As humans we need people who can support us be it financially or emotionally, we need other people to be successful.

However, according to Wendlandt and Rochlen (2008 cited in Lane, 2014) and Verhaeghe, Van der Bracht, & Van de Putte (2015), claims that graduates are lacking social support during the transition process from higher education into the world of work, and thus urges that counsellors should aim to develop interventions to increase the support. Social support is a concept that involves constructs such as subjective appraisals, supportive behaviour, and social network resources. Subjective appraisals refer to the perception of individuals (positive or negative) with regards to the support they receive from their social network. Should individuals perceive support as a way to reduce their independence or control them, they will receive the support negatively. If the support aids in the achievement of goals they can view it positively (Magagula, 2017) Supportive behaviour indicates such encouragement and financial assistances that can be received by an individual from the social network. Social network resources refer to the people who offer support to an unemployed person for positive adjustment (Forsythe & Walla, 2017). For traumatic life events, for example inability to secure employment after graduation, social support can act as a buffer (Botha & Coetzee, 2017). A good social support structure will help the graduates in times of adversities especially when they are failing to secure employment.

Previous studies argue that a lack of social support can result in high blood pressure, social isolation, alcohol and drugs abuse, psychosomatic complaints as well as deterioration of physical and emotional well-being (Karakuş, 2018; Magagula, 2017; Maswangayi, 2015). Graduates from poorer families usually lack social networks which results in a lack of employment information, employment connections and unemployment (Crawford, et al., 2016;

Theron, 2016). Social capital in the South African context differentiates how graduates are excluded or included in the labour market (Kruss, 2016; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016), for example typically White graduates are involved in part-time work through their families' networks. In turn, such work experience would place the White graduates at an advantage in the labour market (Seekings, 2012). In contrast, many people from disadvantaged backgrounds lack such family social networks as the adults in the household will be unemployed (Graham, et al., 2016; Van Zyl, 2016; Walker & Fongwa, 2017). Tomlinson (2017) argues that there is thus a need for HEIs to promote networking between students from disadvantaged backgrounds and employers. Social networks with employers will help the graduates to gain access to various companies and those vacancies that are not advertised.

3.2.4. Role of employers.

Previous studies have indicated that employers need to convey to HEIs their skills expectations for future employees (Lenard & Pintaric, 2018; Selvadurai et al., 2012). However, a small proportion of the studies indicate that the curriculum should not be influenced by the employers (Hendricks, 2014). Generally, employers allude that graduates struggle with the transition from higher education into the labour market (Reddy, 2016; Wood, et al., 2015). Therefore, to some extent the transition process can be made easier by the involvement of employers.

Most of the literature has noted a lack of involvement by employers at the university level as major concern (Hendricks, 2014). Before being hired, graduates need to have extensive interactions with the potential employers. Employers demand that graduates be desirable for prospective employers (Bunney, et al., 2016). However the HEIs and employers are not working incorporation in order to meet the skills demand and shortage (Jonck, 2017). This can be regarded as hypocrisy on the part of the employers (Selvadurai, et al., 2012). As the employers continue to raise concerns on the quality of graduates entering the labour market they should be involved in the production of employable graduates.

Previous studies that utilised surveys and questionnaires indicate that there are discrepancies between graduates' and employers' perspectives with regards to issues such as decision making and problem-solving skills (Donald, 2017), work experience (Chhinzer & Russo, 2018), social interaction (Selvadurai, et al., 2012) and communication (Holmes, 2013a). However, it is difficult to measure some of the competencies that the graduates are expected to possess. Consequently, educational credentials are utilised to estimate the employability skills that an individual possess in the hiring process (Cai, 2013). With educational credentials graduates are assumed to be having adequate employability skills, however when graduates

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start work this can be proved fallacious (Hendricks, 2014). Accordingly, this will lead to a discrepancy between graduate performance and employer expectations.

It is rare for universities to initiate communication with employers, but employers are able to inform the university about the labour market demands. Hence, it is imperative that both employers and universities work in collaboration. Although the university cannot guarantee employment or have control of the job market, they can improve the probability of the graduates securing employment by developing employability skills. Employers and HEIs should work together as a system to improve the employability of graduates. The system can be built through consistent and clear communication between the two entities. A collaboration between the employers and HEIs will promote the transition of graduates into the labour market through the development of the required skills.

3.2.5. Choice of university.

Labour market success of the graduates, especially in the South African context, is determined by the quality of education that an individual will receive during their studies (Ntikinca, 2014). People from poor socio-economic backgrounds are highly unlikely to attend the so-called high states HEIs (Crawford, et al., 2016). Most employers in South Africa measure graduate competence through the type of university attended (Van Broekhuizen, 2016). Previous studies have pointed out that graduates from HDIs struggle to make the transition into the labour market from university (Rogan & Reynolds, 2016; Magagula, 2017; Van Broekhuizen, 2016). As a result, most students desire to enrol with HAIs, but due to poor socio-economic backgrounds of most Black people, they are unable to do so. This was expressed by Ntikinca (2014) in a study of 2010 Rhodes graduates who indicated that Black students preferred HAIs to HDIs. Many studies are in consensus that the type of university determines labour market outcomes of graduates (Kundaeli, 2015; Mncayi, 2016; van Broekhuizen, 2016).

The DHET has to ensure that HDIs hire competent and qualified lecturers. The universities also need to have all the resources needed to produce employable graduates. As much as Employment Equity is important, the first consideration that has to be taken into account is the quality of the lecturers that are being hired at HDIs. Former students of these HDIs are being hired soon after Honours or Masters Qualifications to lecture at the same university. It thus becomes a cycle of poor education quality as the lecturers will not have the competence to impart knowledge on the students. As a result, it is not only the problem of the

type of institution but the resources within the institution that are causing transition difficulties for the students at HDIs.

3.2.6. Financial Assistance.

Generally, South African university fees are high, hence most of the students are reliant on bursaries, loans and other sources of funding to complete their studies (Nkosi, 2015). NSFAS, the widely used study scheme by people from poor backgrounds and working-class families, is a study loan that was introduced to assist previously disadvantaged people (Walker & Fongwa, 2017a). As NSFAS is a study loan it has been characterised with poor recovery as students fail to repay after graduation (Motala, 2017). Looking at the unemployment rates in the country it is no wonder why most of these graduates are unable to repay the loans. In study by Ntikinca (2014) the findings indicate that most White graduates funded their own studies and more Black graduates were reliant on NSFAS. Due to the ever-increasing cost of attending higher education, students in South Africa embarked on a movement termed #FeesMustFall (Jansen, 2017; Motala, 2017). Although most students from poor backgrounds being recipients of a study loan (NSFAS) it is argued that the cost of attending higher education is actually higher than the funds being made available (Motala, 2017). The funds appear not to be enough for all the students as highlighted by campaigns such as #FeesMustFall. However, Van Zyl (2016) reports that students from poor socio-economic backgrounds, due to a lack of financial resources, are likely to drop out. The researcher also points out these students have limited access to NSFAS.

3.2.7. Unrealistic expectations.

The transition from university to work is often affected by the exaggerated and ambiguity expectations that the graduates will tend to have (Maharaj, 2015; Mncayi, 2016; Tymon, 2013). However, graduates have such high expectations because of how the employers sometimes advertise their employment vacancies which can be deceiving to the graduates. Tomlinson (2017) acknowledges that students' expectations of the transition from higher education into the world of work should be managed well to avoid reality shock among the graduates. Failure to secure employment in their chosen career pathways can intensify apprehension levels as there will be discordant with their expectations (Tomlinson, 2017).

When students enrol for and leave higher education they expect to have a better life than what they had before higher education. Many of these graduates fail to obtain employment which may result in family conflict, reduced family support, financial hardships, stress, limited

social networks and depression (Magagula, 2017). Should a graduate secure employment in the labour market and their expectations are unmet, the graduates will suffer with stress and fear of losing their jobs. El-Fekey and Mohamad (2018) observe that students from poor socio-economic backgrounds might not be motivated to consider employability after graduation as they might be the first in their families to obtain higher educational qualifications. Students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds are concerned more with employment but not with the process of employability. Being the first people in their families to attend HE, graduates have high expectations of securing top level employment soon after graduation. Such unrealistic expectations are generally caused by a lack of knowledge and information of the labour market. The only goal that exists in the minds of the students becomes securing employment after graduation neglecting the process that needs to be followed. Hence, most of these students fail to make the transition into the world of work because of unrealistic expectations and a lack of work readiness.

3.2.8. Higher education and the labour market.

In the last few decades there have been changes in the higher education sector due to massification (Mok, 2016; Motala, 2017; Tomlinson, 2012). Massification of higher education can be attributed the social inequalities reduction drive and consideration of education as a major role player in socialisation (Blessinger, 2015). The changes coincided with the introduction of knowledge economies that need highly skilled and knowledgeable workers (Bridgstock, 2009). Higher education, within this context, is continuously expected to produce graduates that will add value in the labour market. In South Africa people from various backgrounds now have access to HE in an effort to reduce social inequalities. It appears that the government is more concerned about opportunity equality than outcome equality.

Employers have thus raised concern about the new graduates. Cox (2015) indicated that labour markets worldwide are still suffering from shortages and the skills shortage was not showing any signal of easing. On the other side of the coin it is indicated that graduate unemployment continues rising (Lourens, 2016). According to Kigotho (2016) twenty-five percent of African universities graduates were unemployed and the trends continue worsening. Such contradicting statements have led to confusion among students and communities.

A fourth Industrial Revolution is expected to begin due to graduates who are continuously confronted with a world that is ever changing (World Economic Forum, 2016). The World Economic Forum indicates that:

"While these impending changes hold great promise for future prosperity and job creation, many of them also pose major challenges requiring proactive adaptation by corporations, governments, societies and individuals. As whole industries adjust, and new ones are born, many occupations will undergo a fundamental transformation" (World Economic Forum, 2016, p. 8).

Hence, highly skilled graduates are needed in the labour market. According to Lourens and Fourie-Mlaherbe (2017) "knowledge workers are expected to supply and manage their knowledge in order to make a contribution to a knowledge-driven economy" (p.7). In light of this, questions are raised about the responsibility of higher education, is it only to supply highly skilled graduates or serve another comprehensive purpose? At the beginning of their careers, many graduates go through development phases to enhance their employability. This can be attributed to the process of transition, but not higher education as such (Wood, et al., 2015). The transition process involves several factors such as a social capital, psychological capital and cultural capital, it is not the sole responsibility of the HEI for a relatively easy transition.

However, several stakeholders are not in agreement about the role of higher education. According to Lourens (2016) generally higher education had a three-fold mission which included application, transferral as well as production of knowledge. Student preparation for the labour market has not been considered as the main purpose of higher education. There is thus a need for employers and HEIs to work cooperate to facilitate the production of employable graduates to scourge poverty and meet the needs for employable graduates in the labour market.

3.2.9. Psychological capital (PsyCap).

PsyCap is regarded as a psycho-social resource which allows adaptation and positive response to inevitable career adversities by graduates (Tomlinson, 2017). These capitals i.e. social, cultural and human, are interrelated and enable graduates to effectively make the transition into the labour market (Tomlinson, 2017). PsyCap comprises of four interrelated resources; namely, optimism, resilience, self-efficacy and hope. PsyCap has been defined as:

"An individual's positive psychological state of development that is characterized by: (1) having confidence (efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success" (Luthans, Youssef-Morgan, & Avolio,

2015, p. 2). Such factors help graduates to cope with inevitable adversities as employment is not guaranteed after graduation.

De Jong, Berckmoes, Kohrt, Song, and Reis, (2015) argued that the adjustment of young people (resilience) to adverse life situations is determined by intergenerational or social circumstances, i.e. young people should not be held accountable of their responses to adversities (Theron, 2016). Young people's achievement is dependent on social ecological stakeholders such as teachers, community, and parents (Masten, 2014). These stakeholders have the responsibility of providing resources to the youth in order to be successful in life (Theron, 2016). Not only relevant resources should be provided but the adversities should be lessened for the wellbeing and mental health of the youth (Hart, 2015). It is important to have a strong social support structure for personal wellbeing.

Hope involves the willpower (i.e. the determination to pursue and realise one's goals) and way power (i.e. being able to come up with new strategies when faced with obstacles) (Luthans, et al., 2015). A hopeful person is able to envisage and come up with solutions to life's inevitable adversities. Hope is an attribute that is useful when searching for employment in the context of high unemployment (Coeztee & Schreuder, 2013). On the other hand, optimism is anticipation of something good happening (Bakari & Khoso, 2017). This is an expectancy that regardless of the situation an individual will achieve their objectives.

Self-efficacy is described as the ability of an individual to remain motivated until a positive outcome is achieved. When a person has self-efficacy, they are likely to persevere in times of adversity given that they remain optimistic (Bernstein & Volpe, 2016). The graduates' PsyCap should be developed when they are still students to contribute towards positive graduate outcomes in the labour market (Bakari & Khoso, 2017). Competing in the labour market is not a straight-forward process. There are many barriers that are involved in the process of searching for employment. Graduates thus needs PsyCap in order to cope with the inevitable labour market challenges.

3.3. Graduates perspectives

Despite the differences between the employers' and graduates' perspectives there are some similarities. As employers, graduates indicated the curriculum needed more attention on decision making and problem-solving skills (Donald, 2017). Graduates alluded that perceived skills were more important than the competence to really perform the skills, which is in contradiction with the perceptions of employers (Hendricks, 2014). Such feelings espoused by students are of importance in this study.

3.3.1. Curriculum.

Hendricks (2014) indicates that the transition of students into the labour market from higher education is affected by how they perceive the curriculum. Hendricks further comments that there is limited literature on the satisfaction with curriculum thus there is need for more literature. In a longitudinal study of 5,203 students indicated that curriculum satisfaction was contributed to by two factors, namely; career and graduate school preparation and academic counselling (Tessema, Ready, & Yu, 2012). In addition, a survey was administered among University of Kentucky students who identified academic counselling as needing improvement (University of Kentucky, 1996). Furthermore, in a qualitative study by Yorke (2004) some students mentioned that they were entering the labour market without adequate practical experience and were overloaded with theoretical knowledge. Such findings suggest discontent with the curriculum.

Employability has to be embedded in the curriculum to increase employment chances of the graduates (Artess, et al., 2017). Embedding of the employability skills in the curriculum enhances the students' ability to perform duties in the job market (Tran, 2015). Employability skills may be included in the curriculum, but it is up to the graduates to demonstrate and prove to prospective employers that they are work ready (Paterson, 2017). Calls have been made to dismantle the curriculum to rid of the Eurocentric perspectives in the curriculum to include Africa and South Africa perspectives (Heleta, 2016). The challenges experienced in the education are attributed to the legacy of apartheid (Chinyamurindi, 2017). It is believed that such reformations will improve the development of human capital and help with curbing poverty (Musitha & Mafukata, 2017). Some reformations of the curriculum led by African scholars in South Africa have been put in place e.g. AIDS research and cardiovascular research (Jansen, 2018). However, Jansen indicated that:

"In South Africa we are fighting the wrong battles. Surely the most powerful statement on decolonisation would be to provide every school student with a high-quality education that enables them to engage the world of science, knowledge and authority with confidence and competence. In a society where schools are systemically dysfunctional for the majority, we are in danger of imposing an elegant, even profound, language of decolonisation on a broken school system whose products (sic) show up angry and inarticulate in our public universities. In other words, we are gripping the wrong end of the political stick when it comes to the daunting task of curriculum change in schools and universities" (Jansen, 2017, p. 11).

The researcher concurs with Jansen that if the education quality remains poor, curriculum decolonisation will be unsuccessful. The government has to first improve the quality of education before considering decolonising the curricular. The developments need to start from primary and high schools levels. The education system needs development such as high-quality teachers, school-based career counsellors (properly trained counsellors), and adequate other resources such as textbooks and computers. It is unacceptable, considering the world we are living in these days which is technologically advanced, that students from rural areas only know about a computer when they enrol for HE. If the education system quality remains poor many people from disadvantaged backgrounds will struggle to make the transition from high school to HE and eventually into the labour market. All the efforts by the government to redress past imbalances will also remain unfulfilled and poverty will continue to prevail among the individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds.

3.3.2. *Motivation and job factors.*

Graduates who are making the transition into the labour market from higher education are discovering that their educational qualifications are not enough to secure employment (Wood, et al., 2015). Individuals are driven by varying external and internal motivators to search for employment (Holmes, 2013). Motivation for employment can be viewed as an opportunity for bigger things, status in the society or for earning purposes (Hendricks, 2014). In a report by Benford & Newsome-Gees (2006) it is noted that "thirty-six percent of students seek a college degree to pursue a career they love, 32% to be financially successful, and 23% to satisfy a personal interest or goal" (p. 81). Many students from disadvantaged backgrounds hope to secure employment soon after graduation hence investment in education.

It is up to the graduates to decide which dimension motivates them more so that they can be able to plan for future employment goals. Graduates can be intrinsically motivated to seek for employment in order to achieve a personal goal (Coeztee, 2012; Goodman & Treadway, 2016) or can be extrinsically motivated such as to obtain of resources e.g. cars and status in the society (Holford, 2017). It is important to understand the motivation behind the graduates seeking employment as it plays a major role in the transition process (Baron-Puda, 2018). Motivation for seeking employment influences how an individual perceives the transition process (Hendricks, 2014). People from disadvantaged backgrounds typically enrol for HE in order to secure employment. Given the history of the country, it is vital to understand how they are experiencing the transition process and what are they doing to be able to make an easy transition into the labour market.

3.4. Employment search

This section is important as it highlights that there are various channels which can be adopted by the graduates to secure and retain employment. The process to secure employment is not a straight-forward process. Several factors come into play in the transition process. The ability to search for employment has been identified as one of the factors that is causing high unemployment rates within South Africa (Mncayi, 2016). Graduates are lacking skills on how navigate the labour market this results in lack of knowledge of the labour market.

- *Private Employment Agencies*

This involves another person/s who attempts to secure employment for another person who will be seeking employment for a profit or gain (Jutalaw, 2012). Previous studies have highlighted that White graduates use private employment agencies more than Black graduates (Ntikinca, 2014). On the other hand, Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, (2017) argue that Black people make use of formal methods to obtain employment, including employment agencies, than White people. This is so because Blacks do not have easy access to informal methods such as social capital. Employment agencies are endorsed as a valuable source for the job market information (Baron-Puda, 2018). Graduates rely on employment agencies to assist them in securing employment.

- *Family*

In the labour market if a new graduate is well connected it will be a huge plus. It will be advantageous when graduates want to enter the labour market. However, graduates from high socio-economic have strong family ties in the labour market and, usually they will be successful in the labour market (Crawford, et al., 2016). Previous studies articulated that White graduates were more likely to use this route to enter the world of work (Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017). Meaning it will be easier for White graduates to succeed in the labour market than for Black graduates. Many graduates from previously disadvantaged backgrounds will usually be the first ones to graduate in the family meaning they will not have the guidance or support of the family when trying to make the transition between higher education and labour market (Theron, 2016). The quality of social capital an individual knows also improves the quality of employment opportunities that they can access (Magagula, 2017). Crawford et al., (2016) claims that graduates from high socio-economic backgrounds are likely to obtain employment where they will earn high earnings than graduates from poor socio-economic backgrounds.

Many job seekers, to secure employment, are using personal contacts (family and friends). According to Gordon (2013) high socio-economic individuals are in a better place to secure employment than low socio-economic individuals as they have better connections in the labour market. Previous studies articulated that Black graduates had a fewer personal contacts as compared to white graduates. In the UK networks were cited as the most used form of securing employment (Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2015). Many graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds are usually the first ones in their families to graduate hence they lack social capital in the labour market.

- *Internet*

As a result of the development of social media, graduates have easier access to the employers than 10 years ago. Such developments allow the graduate to have access and network with prospective employers (Stamp, 2014). Other studies discovered that Black graduates were more likely to utilise social media to secure employment that white graduates. Networking on social media such as LinkedIn and Facebook are believed to be a way to improve an individual's employment prospects (Artess, et al., 2017). Lourens & Fourie-Malherbe (2017) indicated that the most utilised tool for search for employment in the initial stages was the internet. The participants of the study used different job search engines such as Facebook, Career Junction and Gumtree. Technology has become part of our daily lives and it allows people unlimited access to various employment vacancies (Piróg, 2016). By using platforms such as LinkedIn graduates will be able build relationships with prospective employers earlier in their careers (Tomlinson, 2017). However, it appears graduates are unaware of such networks and not making use of the platforms to build networks with potential employers.

- *Newspaper Advertisements*

Even before internet, for many decades graduates have been utilising newspapers to search for employment (Magagula, 2017). In the contemporary world, the method is still popular among graduates. This method is commonly used by graduates that have poor access to the internet and lack personal or family ties in the labour market (Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). Despite the advancement in technology, many employers are still using this method to advertise job vacancies. Previous studies have discovered that it is mostly Black graduates who utilise newspapers to secure employment as compared to White graduates (Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017).

The issue of unemployment is intensified by communities that do not provide employment services and information to the graduates. These communities do not have job centres which are functional having up to date and relevant information about employment opportunities (Graham, et al., 2016). As result most of the recent graduates rely on newspapers and/or internet to search for information which will be costly for people that unemployed (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Patel, Khan, Graham, Bladry, & Mqehe, 2016). Due to a lack of resources the graduates will have to make use internet cafes which are often expensive and will be quite a distant from their home. Furthermore, employers request for paper applications which include costs for postage, photocopying, printing and certification (Patel et al., 2016). These costs, taken together, limit the number of applications that graduates can make as it is too expensive for a person who is unemployed.

As mentioned earlier, the transition process can be done through various mediums. Several studies have been conducted worldwide to understand how the graduates navigated the transition process. Most of the studies that have been conducted are called graduate tracer studies, they utilised graduate cohort samples. The following section will discuss some of these studies that have been conducted in South Africa and the rest of the world.

3.5. Empirical Literature

3.5.1. South African Studies.

Against the extensive context of workforce that is always changing, increasing rates of youth unemployment and the expanding demand for products that are capital intensive, graduate tracer research has become a vital instrument in order to understand adaptation of new graduates (CHEC, 2013; Botha, 2015). According to Ntikinca (2014) international tracer studies are utilised to investigate the process of transition from higher education to labour market as well as explore the higher education role in addressing labour market demands. In South Africa, some of the studies have utilised Labour Force Survey to understand labour market outcomes for graduates (van der Berg & van Broekhuizen, 2012). However, only a few studies have traced alumni from higher education to the labour market (Bhorat, et al., 2016; CHEC, 2013; Letseka et al., 2010; Moleke, 2005; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). By tracing graduates it helps us understand the processes that the graduates go through to secure employment.

As much of the information about graduates' labour market outcomes is gathered through tracer studies, it is important to discuss some of the tracer studies that have been conducted in South Africa. Graduate tracer studies have indicated that labour market outcomes

are unequal because of institution type, race, sex and field of study (Allais, 2017; CHEC, 2013; Ntikinca, 2014; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). Previous studies (Letseka et al., 2010; CHEC, 2013) established that race is the major influence on labour market outcomes. It shows that Black graduates remained unemployed for longer periods than any other race group. The legacy of apartheid continues to play a significant role in the labour market outcomes.

Cosser and Letseka (2010) supported this trend in their study of Pretoria Technikon, University of the North, Stellenbosch University and University of Fort Hare. One of the key findings of the study was Black graduates faced difficulties in the transition to work process. In another tracer study, CHEC (2013) looked at four Western Cape universities. Although most of the participants were all employed, race remained influential in determining when a person can secure employment (CHEC, 2013). The study indicates that White graduates are more likely to work in the private sector and are more effective in utilising social networks to secure employment (CHEC, 2013). On the other hand, Black graduates are more likely to secure employment in the public sector (Paton, 2013; Jenvey, 2012; CHEC, 2013). Such findings reflect that the labour market outcomes of the country are established in racial dualism.

In a quantitative survey study by Ntikinca (2014) of 2010 cohort of graduates, the study focused on the labour market experiences of graduates from a HAI. The study indicated that labour market outcomes of HAI graduates were determined by the field of study (most employers' preferred science and commerce graduates than humanities graduates), race and gender. Cosser (2015) argues that individuals from high socio-economic class enrolled for programmes with high chances of employment (e.g. sciences) unlike people from poor socio-economic backgrounds who enrol for programmes such business where there are poor chances of employment. It also indicated that pre-labour market discrimination according to gender and race was common in the labour market. Inequalities were noted in the supply side process and institutions such as schooling, university and family.

The Cape Area Panel Survey (CAPS) studied the transition of youth from university into world of work. The survey found that the transition of white youth was relatively easy and smooth in comparison to the transition of Black African and Coloureds (Branson et al., 2009). This indicates that white youth enjoy the best job market outcomes. The study, although it was longitudinal, focused on a sample from the Western Cape Province. This province is the one of the best provinces in the country with regards to employment as it considered an economic hub (Mncayi, 2016). Most of the African sample was made up of people from the Eastern Cape (Mlatsheni, 2014) which shows that employment opportunities in the Eastern Cape are limited. Furthermore, the study also included people that did not have tertiary qualifications.

Lourens (2016) also conducted an interpretive qualitative study of the transition of first entrants into the labour market using a sample of 46 graduates from the cohort for 2010 graduates. The study focused on four universities in the Western Cape Province with the aim of explaining the journeys of the graduates into the labour market. The study established that the graduates needed a career identity to be able navigate through the transition process. It was also noted that higher education had to lay their role in the development of career/graduate identity.

A study by Kruss (as cited in Pop & Barkhuzien, 2010) on employability and higher education it was indicated that a misalignment existed between graduates' expectations and labour market realities. The study established that employers perceived graduates as not ready for the world of work. The findings were also supported by an Australian study by Mourshed, Farrell and Barton. A total of 72% of HEIs articulated that new graduates were well prepared for work, while only 42% employers concurred. Furthermore, another South African study by the Council of the Built Environment (CBE) established that graduates were not ready for the world work as they could not meet the demands of the labour market (Vatiswa, 2014). What is of importance in the findings of the study is the identification of the university curriculum or education system that does not address the instilling of soft skills among graduates as the main reason for lack of preparedness.

Mtebula (2014) in a quantitative study of Wits University of 2008 to 2011 cohort of graduates in the School of Construction Economic and Management indicates that the programs offered both theory and practical training, thus the graduates will be guaranteed of work readiness. Although the graduates reported that the programs had made them work ready, employers were of the opinion that the graduates lacked the required competencies in the world of work. However, the survey study was conducted among a cohort of graduates from 2008 to 2011. The data was collected at one point, after graduation.

Ismail (2017) in another quantitative study investigated the relationship between self-esteem, graduate employability capabilities and career adaptableness among a sample of students that were enrolled at a Further Education and Training (FET). Mncayi (2016) also conducted a survey study using alumni database of one of the South African universities and indicated that graduates took an average of seven months before securing employment. In addition, most of the graduates were employed in the fields they studied. However, many of the graduates highlighted that they were below their desired level, suggesting under-employment problem. Furthermore, the length of unemployment was predicted by age, study field, job searching abilities and race. Most of the sample was unemployed and, subsequently

it was suggested that the overall education system required to be improved, exposure to career guidance and the government had to intervene by offering employers wage and training subsidies to hire graduates.

Sharlene, James, & De Lannoy (2012) suggested that in South Africa there is a general sense that if an individual is, in terms of education, hardworking and excels, have better chances of improving their socio-economic background than those who are uneducated. Consequently, young people are put under pressure as families would look up to them for financial support on completion of their studies. This ends up stressing the individuals as most of the time they would be struggling to secure the employment. These tracer studies provide empirical evidence that geography, socio-economic status, race and gender are the major determinants of labour market outcomes. Africans are reported to be discouraged in employment search due to the racial disparities, the history of racial prejudice is believed to be causing problems in South Africa (Magagula, 2017).

Employers are dissatisfied with graduates, especially from HDIs, who are lacking soft skills to be able to make a successful transition into the labour market. Graduates are no longer regarded as work ready by having field specific knowledge, there is a need to develop other skills beyond their degree programs. Having a qualification does not inevitably translate into the skills that are required in the labour market.

3.5.2. International Studies.

Schomburg (2007) conducted a graduate study in 11 European countries and Japan, which analysed issues such as smoothness of the transition process; employment appreciation; professional success – status and income. Professional success of the graduates was determined by structural and cultural patterns as well as individual factors (Schomburg, 2006). The study highlighted that socio-biographical factors such as educational levels of parents and gender as well as other factors such as work experience were influential in the success of the graduates. According to Schomburg (2007) there is no defined way to professional success. The study concludes by articulating that graduate employability cannot be defined by a single factor (Schomburg, 2007). Graduate employability is affected by several factors such as geographical location, labour market opportunities and education quality.

The above findings were also supported by a study that was conducted by National Council of Higher Education (NCHE, 2006) in Uganda. The study affirmed that graduate employability is determined by several factors which include institution reputation and personality, field of study and grades achieved during the studies. In addition, the study

indicated that graduates had the better chances of securing employment on merit. It also established that both genders had an equally fair chance of securing employment.

In a study by Pollard et al., (2015) it was indicated that although some employers sought after specific job knowledge, most of the employers were more concerned about generic skills. The employers are of the perception that having generic skills displays that an individual is capable of learning and has high intellectual capacity. However, in studies by Morrison (2014) and Roepen (2015) both reported that students lacked confidence to mobilise non-technical and transferable skills in the world of work. This suggests that there is a misalignment between higher education outputs and labour market demands.

Jackson (2015) suggests that the classrooms should involve strong career-related components, such as work placements. In another study Jackson (2016) investigates the transfer of attributes from university to world of work as part of graduate transition process. Using 647 graduates from the business programs, it was established that skills transfer was influenced by three elements, namely; student, learning curriculum as well as characteristics of the workplace. Jackson's studies suggest that a process-oriented method is more applicable to understand the process acquisition as well as transfer of skills by graduates, and all the stakeholders involved should share the responsibility. This is also supported by Jones (2014) who suggested that graduate transition should be regarded as a skills accumulation process that does not cease when graduate enters the labour market. Graduate employability is a continuous learning process it does not stop when a person secures employment. Graduates have to continuously develop their skills to keep up with the ever changing labour market.

In a qualitative study by Hendricks (2014) of college graduates to understand their transition into employment the following themes were highlighted; networking and connections to succeed in the workplace, positive feelings about the curriculum, support and challenges from family relationships, lack of direction and graduate school. However, this study only looked at graduates, the data was collected at one point, and only those who had secured employment in a field related to their study program were interviewed.

Wood, et al., (2015) conducted a qualitative and qualitative survey study on Australian alumni business undergraduate who were involved in the transition process. The aim of the study was to explore final-year learning effectiveness and explore graduates' perceptions. The study established that graduates rate group work, oral presentations and case as important in the transition process. Wood and Solomonides (2008) also express that it is important to understand students' needs with regards to professional development as well as predicting professional work transition. Weiss and Klein (2014) conducted a study using German data in

which they indicated that graduates benefitted from work experience only if it is voluntary than a compulsory a component of the programme. They also highlighted that it leads to transition that is faster and easy integration in the labour market.

BIS (2013) conducted another study comparing the effects of paid and unpaid work. The aim was to investigate how graduate outcomes were influenced by different forms of work experience. The findings established that positive transitions outcomes in the labour market were experience by those graduates who assumed work integrated learning and paid work.

In another study by Bell (2016) he used a qualitative approach to investigate the correlation between creativity qualities and outcomes of graduate employment, this was done by measuring the entrepreneurial enterprise among undergraduate students. The study aimed at understanding how entrepreneurial students achieved labour market success. He indicated that most employers seek applicants that have entrepreneurial attributes. Bell expressed that "since many of the enterprise skills can be regarded as entrepreneurial behaviours, this would suggest that students with a higher entrepreneurial spirit would be more enterprising, more employable, and consequently more likely to obtain higher level graduate employment" (Bell 2016, p. 5). This shows that graduate employability skills can also lead to developing own companies rather than being a employee.

3.5.3. Analysis of empirical studies.

An analysis of the above studies it shows that they moved beyond the human capital theory simplistic explanations that labour market outcomes are determined by obtaining an academic qualification, by highlighting that it is a complex process that involves interrelation between individual and structural factors. Employability concept is dynamic, and it involves many interactive forces. As a result, higher education has to offer ways to improve graduate employability for a smooth transition into the labour market. Unemployment of graduates in South Africa is a growing problem that is suggestive of problems with the education system, an ever-changing labour market and economic structural problems.

South African studies on labour market outcomes are aligned to international discourses on the responsibility of higher education in producing work ready graduates and the misalignment between the higher education curriculum and labour market demands (Van Broekhuizen, 2016). As the economy is ever-changing it can render other qualifications as less important and, thus holders of such qualifications will be underemployed (Cosser, 2015). Against this background, as a result of the general nature of the qualifications, humanities graduates are expected to struggle than science and commerce graduates in the labour market

(Ntikinca, 2014). The qualifications are not in demand in the labour market hence low levels of employment for those qualifications.

Most of the tracer studies that have been conducted in SA have established that race and gender are the main predictors of success in the labour market. According to Cosser (2015) socio-economic background played a major role in what programs the students enrolled for. It was found that students with high socio-economic backgrounds enrolled for programs in areas such engineering and health sciences, while those from low socio-economic enrolled for programs in social sciences, commerce and business. Thus, high socio-economic students had better chances of securing employment because of the programs they completed (Cosser, 2015). The findings were in support of a study by Koen (2006) who noted that "key graduate employment problems relate to the demographics of graduates, mismatches between graduate skills and labour market needs, graduate shortages in key field, bias in terms of institutions attended, and crucial differences in time-to-employment across economic sectors" (p. 3). Basically, unemployment is being mainly caused by a lack of employability skills.

Furthermore, most of the studies highlighted that it is imperative for higher education to embed a work placement component on their curriculums to assist the graduates in the transition process. Successful labour market outcomes are reliant on the graduates acquiring, not only job specific skills but generic skills as well. Due to the misalignment of higher education outcomes and labour market demands, it is suggested that higher education and employers work in collaboration to ensure that the graduates are well prepared to integrate smoothly in the labour market.

Most of the discussed studies have gathered data at one point. The studies have excluded measuring graduate employability as an element of the transition process. Hence, current study focused on final year of undergraduate studies and post-completion of a degree qualification. In order to understand the various processes that the students go through before entering the open labour market, and how they behave when they are in the labour market. Schreuder and Coetzee (2012) pointed out that more research is needed in South Africa which covers areas such career success predictors, career counselling and development models and graduate employability. Furthermore, Carbone and Hamilton (2016) propose that more research was needed to determine how and where within the university curriculum could employability skills be developed and understanding the roles of different stakeholders (academia, employers and individuals) in development of employability skills. This study therefore responds to such calls to understand more about the graduate employability in the South African context.

Moreover, as shown in the previous section, most of the studies in South Africa have been quantitative (survey) studies (e.g. Archer & Chetty, 2013; Bezuidenhout, 2011), with respondents rating graduate attributes and skills from a list (Holmes, 2013), and the data has been collected at one point (e.g. Mncayi, 2016). In addition, many of employability studies have been in other countries (Evans & Richardson, 2018; Forsythe, 2017, Lenard & Pintaric, 2018), the findings of these may not be applicable to the South African context. Each country is unique therefore the need to understand the perspectives of South Africans.

To have a better understanding of the concept of graduate employability this study adopted a longitudinal qualitative study. This is in response to calls by Clements and Kamau (2017) for researchers to utilised longitudinal methods look at students before and after graduation. A longitudinal qualitative approach was selected as it allowed the researcher to have a better understanding of the lived experience as well as changes over time (Calman, et al., 2013), career and/or life expectations of the participants (Hendricks, 2014) and transition process from higher education into the labour market.

Literature review illustrate that there is a lack of qualitative longitudinal studies of students for before and after graduation. There is thus a need to understand the experiences of the disadvantaged students before and after graduation. In the literature there is limited understanding of the experiences of students from HDIs and the activities that they are involved in before and after graduation. As the students are from previously disadvantaged backgrounds, it is important to understand how the students prepare for the transition into the labour market to become employable in the context of high unemployment before graduation? Furthermore, to understand how the students experiences the labour market after graduation and what activities are the graduates involved with to become employable after graduation to secure employment?

3.6. Strategies to link higher education and labour market

Graduates have to make decisions about their transition process from higher education into the labour market without much experience (Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2015). Many students in developed countries develop and enhance their employability through engaging in activities such as internships, volunteering and unpaid work (Evans & Richardsn, 2018; Holford, 2017; McDonald & Grant-Smith, 2015). By using those methods, the students gain invaluable work experience which they will use after graduation for a smooth transition into the labour market (Tomlinson, 2017). Such methods aid the students in bridging the gap that exists between the skills required in the labour market and the skills that the graduate will be

having (Bola, Trollip, & Parkinson, 2015). Moreover, this provides the graduates with an opportunity to attract potential employers by exhibiting their skills in the labour market (Baron-Puda, 2018). Internships are believed to increase the level of confidence of graduates when searching for employment in the future (O'Connor & Bodicoat, 2017; Ndibunza, 2016).

Furthermore, graduates can be assisted with the transition process through career guidance (Hooley & Dodd, 2015). However, because of different backgrounds not everyone is fortunate enough to receive career guidance services. Most people in South Africa continue living in poverty which makes it difficult for them to benefit from such vital services. In the event that they are exposed to career guidance, it will be of sub-standard as it will be done on a large-scale and not on an individual basis which is not beneficial as it lacks the understanding of the individual needs. Jackson & Wilton (2016b) suggest that universities in collaboration with employers need to develop career self-management strategies to increase employability of the graduates. In South Africa it appears employers are more concerned with HAIs which makes it difficult for HDIs to engage with the employers. Also, with some HDIs in the rural areas it becomes difficult for the employers and universities to engage for the development of the graduates.

Such activities aid in the transitional process as students will find it easier to transit from HE into the labour market after gaining some experience (Evans & Richardson, 2018). Graduate employment is enhanced by increased exposure in the workplace as individuals will be able to develop professional networks, skills in demand, interpersonal and intrapersonal skill (Campbell, 2018). Such initiatives however can lead to exploitation of young people who will be desperate for find to enter the labour market in a context of high unemployment (Christie, 2016; Reddy, 2016). Failure to meet the needs of the ever-changing labour market demands may result in a negative transition experience (Mok, 2016). To have an effective transition between higher education and labour market, graduates need to have human capital, social capital, cultural capital, graduate identity and psychological capital (Artess, et al., 2017; Ngoma & Ntale, 2016; Tomlinson, 2017). The students need to have self-confidence, self-efficacy, decision making ability, proactivity and self-belief to succeed in the transition phase (Artess, et al., 2017; Dacre Pool, 2016). There is a lack of university-employer interaction which makes it difficult for the graduates to make the transition (Minocha, Hristov, & Reynolds, 2017). The two entities are acting as if there is no link between the two.

Sometimes graduates lack prior learning and planning on how to make the transition from higher education into the labour market (Lourens & Fourie-Malherbe, 2017). The process of moving from being graduate to becoming an employee is complicated and messy (Holmes,

2015; Tomlinson, 2017). It is thus important to understand how graduates make sense of this journey (Lourens & Fourie-Malherbe, 2017). It is suggested that it is important to understand self-perceived employability for all stakeholders in order to come up with strategies of how to prepare the graduates for the labour market (Donald, Baruch, & Ashleigh, 2017). Accordingly the need to understand the perspectives of the students/graduates of their employability.

3.7. Conclusion

This section explored the realities of transition from higher education into the world work for first time employment, both international and local literature was explored. Graduate transition can be regarded as complex and multifaceted process. Literature indicates that higher education is trying to produce graduates that are work-ready, but many employers are still of the perception that the graduates are inadequately trained. Higher education institutions are no longer only expected to provide education, but to prepare students to be employable in the labour market. However, previous studies have indicated that most graduates manage their university to work transition without or with little support from other stakeholders.

Changes in the economy and policies in the labour market have resulted in universities being pressured to produce graduates that are employable. The main question that remains with most stakeholders is: are graduates being prepared adequately for the transition for university into the world of work? Most of these studies utilised graduates to investigate the transition from higher education to world of work as well as to explore higher education role to meet labour market demands. A successful transition does not only rely on one factor but on a range factors and behaviours.

Chapter Four – Research Design and Methodology

4. Introduction

The philosophy as well as the methodology which underpins this study will be evaluated in this chapter. As already mentioned in previous chapters, the main purpose of this study was to explore students' transition and experiences from university into the labour market. An exploration of the students' experiences during the transition process will assist in coming up with interventions to curb the ever-increasing graduate unemployment. The literature review has shown that most of the studies that have been conducted in South Africa and internationally have inclined to using quantitative survey-based methodologies, (e.g. Archer & Chetty, 2013; Bezuidenhout, 2011; Goodman & Treadway, 2016; Ismail, 2017; Nel & Neale-Shutte, 2013; Shivoro, et al., 2018). Of the studies that utilised qualitative studies most of them collected data at one point, i.e. before or after graduation (e.g. Campbell, 2018; Lourens, 2016; Reddy, 2016; Paterson, 2017a). There are some studies who have focussed on collecting data before and after graduation, (e.g. Christie 2016). There is thus a need to understand the experiences of the students before and after graduation (Clements & Kamau, 2017). It was therefore the aim of this study to understand the experiences of students before and after graduation.

The world is a multidimensional sphere which comprises a diversity of storytellers who perceive the social world differently (Clarke, 2016). Social life, therefore, cannot be fully understood by espousing natural science methods as they are too restricted (Levitt, et al., 2018). Thus, this research project adopted research methodologies that are regarded as appropriate to deal with the heterogeneity and complexities of the social world (Vogl, et al, 2018). An interpretivist approach was adopted for this study. The research approach allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of the participants from their own perspective (Levitt, et al., 2018). A total of 30 final year undergraduate students participated in this longitudinal qualitative study to form the basis for narrative inquiry. A longitudinal qualitative approach was selected as it allowed the researcher to have a better understanding of the lived experience as well as changes over time (Calman, et al., 2013; Vogl, et al., 2018), career and/or life expectations of the participants (Chinyamurindi, 2016a, b; Hendricks, 2014) and transition process from higher education into the labour market (Clements & Kamau, 2017). Textual data cannot be quantified when trying to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of the participants as the main objective will be lost (Gramer, 2017). Hence this

study utilised an interpretivist approach to understand the experiences without having to quantify the data.

The data was collected using focus group and individual interviews (Steyn & McEwan, 2013), online debates (Modica, 2012) and archival sources (Hook, 2013; Levitt, et al., 2018). The researcher also utilised personal reflections of previous events to collect the data (Smit, 2017). The data generation process did not thus only involve the participants but the researcher as well (Calman, et al., 2013; Vogl, et al., 2018).

The study was delimited to final year undergraduate students who were enrolled at a rural university in one of the poorest provinces in South Africa, that is, Eastern Cape. Studying at a rural university, which is also a HDI, affected how the students and/or graduates perceived and experienced the open labour market. Thus, it was imperative to adopt a longitudinal qualitative methodology to understand the perceptions of the participants before and after graduation (Clements & Kamau, 2017). A longitudinal approach allowed the researcher to understand the changes that occurred over time.

The structure of this chapter was as follows: concerns with epistemological and ontological were presented. Furthermore, a narration of the journey towards a longitudinal qualitative methodology was addressed. Thereafter, a discussion was provided for utilising a narrative inquiry methodology. Subsequently, the process of collecting data followed. Lastly, the chapter reports on the challenges encountered by the researcher as well as the ways in which they were dealt with.

4.1. Epistemological and Ontological concerns

Research philosophy is "concerned with exactly how we can link theoretical ideas to the reality of our world, but also about the nature of that reality and how much we can ever know about it" (Lee & Lings, 2008, p. 24). Research philosophy is the underpinning perspective that determines research view and creation of the basis of the research. The relationship that exists between theory, collected data and real world is described by the research philosophy (Vogl, et al., 2018). Certain assumptions which are related to how learning and the world is perceived make up research philosophy, for example ways to obtain knowledge and ways to measure reality (Calman, et al., 2013). All these assumptions are categorised into epistemology and ontology. Supporting any research process is the foundation of what denotes realism (ontology) including principles and values (axiology) on the relationship that exists between what can be known and researcher (epistemology). These philosophical perspectives, although each may be independently described, combine to form

the foundation upon which humans relate to their social, biological and natural worlds (Reddy, 2016).

Ontology refers to the study or science of being (Blaikie, 2010). The concept is also referred to as "the very nature or essence of the social phenomena" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 5). On the other hand, epistemology is perceived as a notion of acceptable realistic data, used to analyse the association between human beings and nature of knowledge (Wang, 2017). The two philosophical perspectives will be discussed below.

4.1.1. Ontological perspective.

From an ontological perspective, narrative inquiry is "continually working with, and from, a transactional or relational space" (Clandinin, Engaging in narrative inquiry, 2013, p. 6). Different perspectives on ontology play a role on how nature of existence is approached by people, this is primarily determined by people's perceptions on whether the existence of reality is separate to, or awareness of that reality is important to people's conscious (Creswell, 2013). In rationalising this notion Crotty (1998) stated that "the world is there regardless of whether human beings are conscious of it" (p. 10). To qualify this statement, Crotty questioned what kind of world would exist if humans did not have a cognisant engagement with the world. Drawn from this perception, the world and its components independently exist of consciousness of humans. On the other hand, the existence of people is determined by the meaning people attribute to their being or existence (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Humans ascribe different meanings to similar events hence it is important to understand the experiences in their own words.

Several ontological perspectives are the under the continuum of reality which exist outside the mind of a human (realism) and reality being determined by human consciousness of their existence in the world (relativism). Maxwell (2012) opines that realism is combination of ontological and epistemological view. He argues that, independent of our human constructions as well as beliefs, there is a real world that exists and our own constructions, generated from a vantage point create the knowledge of this world.

Most of social research strive to explore how human constructions and experience of the world create the people themselves (Smit, 2017). This orientation forms the foundation for an interpretivist perspective of what establishes socially oriented knowledge (Gramer, 2017). An interpretive approach was adopted for this study, supported by a relativist perspective on social realities which are found in human consciousness. This perspective allowed this current study to embrace multiple views of the study participants, with the purpose of "reporting these

multiple realities" (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). The views were shared through narratives from the participants.

4.1.2. Epistemological perspective.

An interpretive study is an "investigation that relies heavily on observers defining and redefining the meaning of what they see and hear" (Stake, 2010, p. 36). Thus, people strive, from an interpretivist approach, to comprehend the world that they live in (Creswell, 2013). Creswell highlighted that experiences of people are turned into diverse and multiple subjective meanings. Consequently, research conducted using this perspective sets to explore views which are complex from and with others, this was referred to as highly person-context specific (Vogl, et al., 2018). To explore the experiences of students from university into the labour market, an interpretivist approach was preferred. The objective was to understand and interpret meaning constructed by others in area of interest.

This could not be achieved by adopting research methods that view people from an objective perspective and desire rationality that is scientifically detached. Interpretive research philosophy perceives people as subjective meaning constructors through interaction between oneself and others (Morgan, 2013). Research contexts are not entered by the researchers as objective observers, but "observations are socially situated in the worlds of, and between, the observer and the observed" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 29). Researchers, consequently, are involved in subjective interaction within the research context, thus they are unable to detach themselves from research procedure.

The lives of others are regularly observed and interpreted by the researchers, but the aim of the researchers remains on focusing on the study as much as possible. When researchers "cannot see for themselves, they ask others" (Stake, 2010, p. 23). The researcher aimed to, through vicarious or direct means and observation, record facets of human experiences and, to comprehend several meanings attributed to personal and social existence through interpretative procedures with participants and of participants (Vogl, et al., 2018). The epistemological postulation of this study was that through interactions with others that is how the truth is socially constructed (Li & Zizzi, 2017). "When we narrate something, even in telling our very own story, it is (again in the normal course of events) the voice of our culture – its many voices, in fact – that is heard in what we say" (Crotty, 1998, p. 64).

The boundary that existed between epistemology and ontology has become blurred. Humans form their own reality by how they understand, interpret, perceive and act upon reality, this is all done through stories (Campbell, 2018; Gramer, 2017). Humans are always

undertaking on making sense of their real worlds. As it is formed by participants' perceptions, values and research aims, social reality is nuanced and subjective (Levitt, et al., 2018). As such meanings given to the world by people should be used to interpret reality. The meaning cannot be discovered exclusively by quantitative methods, but through language.

4.2. Journey towards Longitudinal Qualitative Research

The aim of quantitative methodologies is to isolate and control research variables to infer on casual relationships, therefore one must ensure that the research conditions are controlled (Hernandez-Scott, 2017). Research conditions, on the other hand, under qualitative inquiries are not controlled. Merriam (1998) posited that "qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that helps us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (p. 5). Qualitative inquiries allow for greater understanding, generation of hypothesis, meaning, discovery and description (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative methods are the best methods to use in educational situations (Hernandez-Scott, 2017). These situations usually involve human interactions that are complex that cannot be described, researched or understood using simple terms (Anderson, 2010). Accordingly, the researcher adopted a qualitative approach to allow the participants to share their experiences under uncontrolled environments.

The objectives of qualitative inquiries vary just as there are many ways to conduct qualitative research. Qualitative inquiry was explained by Levitt, et al., (2018) by describing selected approaches: grounded theory, case study, ethnography, phenomenology and narrative research. These methodologies, together with other theoretical orientations and traditions, vary depending on the foundational research questions to be addressed (Flynn, Albrecht, & Scott, 2018). A qualitative study must be conducted strategically. To achieve an accurate picture of the participants through qualitative inquiry, researchers must be close enough to the participants to gather a profound understanding, record perceived facts, include sufficient narrative of events, interactions, utilise direct citations from the discussions and observations with and of the participants (Levitt, et al., 2018). The researcher was able to understand the situation as he was also a student at the same institution, used direct citations from the narratives to present the findings and all the perceived facts were recorded during the data collection process.

This research project utilised a longitudinal qualitative methodology to explore the changes that occurred over time through a series of ethnographic and interview techniques (Li & Zizzi, 2017). The data collection process was spread over a time that was deemed adequate

for the researcher to describe, observe and analyse any substantive changes in the phenomena under study (Gramer, 2017). Longitudinal qualitative research evolves around change and time, for instance why Black students perceived themselves as unprepared for the world of work as compared to other students and how that can change with time. A longitudinal qualitative research incorporates change and process dimensions to an ordinary qualitative inquiry for more in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Vogl, et al., 2018). This can be done by allowing participants to share their own perceptions without limitations.

The researcher employed a qualitative methodology given that there is limited research on the experiences of disadvantaged students before and after graduation. This allowed the participants to share their own experiences without having to choose a predetermined response. By utilising this method the participants were able to explain their perceptions towards various issues such as the education system, government and racial inequalities. Furthermore, a qualitative longitudinal inquiry was appropriate to understand the justification of the various choices made by the participants in the context of high unemployment.

A qualitative method allowed the researcher to gain understanding of the perspectives of the students towards the role of the HE in preparing them for the labour market. It also gave the researcher an insight into how the students believed they were perceived by the employers in the labour market upon graduation. The key variables that affect employability and the transition process were identified as education and other factors such as socio-economic background and geographical location which were overlooked in the theories that were previously discussed. In order to come up with effective ways to deal with the challenges of the employability and university to work transition it was important to allow the students to explain their experiences without predetermined categories.

The following section will explain why narrative inquiry was chosen as an analytical technique.

4.3. Rationale for Analytical Technique Selection: Narrative Inquiry

This study was guided by the following main research questions:

"What are students' transition and experiences from tertiary education into the labour market"? How do these transitions and experiences manifest in a context of high unemployment?

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) explained that "to use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomena under study" (p. 477). Narrative inquiry is described by Clarke (2016) as a methodology that perceives experiences narratively. Using

a narrative inquiry allowed participants to share their understanding of themselves and their perception on how they fit in the labour market. A narrative inquiry "begins in experience as expressed in lived and told stories" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 5 cited in Clarke, 2016). Furthermore, narrative inquiry is an effective method when exploring subjective experiences through its natural way of exploring the world (Clarke, 2016). Narratives allow a person to explain how their story begins, the events that were encountered in their journey and how the participants made sense of all the events did.

Narratives directly replicate who we are and, indicate "ways we enlist each other's help in building our lives and communities" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). King (2003) cited that "the truth about stories is that that's all we are" (p. 153). The statement is consistent with narrative inquiry methodology which explores lived experiences. As humans we construct our own identities through narratives (Gramer. 2017). The truth about who we are is found in the stories we narrate about ourselves, stories told by other people about us, acted out stories and stories told by our actions. Thus, stories are imperative in gaining an understanding, in any context, any nuances that exist in human relationships (Clarke, 2016).

A quality narrative inquiry is determined by the number of commitments that one dedicates to the process, particularly "an extensive commitment to writing as a way to inquire" (Clandinin & Caine, 2013, p. 178). A narrative inquiry allows for stories to describe a phenomenon through studying lived experiences. Clandinin (2013) argued that "narrative inquiry is an approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of honouring lived experiences as a source of important knowledge and understanding" (p. 17).

A narrative inquiry study establishes four key progressions, namely; living, telling, retelling and reliving (Clandinin, Engaging in narrative inquiry, 2013). Initially, individuals "live out stories and tell stories of their living" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 34). Narrative inquirers, as we come along, we engage in conversations with participants and "live into the lived and told stories" (Spires, 2017, p. 49). Narrative inquirers do not simply, together with the participants, retell the stories as recorded, but work within the narrated stories co-creating, alongside the participants, meaning by re-telling the narratives through a relational process (Clarke, 2016; Vogl, et al., 2018). This process is described as reliving of the story by the narrative inquirer. The relational process between the researcher and participants has the potential to live into the society of students and graduates who will read the stories.

It is an ordinary occurrence, on the surface, that people live and tell stories of their lives (Mamabolo, 2014). Narrative inquiry however is a complex process which involves

storytelling coupled with narrated occurrences (Gramer, 2017). Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves (2013) pointed out that:

Throughout the ages and across cultures stories continue to express the fundamental nature of humanity. Stories are not to be treated lightly as they both carry, and inspire, significant obligations and responsibilities: stories must be cared for as they are at the heart of how we make meaning of our experiences of the world (p.214).

Thus, stories define the human existence (Clarke, 2016). Some forms of positivist studies require researchers to uphold an objective distance from the participants, however this is not the case under narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Caine (2008) articulated that "in studying and understanding experience narratively, researchers recognise the centrality of relationships, the relationships among participants and researchers, and the relationships of experience studied through time and over time and in unique places and multi-layered contexts" (p. 542). Narrative inquiry is a relational inquiry that involves the researcher dealing with relational engagement (Smit, 2017). A relationship had to be developed with the participants in order to build trust between the researcher and the participants.

Narrative inquiry was regarded as the most suited methodology to address the research question as the main purpose of the study was to understand the experiences of students as they make the transition from university into the labour market. Furthermore, through narratives participants were able to share how they perceived themselves as students as well as curriculum makers. In addition, the narratives also indicated the perspectives of the participants on how they fit within the labour market (Clandinin, 2013).

My focus as a narrative inquirer is on experience which grounded in continuity, situation and interaction as understood by Dewey (cited in Clarke, 2016). Dewey (1938) articulated that "the principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after" (p. 35). Interaction was described as an interaction between personal and social. The understanding of interaction, however, cannot be separated from the experience of the situation. Dewey (1985) pronounced that "an experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment" (p. 43).

Connelly and Clandinin on the other hand identified three commonplaces of narrative inquiry as sociality, temporality and place "which entail an exploration of temporality (past, present and future), sociality (dialectic between inner and outer/the personal and social), and place (the concrete physicality of the place or places on which experiences are lived out and

told)" (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2011, p. 12). Clandinin and Connelly developed the three-dimensional commonplaces on the foundation of Dewey's understanding. As a narrative inquirer I engaged in open-ended wondering using three commonplaces of narrative inquiry, i.e. sociality, temporality and place as indicated in the participants' stories.

In this study, the narrative inquiry process began by listening and recording participants' stories. The process was done over a period of more than a year. The participants were initially met through a focus group and, thereafter individual interviews were conducted with the participants. Through constant communication, the participants began to include me in their lives and opening their lives to me. As a researcher involved in a process that is profound, I discovered that it was important for me to share my personal life with the participants to build that trust and build a stronger relationship. The following section will explain how the participants were selected.

4.3. Choice and Description of Participants

The term participant is generally used to signify individuals being studied in an interpretive research (Flynn, et al., 2018). Using the term indicates that participation is voluntary, informed and inclusive. Participants furthermore are an important part in the process of inquiry of the area of interest, through interpersonal subjectivity with the research (Levitt, et al., 2018). Inquiry into the perceptions and experience of students in their final year of undergraduate studies was best achieved by informal dialogues with participants. Furthermore, a decision was made on the number of participants, recruitment and location (Creswell, 2013). This process is called purposive sampling strategy (Creswell, 2013). A purposeful sampling strategy is useful when selecting participants for a specific research purpose. Merriam (2009) argued that "based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned".

This was supported by Smit (2017) who pointed out that those who participate in a study should have experienced the phenomenon being explored and are capable of offering perception into their experience. Utilising purposeful sampling strategy, participants were sought from Faculty of Management and Commerce at a HDI located in the rural areas of South Africa. The reason for this was that the Faculty of Management and Commerce enrols most of the students in many universities in SA. Furthermore, to address the perception that students from HDIs are underprepared for the labour market.

Participation was limited to persons completing their final semester of undergraduate study at the end of 2016. Students in their final semester of undergraduate were expected to

transit into the labour market. This allowed the researcher to follow the progress of the students. The data was collected on three phases, focus group, individual interviews and online discussions. In an extensive research that was conducted by Mason (2010) it was indicated that in 2 533 qualitative studies the median sample size was 28 participants. Levitt, et al., (2018) suggested that a sample size to be appropriate must adequately answer the research question, or data saturation has to be achieved. Therefore, as the sample size was determined as the study progressed. The details of the participants are outlined in the table below:

Table 8: Details of Participants

Name	First Round of Data Collection (October 2016)	Second Round of Data Collection (June 2017)	Third Round of Data collection (January 2018)
Participant 1	Student	Student (Post graduate)	PGCE Student
Participant 2	Student	Unemployed	Unemployed
Participant 3	Student	Student (Repeating)	Unemployed
Participant 4	Student	Student (Repeating)	Unemployed
Participant 5	Student	Student (Post graduate)	Unemployed
Participant 6	Student	Student (Repeating)	Unemployed
Participant 7	Student	Unemployed	Intern (Underemployment)
Participant 8	Student	Working - Underemployed	Working – Underemployed
Participant 9	Student	Student (Repeating)	Post-graduate
Participant 10	Student	Student (Post-graduate)	Post-graduate
Participant 11	Student	Student (Post-Graduate)	Post-graduate
Participant 12	Student	Unemployed (Failed)	Passed (Unemployed)
Participant 13	Student	Student (Repeating)	Post-graduate
Participant 14	Student	Student (Post graduate)	Unemployed
Participant 15	Student	Post-graduate	Employed – Family Business
Participant 16	Student	Student (Post graduate)	Unemployed
Participant 17	Student	Student (Post graduate)	Post-graduate
Participant 18	Student	Student (Post graduate)	Employed – Studied field

Participant 19	Student	Student (Post graduate)	Unemployed
Participant 20	Student	Student (PG)/Internship – Studied Field	Employed – Studied field
Participant 21	Student	Internship – Studied Field	Unemployed
Participant 22	Student	Unemployed	Unemployed
Participant 23	Student	Unemployed	Unemployed
Participant 24	Student	Student (Repeating)	Unemployed
Participant 25	Student	Unemployed	Unemployed
Participant 26	Student	Student (Post graduate)	Unemployed
Participant 27	Student	Student (Repeating)	Unemployed
Participant 28	Student	Student (Repeating)	Unavailable
Participant 29	Student	Student (PGCE)	Unemployed
Participant 30	Student	Student (Hons)	Post-graduate

Source: Author own creation

The following section explains how the interviews were conducted.

4.4. Interview Protocol and Research Time-Frame

A narrative inquiry methodology entails a multi-phase procedure (Clandinin, 2013). Focus group and individual interviews as well as online discussions were utilised as sources of primary data. This was done to focus on an interpretivist approach which favours subjective epistemology (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). In order to analyse the dialogue at a later stage, focus groups and individual interviews were recorded (Merriam, 2009). The interview recordings were transcribed soon after each interview. The data collection was spread over through three distinct phases. All the phases had different objectives as discussed below.

4.4.1. Focus Group Interviews.

The researcher utilised a focus group to collect data for phase 1. This method was chosen due to the social nature of the groups, which involve questions that are less structured to prompt "more spontaneous and emotional views than in individual, often more cognitive interviews" (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 150). A focus group allowed the participants, in a socially intermediated environment, to express their own perspectives and hear as well as consider the perceptions of others (Flynn, et al., 2018; Paterson, 2017). This method allowed participants to come together and share their lived experiences as well as share some solutions to the challenges they were facing.

Participants were grouped into small groups, and material that was stimulus was provided. The small groups were given an opportunity to discuss the outcomes of their discussion in the plenary session and were discussed by the entire group. The discussions, both for small and entire group, were audio recorded and transcribed. Focus group allowed the researcher to explore participants' thoughts, attitudes, experiences and ideas in relation to lived experiences and transition into the labour market. A focus group interaction between participants allowed for discussion and encouraged participants to intricate and rationalise thoughts. Thus, rather than what can be obtained in an individual interview, a focus group revealed more about participants' perspective and reasons for certain patterns of thinking (Plummer, 2017). The focus group session lasted for 2 hours. The discussion was continuous, and no interruptions were experienced during the discussion.

4.4.2. Individual Interviews.

Conversations were conducted with participants by keeping to the research questions and listening to their responses carefully. Through the conversations the researcher was able to gain a better understanding of the experiences of the students. The lived experiences of the participants vicariously unfolded during the interviews giving an opportunity to the researcher to gain an insight into the lived experience (Levitt, et al., 2018). The interviews made it possible for the researcher to enter and understand the participants' perspective (Vogl, et al., 2018). The purpose of the individual interviews was to gain a profound understanding of lived experiences of participants from their own perspective (Smit, 2017) without the influence of the group.

The most appropriate interviewing format that was chosen for this study is semi-structured. Semi-structured questioning provided a profound perspective of human reality meaning through the narratives of the participants. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) argued that semi-structured interview format comes "very close to an everyday conversation, but as a professional interview it has a purpose and involves a specific approach and technique. It is conducted according to an interview guide that focuses on certain themes and that may include suggested questions" (p. 27). In support of the above, questions were prepared for all the phases in an aim to explore and address the experiences of the participants.

The researcher approached the interviews with openness to the unexpected (Gramer, 2017). Such an approach encourages self-qualities which involved "being curious, sensitive to what is said – as well as to what is not said – and critical of own presuppositions and hypothesis during the interview" (p. 31). As the researcher, while interviewing, I operated on various metacognitive levels: interviewer and observer of other and self-reflection. This allowed room for perspectives to be expressed whilst ensuring the boundaries between profession identity and intersecting professional was maintained (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

These interviews were through face to face and telephonic interviews. As the participants had taken different routes after final year of undergraduate studies, the researcher employed telephonic interviewing method because of geographical location variances. Consequently, the researcher was able to remain in contact with all the research participants. However, as some of the participants were home, it meant that there were some interruptions during interviews. In order to avoid this, the participants were contacted prior to the interview to make arrangements of when to conduct the interviews. The challenge of interruptions was also a factor during face to face interviews that were conducted at the university residence with some of the participants. This was also rectified through making prior arrangements and the

interviews were also conducted between Mondays to Thursdays. This was chosen as an appropriate time because other students were attending lectures during that period.

Furthermore, due to a lack of English proficiency, sometimes the participants were unable to clearly express themselves. However, as the researcher understands the local language, the participants were encouraged to express themselves in their local language to avoid losing information because of inability to use English language.

4.4.3. Online Discussion.

The third phase focussed on developing professional identity, an online discussion allowed participants at different stages in life, after graduation, to jointly discuss perceptions on the key factors of employability. The discussion acted as a catalyst for participants to voice their perceptions in comparison to other individuals who were at different stages. Online discussions are regarded as a useful data collection tool for critical psychologists exploring naturalistic data on a phenomenon as they provide affluence of publicly available data (Jowett, Peel, & Shaw, 2011). Some commentators have argued that online self-disclosure echoes "a culture of increasing individualisation where people want to have their story told" (Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2008, p. 426) and thus less concerned about privacy. Van den Hoonaard & Van den Hoonaard (2013) argue that there is "a fair expectation" from the individuals who post "publicly available nonintrusive materials" online that "issues of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity have no currency" (p. 63).

An online discussion allowed individuals separated by work schedules, time zones and other activities to engage with each other (Saunders, et al., 2015). It also allowed individuals in different geographical areas to interact and share experiences and meanings without having to travel long distances (Wilkerson, et. al., 2014). Previous studies that have utilised online data collection technique argued for the richness of the data, feasibility of the method, reduction of human errors, informative and prompt responses from participants ((Bouchard, 2016; Jowett, et. al., 2011). Although online discussion has certain benefits to studies, it should not be nominated to expedite conventional methodologies, but rather should be chosen for its suitability to contribute to an understanding of a phenomenon (Bouchard, 2016). Online discussions should also be viewed as a "differential perspective" as it is "considered to be a new, different, complementary tool in qualitative researcher's tool box" (Graffingna & Bosio, 2006, p. 5). This was used to complement the focus group session and individual interviews to gain a further understanding of the phenomenon.

In previous studies it has been indicated that participants are encouraged to share more freely on their experiences on an online discussion (Seale, Charteris-Black, MacFarlane, &

McPerson, 2010; Synnot, Hill, Summers, & Taylor, 2014). Online discussions exploit on the increase of internet usage as a communication tool. It is comprised of two temporal contexts: synchronous and asynchronous methods. Synchronous methods entail real-time live chat and video imaging chats, while asynchronous methods involve forums, blogs and emails (Bouchard, 2016). This study selected asynchronous methods to allow participants in hard-to-reach areas to reflect and formulate responses in their own time (Wilkerson et al., 2014).

Measurement of variables

To understand events it is important to see them in context. The study did not focus on the influence of one variable on the outcome but explored the variables in order to understand the experiences as a whole not as separate variables. This allowed the researcher to understand how the experiences of the students evolved rather than focussing on the outcomes. As the study considered individual perspectives and multiple realities, many variables were brought up through the interviews. By not having a predetermined way of measuring the variables it allowed the researcher to look at the variables in their natural setting. The aim of the study was to understand the experiences of students as unified. The interpretivist approach is more concerned with the understanding of the experiences of the individuals in their own words. The interpretivist paradigm uses meaning, rather than measurement, focused approaches, such as interviews, which are reliant on the personal relationship that exists between participants and the researcher. Therefore, dependent and independent variables were not predefined as the focus was on understanding the meanings of human experiences.

4.5. Research Setting

4.5.1. Choice and Description of Interview Site.

Students that were enrolled with an HDI in a rural area in their final year of undergraduate studies were chosen as the participants for this research study. This university was selected as the research site as it was readily available and so were the participants. Furthermore, the researcher had studied at the institution for eight years, hence I was more familiar with the environment and had existing relationships with the participants which made it easier to gain their trust. To gain access to the students an ethical clearance was sought and obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University (refer to Appendix A). The ethical clearance to conduct research among final year undergraduate students was easily obtained. Data collection process started after obtaining an ethical clearance.

As the participants were final years, for the sake of not disturbing their studies, the focus group was conducted towards year end, soon after completion of their courses, before

commencement of their study week (week for before the examinations commenced). Due to environment familiarity, the researcher, with the help of my promoter, managed to utilise one of the times allocated for lectures for the focus group. Students were informed about the focus group through a group email to 105 students and interested parties were asked to participate in the same. A week prior to the focus group an email was sent to all the students who had indicated an interest in partaking in the study reminding them about the focus group. The focus group was conducted without any technical or any other glitches.

The participants were contacted again after about seven months for individual interviews. A lapse of time was allowed for change to occur in the lives of the participants. Some of the participants were telephonically contacted due to the geographical locations and others were interviewed face to face as they were still students. Telephonic interviews were adopted as they allowed the researcher to be in contact with participants that were no longer in the same area.

After a further seven months, an online discussion was established. As a second focus group could not be conducted as some of the participants had relocated, an online discussion was deemed an appropriate way to collect further data on the progress of the participants. An online discussion also allowed participants in different geographical locations to engage on the issue of employability and transition. Participants were able to contribute to the discussion anytime of the day or night. This allowed flexibility to those participants who were working or still studying. The three interview methods were chosen due to their flexibility and allowed the researcher to understand the experiences of the students in the transition phase.

4.6. Data Analysis

A variety of ways can be used to gather and analyse/re-present narratives. Throughout the study both data collection and analysis took place simultaneously due to the fluidity of the categories. The data analysis procedure that was adopted for this research was also utilised in previous narrative studies that focussed on understanding human experience (Chinyamurindi, 2016a, b, Harry, et al., 2017). In order to reconstruct the narratives a three-levels of meaning making strategy was followed.

First, each of the interview contents were summarised briefly and, thereafter a longer account of each of the participants was written down. The purpose of this was for the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants with regards to employability and transition. This was achieved by revising the interviews as well as listening to the aural recordings. As was advised by McCormack (2000, p. 221) all the narratives were

scanned for story "markers", which include, as outlined by Labov (1982), orientation, abstract, what happened, evaluation and coda. The main aim of this stage was to understand the emotions and details as described and explained by the storytellers. By doing so it allowed the researcher to answer the key question of each interview: "What kind of story is this?" (Thornhill, Clare &May, 2004, p. 188). The structural analysis that was utilised for this research is explained and evaluated in the table below.

Table 9: Summative explanation of Labov's Structural Analysis

Element	Explanation
Abstract	How does the participant story begin?
Orientation	Who/what does it involve, and when/where?
Complicating action	Then what happened?
Resolution	What finally happened?
Evaluation	So what?
Coda	What does it all mean?

Source: Chinyamurindi (2012)

The structural analysis allowed for the identification crucial events or critical moments of the narratives (Levitt, et al., 2018). The structure also assisted with identification of substantial transcript parts that may warrant further inquiry. This structure was also utilised in previous studies (e.g. Chinyamurindi, 2012; 2016a, b; Gramer, 2017). Not only did the structure allow for key events identification, but as well as the plot behind each of the stories (Chinyamurindi, 2012), as well as difficulties in personal life as a means of sense making (Maree & Beck, 2004). As the data that is collected through narrative interviews will be of large amounts, this structural analysis helped in sorting the data.

The researcher acknowledges the use of structural analysis has raised concerns (e.g. Gale, 2007). Given however the large amounts of data that was collected and time constraints, identification of key episodes in the narratives was made easier by applying Labov's structural analysis. The outlined frames help in understanding the individual narratives (Labov, 1982). The frames allow for the identification of themes that form the core of the research findings. Considering the nature of the data collected, structural analysis was beneficial in analysing the data.

The individual stories were not confined to one-time frame but involved understanding the experiences of the individuals in the past, present and future. Mishler (1986) argued that

through this structure an understanding of the difference between "the order to the told (chronological order) and the order of the telling (the ordering of events as represented in narrative" (p. 95) is developed. Structural analysis elements such as resolution allowed for an understanding of experiences as narrated by the participants in relation to time. Labov's structural analysis model was utilised to summarise the individual stories. An understanding of the stories was compiled based on the model.

On the second level of meaning-making narratives that were communicated by the participants were identified and their experiences with employability. Preliminary themes were outlined from each of the interview before cross-case comparison. As was purported by Chinyamurindi (2012) the responses were coded into meaningful categories. The objective was to discover how widespread the experiences of employability issues among the stories of the participants were. Data analysis final level involved analysing the content from the gathered stories and themes (McCormack, 2000). This was achieved by theme identification and using direct quotes from the interviews, using consistencies in the stories of the participants (Levitt, et al., 2018).

The view that qualitative research methods can identify casual relationships has been contested by various researchers. However, a significant number of qualitative researchers have accepted that the methodology can identify casual relationships. The findings of this study clearly show that there are causal relationships among various factors which play a significant role in determining graduate employability and university to work transition. Data analysis provided the researcher with casual relationships that existed between the phenomenon under study and the narratives of the participants. The participants' narratives addressed the questions of what was causing the production of unemployable graduates and how the students experienced the transition process. The causal relationships that were generated from the findings are presented in the discussion of findings section of this research.

4.7. Reflexive Issues in My Research

Reflectivity is an "awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process and an acknowledgement of the impossibility of remaining outside of one's subject matter whilst conducting research" (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999, p. 228). This concept urges us to explore how the involvement of the researcher has an effect on the research being conducted. Reflexivity comes in two types: personal and epistemological reflexivity. Personal reflexivity urges us to reflect on our own values, interests, experiences, beliefs and social identities on how they influence the research (Levitt, et al.,

2018). This also involves reflecting on how the research might have changed us as researchers and as people. Epistemological reflexivity involves us engaging in questions such as "how has the research question defined and limited what can be found? How have the design of the study and the method of analysis constructed the data and the findings? How could the research question have been investigated differently? To what extent would this have given rise to a different understanding of the phenomenon under investigation" (Willig, 2013, p.10). Thus, this reflexivity encourages us to reflect on the assumptions we make in the research process and how the assumptions implicate our research findings. Thus, the purpose of this section was to identify and declare an influence and how it might influence the research.

4.7.1. Motivation informing this Research Topic.

An individual's personal interests and inspirations are the main drivers for a person to assume a research study (Gramer, 2017). For the researcher those were the leading reasons for me to embark on this research on graduate employability and transition. The major influence came after completing my undergraduate studies not knowing which route to take. Being from a low socio-economic background I had never received any form of career guidance or counselling. But here I was having to make a decision that would have an effect on the rest of my life. I was not ready for the labour market as I had only received theoretical knowledge. However, through internet surfing I discovered that if I pursue further studies I could become an Industrial Psychologist, and that is how I ended up becoming an Industrial Psychologist.

Although this was in 2011, almost six years later, I found myself wanting to know more about the journey from university into the world of work and how it can be made easier especially for students from low socio-economic backgrounds who are not well exposed to the real world. Sharing stories with various students who also faced and/or facing the same challenges of the transition encouraged me more to explore more on the phenomenon. Furthermore, most university graduates that I know are unemployed or underemployed. Such a trend also made me realise that research in this area was of utmost importance to come up with viable recommendations.

4.7.2. Motivation informing the Research Method.

In the African context it appears that storytelling is the common way of sharing information. Most people in Africa grew up with their grandparents. These grandparents would sit with the children for long hours telling them stories about their lives such as war time among other things. As an African who grew up listening to such stories and folk tales, commonly

known as "ngano" in my home language (Shona), I found that storytelling is an interesting way to communicate information. It does not have any restrictions and people are able to express themselves well through stories that cannot be done through quantitative studies.

As a person who has gone through all the stages from university into the labour market, I had the privilege of communicating with many people. Most of these people have been unemployed graduates and some who were furthering their studies due to a lack of employment opportunities. All this communication was done through story telling. From the stories I could see that people had a lot to share but did not have a platform to share their struggles. Thus, I decided to use qualitative methodology to allow people to share as much as they could without being restricted as in quantitative studies.

The researcher, using stories, was able to explore deep into individual characteristics that governed how people behaved (Campbell, 2018). This was noted as the most notable limitation of quantitative methods. Qualitative studies allow researchers to understand the varying challenges that people face in the society (Vogl, et al., 2018). Qualitative studies apart from assisting researchers to understand the experiences of people from their own perspectives, also give people who have not been heard a platform to express their perspectives (Reddy, 2016). People tell stories in order make sense of their experiences and world.

4.7.3. Motivation for using Previously Disadvantaged Individuals.

Rawat (2017) stated that "the racial nature of poverty has not changed since democracy with inequality along racial lines having increased". Failure to address the racial inequalities has exacerbated race-based thinking and racism. The inequalities have led to racial tensions within the broader society of South Africa. Free market dispensation mostly benefits capital holders, however due to apartheid legacy, generally white people are the holders of capital in South Africa (Pennington, Mokose, Smith, & Kawanu, 2017). Furthermore, previously disadvantaged students demand that universities be decolonised, in order for academic courses to address the lived experiences and history of the particular students. Due to the perceived poor education quality, previously disadvantaged students face higher levels of unemployment or underemployment. These students are regarded as not prepared, privileged and traditional (O'Shea, 2015; Smit, 2012). It was thus important for the researcher to understand all these perceptions from the students' perspective, hence the focus on previously disadvantaged students.

4.7.4. Motivation in using Historically Disadvantaged Institution.

Due to apartheid policies higher education institutions have been divided into two distinct categories, namely; historically advantaged and disadvantaged institutions (van Broekhuizen, 2015). As a result, students from different type of institutions experience the labour market differently despite holding the same qualification. This study focussed on historically disadvantaged institution, despite the attainment of independence and attempts to merge the institutions, many disadvantaged institutions continue experiencing challenges such as education quality and socio-economic backgrounds (CHE, 2016; van Broekhuizen, 2016). Subsequently, employers perceive graduates from historically disadvantaged institutions, which is mostly Black students, as inferior to graduates from other institutions (Ntikinca, 2014). This research project aimed at understanding experiences of students while enrolled at this type of institution: What role did the institution have in their labour market outcomes? As many people have different perspectives of the institution, it is imperative to understand the perspectives of the students who are enrolled with the institution.

4.8. Ethical Issues

4.8.1. Informed consent.

All the participants were asked to sign a written informed consent form before participating in the study (refer to Appendix B). The informed consent form signatures acted as a condition for individuals to partake in the study. The form highlighted confidentiality issues, potential benefits that were known and research risks that were involved.

4.8.2. Research & Participant roles.

The roles of the participants as well as the researcher were addressed before commencement and duration of the research. It was important to clarify the roles before commencement of interviews. The researcher introduced himself as a Doctoral student at the University of Fort Hare and working on a study to understand the experiences of students with graduate employability and school to work transition process. The researcher enlightened the participants of the purpose of understanding their experiences as Black students studying at a HDI. The participants were able to relate to the researcher more as I am a Black student who also studied at the same university. Thus, good rapport was established with the participants which led to free sharing of experiences in the focus group, individual interviews and online discussions.

4.9. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methodology that was utilised for this research project. It also outlined the epistemological and ontological reasons for utilising the interpretivist paradigm and longitudinal qualitative research, as well as why it was deemed the best for this study. Furthermore, ethical issues were addressed in this chapter as it is important to ensure that the research project was in line with the ethical guidelines. Narrative inquiry was chosen for this study as it provided the researcher with an opportunity to gain in-depth understanding of lived experiences of the participants.

The findings of the research project will be outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter Five: Findings

5. Introduction

To explore the experiences and transition of students into the labour market, this study utilised a longitudinal qualitative research approach: narrative inquiry. The data was collected through three methods, namely; focus groups, individual interviews and online discussions with students from a HDI located in the rural areas of South Africa. From the analysis of all the discussions and interviews conducted six themes emerged. The themes will be discussed in this chapter. The first theme was socio-economic background of the participants. This theme explores the background of the participants. It explores the effects that socio-economic background had on the participants in enhancing and becoming employable. Due to the socio-economic background of the participants, most of the participants were exposed to poor education system, which makes up the second theme. The third theme that emerged was the process of employment search. This theme was affected by the participants' socio-economic background, education system and geographical location, which makes up the fourth theme. The other theme that emerged was social capital. The last theme was solutions adapted by the participants to enhance employability. By using these main themes, the researcher was able to explain the experiences of the participants. Although several sessions were conducted for data collection, it is important to note that the narratives from the participants produced similar themes at different intervals. The participants kept on raising the same issues on all occasions.

5.1. Summary of Findings

The narratives from the participants highlight that their socio-economic background was significantly affecting how they experienced higher education and labour market. Most of the participants were from poor socio-economic backgrounds (previously disadvantaged individuals), due to a lack of opportunities and resources they had to enrol for further studies at a HDI. Furthermore, most of the participants just enrolled for programs because of their availability. Participants had little or no knowledge of the qualifications they were enrolling for due to a lack of information.

In addition, being from poor socio-economic backgrounds, most of the participants were exposed to a poor education system from primary and secondary education levels, with the trend continuing in their university level education. Being enrolled with a HDI, participants felt that their qualifications were undermined in the labour market by employers as well as

students from other institutions (HAIs). Subsequently, the participants did not experience the labour market the same way as other students from other institutions.

Furthermore, the employment search was not made any easier with the geographical location of the institution. The participants felt that they were too far from the economic hubs (areas such as Cape Town and Johannesburg), as they were in a rural area, to enjoy any benefits of being a university student. As a result, the participants struggled to secure employment on completion of studies.

Most of the participants felt pressured to secure employment on completion of their studies to look after their families as they were from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. Families believed they had invested all they can in the participants, thus the participants had the responsibility of looking after their families because of the investment that was made in them. However, most of the participants were not ready for the world of work and were failing to secure employment due to the above explained points and factors such as geographical location as well as education system made it more difficult to enter the labour market.

Most of the participants however, although not being ready for the world of work, were not engaging in any individual activities to ensure that they developed required skills in the labour market. Therefore, most of the participants remained unemployed. Consequently, inability to secure employment led to increased frustration and stress. Although the data was gathered at different intervals using different data collection methods, the participants continued raising the same issues. The findings of the study will be explained further using illustrations from the narratives of the participants. Appendix C presents a summary of the findings and the illustrating quotes. Table 10 illustrates which initial codes resulted in the development of themes.

Table 10: Development of themes - Resultant themes from Initial Codes

Initial Codes	Resultant Themes
a) Poor families to fund studies; b) Pressure to find employment; c) Situation not good at home; d) Huge gap between the haves and have nots; e) Poor foundational education quality; f) Poor higher education quality.	**Perceived effects of socio-economic background**
	Perceived effects of the education system **Sub-themes**
a) Learning language in Primary and High school; b) Difficulties in expressing oneself in English.	Language
a) Unware of career options; b) Career advice from uneducated parents; c) Enrolment with higher education just to get a degree; d) Not knowing what to do.	Career counselling and guidance
a) Lack of practical component; b) Changing of programs; c) Decolonisation of the education system.	Curriculum design
a) No White people in unemployment discussions; b) Differences between HDIs and HAIs; c) Employers prefer graduates from HAIs; d) Undermined because of the institution.	Type of institution
a) Internships a new form of Black slavery; b) No White graduates doing internships; c) Blacks want to be employees; d) Exploitation through internships; e) Lack of work experience.	**Labour market experiences**
a) Lack of opportunities in the rural area; b) Motivate young people in the rural areas; c) Job application expensive because of the area	**Perceived effects of geographical location**
a) Lack of right networks; b) Most family members are unemployed; c) No connection with the relevant people; d) Lack of support from family.	**Availability of social capital**
a) Making job applications; b) Academic excellence; c) Inferiority complex d) Taking up any job.	**Student resolutions**

5.1.1. Perceived effects of the socio-economic background.

Many of the participants were from a poor socio-economic background and resided in the rural areas. Residing in the rural areas limited their exposure to good education quality from primary and secondary education levels. Participants expressed that the education system was affecting their employability not only at university level but on all low levels. Participant 10 mentioned that:

"*Our parents do not have the money to send us to those fancy schools. As a result, we end up learning at schools where English is even taught in Xhosa*".

As previously disadvantaged students, most of the participants had to settle for poor education quality. The participants were not well prepared for university studies while in high school as a result most of them were walking "*blindly*" due to a lack of knowledge and good preparation. In high school most of the participants were "*spoon fed*" information, consequently the participants struggle to be independent in their university studies. Participant 17 highlighted that:

"*In high school we were spoon fed, here we are given a map and you find the direction on your own*".

Furthermore, due to a lack of resources in the rural schools most of the participants only learnt to use technology when they enrolled for their university studies. Such factors also affected how prepared the participants were for university studies. As a result of such factors most of the participants indicated that they struggled to adapt to the university environment due to a lack of knowledge and adequate preparation. Participant 12 expressed that computers were not part of their schooling years and only learnt to use such when they started university studies.

"*Most of us did not go to schools that had computers, so we had to start learn at university how to use computers. We struggle to use computers because of such things as we do not know how to use them when we start our studies and we are expected to know how to use the computers by our lecturers who give us assignments to complete using the computers*".

As most of the participants were from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and based in the rural areas, many of the participants ended up enrolling with a university that also historically disadvantaged and based in the rural area. Many of the participants enrolled with such a university due to its easy accessibility and non-stringent entry requirements considering their previous schooling background which was of poor quality. This local university was

perceived as fit for the participants due to their backgrounds and convenience. Participant 6 explained that:

"Being a black student from a poor socio-economic background, I have no option but to enrol with a university like this. I do not have the funds to enrol with those top universities. Even my parents do not have the money. So, it's better for me to come and do my studies at a university that will be close by".

However, although some participants had achieved top grades to secure places with the "top universities" in the country, they were unable to do so not only because of financial constraints, but also because of *"inferiority complex"*. Participant 29 explained that although he had passed his matric his parents did not have the funds for him to apply for a place with better universities.

"I passed my matric well but because my parents do not have funds for me to study at other universities I had to enrol with this university. My parents told me it would be easier to enrol with a university that is close by to cut out other costs such as travelling".

For convenience sake most of the participants enrolled with the rural university. Further to that the university does not request for fees upfront before registration. Most of the students can write exams even without settling their outstanding fees but will not access their results. This was expressed by Participant 16 as follows:

"The advantage of registering with this university is that we can register without paying the whole fees upfront. Most of the time the university only requests for registration fee which will be affordable for most of the students. The whole year students can study without having to miss lectures because of non-payment of fees. This you cannot do it at universities such as Rhodes University who require their fees upfront".

Subsequently, being from a poor socio-economic background, participants were able to enrol with the University for such Perceived "Benefits*"*. This allowed the participants to study for the whole academic year while arranging for debt settlement. This is not the policy of the university, but the participants had found a way to manipulate the system for their own benefit. Most of the participants, as they were from poor socio-economic background, were able to secure funding through National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). The scheme caters for students from poor backgrounds at all the universities in South Africa. Thus, it was easier for the participants to obtain such funding considering their backgrounds. The scheme only caters for the undergraduate studies and it is a loan which students are expected to repay after securing employment.

As can be seen from the above, most of the participants had to settle for poor education quality from primary, secondary and university levels as they were poor socio-economic background and did not have the resources as well as means to have better education to prepare them for university studies as well as the open labour market. It is important to note that the poor socio-economic background is the foundation upon which all the other themes were formulated. All the challenges that the participants faced were linked back to the socio-economic status. Participants kept on pointing out that the events of the past still has a major effect on how they were perceived as individuals, graduates and employment seekers.

5.1.2. Perceived effects of the education system.
i.   Language

Most of the participants, as they were from poor socio-economic backgrounds, had to settle for poor education system. Not only in higher education, but from primary and secondary education levels. The participants started facing challenges from primary and secondary levels as they were taught all subjects in the local language (Xhosa). Many of the participants hailed mostly from rural areas. As such most of the participants found it difficult to adapt to the university environment. This is so as they had to learn another medium of instruction at an advanced age. This was expressed by Participant 23 as follows:

"*The other challenge is when you are moving from rural schools then you come here at university, the language becomes a problem because you are used to being taught mathematics in Xhosa, even the English is taught in Xhosa. So, you find it becomes a challenge for us as we have to learn how to write in English*".

Due to language difficulties participants ended up failing some modules which led to an extended period to complete a three-year qualification. Most of the participants failed some of the modules, in one of the participants' words "*I am repeating one module that I failed last year*". Constant conversations with the participants revealed that most of them had previously failed, and some were in the fourth or fifth year of the same three-year undergraduate degree.

As a result of poor language background, the participants failed to articulate themselves well during presentations at the university level as well as with other prospective employers and social networks who could not speak Xhosa. Participant 2 even went on to express himself in Xhosa to make his point clear. In his own words:

"*You know some of us find it difficult to do presentations in lectures. The lecturers want us to do the presentations in English, it's not easy my man, we struggle with that language,*

kunzima ukukhumsha (it's not easy to speak English). We have to dig deep to be able to express ourselves. Tell me then, how I can then express myself to employers in an interview?"

This trend was observed even during the focus group sessions and individual interviews as some of the participants ended up expressing themselves in Xhosa as they could not express themselves well in the English language. This clearly showed that if the participants were to go for an interview with employers that do not speak the local language they would struggle to express themselves in the interviews.

However, some participants had the privilege of being taught in English in their lower levels, hence did not face difficulties in adapting to the university environment. Most of these students however were international students, which meant that the problem was with local education system which was not preparing the students better. The participants reported that it was easier for them "*to manage the medium of teaching – English – as they had received great exposure in their young years".*

Not only did the language influenced how the participants experienced higher education, but also a lack of career guidance and counselling from a young age.

ii.   Career Counselling and Guidance

Most of the participants narrated that they had not received career counselling or guidance, in the lower schooling levels or at university level. Consequently, the participants made uninformed decisions about qualifications to pursue. Most of the participants expressed that they had "*never received any career counselling or guidance in their lives".* Many of the participants ended up registering for what was available due to a lack of information and knowledge. Participant 17 mentioned that:

"*I have never received career guidance in my life, and I think I need it. I do not know what to do with my career or life. I wanted to do accounting, but my matric results were not good enough that is how I ended up doing business management and industrial psychology. I am only doing this to have a degree".*

Many of the participants cited that, due to a lack of proper guidance, upon being rejected for certain programs they enrolled for other "*open"* programs. Participant 25 explained that:

"*In high school we did subjects such as physical science but when we came here we were put in the economics and business management and we had to study that".*

Many of the participants were only enrolling for various programs in order to obtain a qualification. Participant 14 explained that:

"In high school I was doing physics and agriculture, I applied for animal production, but they made it difficult for me here. I met up with the faculty of management and commerce staff, who took all my documents and did everything for me, I was only given the proof registration. I only released then that I was registered for a degree in business management. But I wanted to study so I just did it. It was not my first choice, not even my second. I wanted to do agriculture or engineering".

When making such decisions the participants *"lacked knowledge of the programs they were selecting and how they can utilise them in the future"* and also *"lacked knowledge of the labour market realities"* and how they would affect them in the future. Participant 20 explained that:

"I do not even think there are job opportunities in this field. When I look at the job adverts I do not see economics, I even said it last year that even if I pass I do not think I will have a job. I know someone who has done the same qualification where I am staying, it's been five years and he is not working. So, for me I am just studying for the sake of studying".

Participant 25 also expressed that the career guidance which they had received had come from their parents who were uneducated.

"Some of us enrolled with HE backing on the advice we received from our uneducated parents telling us that if you do this degree you get employed because they had seen other people who had done the same program and were in employment".

However, some of the participants were fortunate to receive career counselling and guidance, but only when they were in high school during their Grade 11 and 12 periods. The process however was not beneficial as most of them did not take process seriously. Participant 17 explained that:

"As I was still young I did not take the process very seriously, because of that the counselling process did not benefit me that much".

It is evident that most of the participants had not received any career guidance or counselling from a young age. The students were just walking in the dark, pursuing qualifications that were not their first option just for the sake of obtaining a degree. Most of them lacked knowledge about the qualifications they had enrolled for, but obtaining a degree was the major motivator. In addition, some regarded having a mere degree as a pathway to employment. Pursuing such a qualification however appeared as a major challenge on the employability of the participants as the programs focused only on the theoretical component. This was mainly due to how the curriculum was designed.

iii.   Curriculum Design

All of the participants were enrolled in the faculty of management and commerce which had a curriculum was designed in a way that did not allow the participants to gain practical experience while studying. The programs in the faculty mainly focused on the theoretical aspect of the qualifications neglecting the practical component. All the programs in the faculty of management and commerce did not have a practical training component. Most of the participants therefore believed that they were not ready for the world of work due to a lack of practical training. Participant 5 explained this by stating that:

"We have degrees (other qualifications) in which students are going for placement, but when it comes to us, as commerce students, you find that its difficult because there is no practical for us to practice the knowledge we would have obtained".

Many of the participants believed that most of the graduates from other universities were not ready for the world of work due to a lack of practical training. This meant that the problem was not only faced by the HDIs. Most of the participants cited that *"the education system was failing them as most institutions were focusing on theory only"*. Participant 7 expressed that due to a lack of practical training for university graduates, if he was an employer he would rather hire people that did not have higher education but have the experience. In the participant's own words:

"I would rather have people in my team who have not been to university because most recruiters are just hiring people by merely looking at the academic record, in most cases which we have high grades because of cramming".

However, some participants believed that although it is the system that is responsible for producing employable graduates, students had to contribute immensely in their development. Participant 27 explained that:

"Indeed, the system plays a part in the unemployment of individuals, but individuals should take 90% responsibility of the unpreparedness for the world of work. It is the individual's fault as they limit what they can learn. Skills such as being smart are never and will never be in the course outline."

The above perspective was shared by Participant 16 who cited that:

"The education system is only meant to open your mind. Nowadays everything is constantly changing, such as software and technology and there is no education system that can catch up to that".

From the above, it is evident that there were mixed feelings among the participants with regards to the role of the education system in preparing students for the open labour market.

However, despite mixed feelings, a lack of practical training in the curriculum was the main issue most of the participants highlighted. Due to a lack of practical training the participants had to search for other alternatives to enhance their employability.

Many of the participants initially cited that upon completion of their qualifications they would change programs to enrol for a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). The reason being that the program offered practical training and there were "*high chances*" of securing employment upon completion. Most of the participants were not only lacking practical skills to compete in the open labour market but were also "*scared*" to enter the world of work without the relevant skills. Thus, most of them planned to switch to PGCE to gain skills to offer in the world of work. The participants planned on switching programs not only for themselves but for their families in order to be able to support them financially as they were from poor socio-economic backgrounds. This was expressed by Participant 18 as follows:

"*We need to do the PGCE so that we can be placed and go back home and feed our families and take our children to school*".

Most participants wanted to enrol for this program not out of choice, but due to desperation caused by a lack of options in the world of work. Most of the participants believed that this program would have offered them financial freedom they were seeking. Furthermore, due to "*family pressure*" the participants could not look at other options but PGCE because of the hope of securing employment upon completion to look after their families.

However, this was not the case in the second round of interviews as most of the participant failed some modules of their previous programs and had to repeat the modules. Failing led to an extended period pursuing a three-year qualification.

Some of the participants managed to pass their qualifications and decided to further their studies with post-graduate studies. However, despite pursuing post-graduate qualifications the participants continued facing the same challenge of lack of practical training. Participant 15 explained that he enrolled for further studies "*hoping*" that he will receive practical training to enhance his chances of securing employment upon completion. Nevertheless, to his surprise, he continued receiving theoretical knowledge. In his own words:

"*I thought honours will have practical aspect, being taught what happens in the workplace. But there is no difference with undergraduate studies. We are only focusing on the theoretical aspect of the programme. We are not doing anything practical. I am not developing at all*".

Due to the poor designed curriculum most of the participants were not ready for the world of work. A lack of practical training made the participants "*scared*" to face the real

world. Not only did the participants had to deal with a poorly designed curriculum, but also had to deal with perceptions of outside people with regards to the institution they were studying with, as will be discussed in the following section.

iv.   Type of Institution

Most of the participants mentioned that the perceptions of the employers (labour market) was determined by the institution where an individual had studied. Being enrolled at one of the historically disadvantaged institutions, in the rural area, participants believed that they were "*undermined*" in comparison to students from other institutions when competing in the open labour market. Participants indicated that the *"level of knowledge"* between students from historically disadvantaged and advantaged institute was different. It was explained that students from historically advantaged institutes had better knowledge as compared to participants of this study. As a result, most of the participants perceived themselves as "*inferior*" in the labour market because their *"qualifications were not up to the required standard"*. Participant 6 expressed this view by stating:

"This rural environment has not made us ready, in terms of inferiority because this institution is Black dominated institution. You know when you take a student from Wits University and compare them with a student from here in Alice (rural area), when you compare this two you will find that your level of knowledge is different".

This was also mentioned by Participant 22 who indicated that:

"We have a passion for studying, because many people from other institutions are undermining our degree because we are studying at a Black university".

In support of previous theme of curriculum design, participants noted that other universities were offering practical training to their students which enhance their competitiveness in the labour market. Participant 13 expressed that they were not able to fairly compete with students from other institutions as they did not have practical skills to offer prospective employers. In his own words:

"Students from other institutions are engaging in practical doing work placements, here at UFH we are busy cramming doing the theoretical part only. Of which now when it comes to the field, theory part yes, it is needed but how do you do your job if you have never engaged in the practical part".

The participants were of the perception that studying at a historically disadvantaged institution was a disadvantage when competing in the labour market. As a result of "*inferiority complex*", the participants were of the opinion that they had to "*go through a lot of obstacles*"

to compete on the same level with other students in the labour market. Participants had various perspectives of their attempts to enter the open labour market which will be discussed below.

5.1.3. Labour market experiences

As mentioned earlier most of the participants, in the initial focus group, indicated they were not work ready, despite being in their final year (final semester) of their studies. During the initial focus group participants cited statements such as "*confused, blind, crossroads, feeling I have to move forward even though I do not even know where I am going, and right qualifications but lost, and lack of work experience.* Many of the participants had no idea where and how they could start to build their career as they were not well prepared during their university studies. Participant 13 narrated this as follows:

"Since I am doing business management I expected at least to have that knowledge, broader knowledge about business things and being able to apply whatever what I would have learned onto business. I don't have that now because it was very difficult for me to do a business proposal. For me I can say I am not (work) ready".

Consequently, participants were *"scared"* to expose themselves in the labour market due to a lack of practical knowledge. Participant 4 expressed this view by stating that *"it breaks my heart to spend sleepless nights and be asked for experience, which I do not have".*

The issue of experience was also highlighted by Participant 30 who cited that even though after securing an internship, the internship will only be for a limited period which does not really enhance an individual's chances of securing employment:

"You find that those internships last a maximum of one year, but you will never find a job opportunity that requires a one-year experience".

Participant 1 further expressed that work experience is an important factor in the open labour market. He had applied for several positions but had not received any job offer because he lacked work experience. Due to the inability to secure employment he continued to further his studies.

"I am applying for jobs but the feedback I am getting is that I am overqualified for the positions and I do not have the experience. I am now doing my post-graduate studies as I cannot just sit at home not doing anything".

However, some of the participants believed that a mere qualification was enough for them to secure employment. A mere qualification without any experience or practical training at university level was deemed adequate to secure employment. This was explained by Participant 18 as follows.

"I am ready because I will be qualifying as soon as I complete my studies. Obtaining a degree will make me ready".

This was despite not having received practical training during their studies. The participants viewed a mere qualification as enough for them to be employable. Most of the participants felt entitled to have jobs on completion of their studies. Graduates acknowledged the fact that the country was facing high youth unemployment rates but did not want to be categorised as youth because of their qualifications. Participant 12 explained during a recently held hire a graduate movement their intention was to inform the relevant authorities that they were different from other people because they had qualifications.

"We, as the movement marched to the Premier's office due to the high unemployment rate that is faced in the province. However, the Premier informed us that they already have organisations for young people that were unemployed. We believe that the offices are failing to understand that graduates are just a portion from the rest of the young people. Graduates acquired qualifications for the transformation of the province…As graduates we are not disputing the fact that we are youth, but our argument is that we are graduates, meaning that we should be obtaining employment".

It is worth to note that during their studies, most of these participants were not partaking in any activities to enhance their employability. This was mainly attributed to the environment (rural area) in which the participants were studying. The rural area did not provide opportunities for development for the participants due to limited or non-existent of employers. Consequently, upon attempting to enter the labour market on completion of studies, the participants faced challenges of a lack of work experience and skills to offer employers. Participant 12 explained this by mentioning that:

"The environment makes you ready and this rural environment has not made us ready. A Black student at Wits probably faces the same difficulties as a Black student at UFH, but the environment in which a Black student operates at in Wits is more enabling in terms of opportunities. Students at urban areas have more opportunities than rural area students".

Furthermore, being based in the rural areas the participants faced difficulties in applying for employment. Many of the participants highlighted that the job application process was way "*too expensive*" for them. Most of the participants relied on internet to search for employment. While residing at the university campus it was easier for the participants as they had access to free Wi-Fi. However, on completion of studies, participants had to face the realities of a poor socio-economic background as they struggled to make applications, due to a lack of finance to

access the internet and send applications. Participant 9 expressed this sentiment by explaining that:

"Job hunting is an expensive process. We have to pay for transport, make photocopies, fax, and e-mail and buy envelopes. For someone who is unemployed job hunting becomes expensive".

Moreover, the participants complained that process of job application had is tedious, especially when applying for positions in the government. One has to fill in the Z83 Application Form which is just a repetition of the information that will be on the curriculum vitae. Graduates when pleading with the relevant authorities to phase out the form.

After going through the expensive process, the participants would not get feedback from the employers. Most of these participants, as discussed above, were from poor socio-economic status as well as located in a rural area. Thus, they had limited access to the economic strongholds of the country. Subsequently, this became unfair for the participants who had to spend a lot of money to make the applications and this becomes demoralising. Participant 13 explained this predicament by stating that:

"Yes, I do make applications. I make use of the internet to make applications for various positions. However, I have not received any feedback yet from the employers".

As a result, most of the participants became unemployed or underemployed due to a lack of employment opportunities in the open labour market. Participant 5 expressed that as long as he can make a living he does not care if he is employed in the same field he studied. In his own words:

"It doesn't matter even if it's not in my field. As long as I earn a living from the work that I will be doing".

Due to a lack of employment opportunities most of the participants indicated that their qualifications were only for "*display*" in their homes as they were unable to secure employment or feedback from the employers. Participant 20 expressed this dilemma as follows:

"My qualification is just an ornament 'into yohombisa nje kwi stand o dongeni' (it is just a thing to display on the wall) let's hope the situation in SA will change after this conference (ANC Conference 2017), I also hope that new and potential graduates will find decent jobs in 2018".

However, although lacking work experience and skills, the participants felt that they were being "*exploited*" by the employers. This is because they believed employers were not remunerating them in accordance with their value (degree qualifications). As degree holders

they demanded an increment of stipends for interns. This was expressed by Participant 7 as being "*undermined*". In his own words:

"*As unemployed graduates we are saying the money given to us in internships is not worth the input we put, a first-year student holding an ESKOM bursary has a monthly allowance more than what graduates are paid in internships, we are tired of exploitation under the guise of experience, what experience? A one-year experience, while companies want minimum 3 years' experience*"?

The same sentiments were shared by Participant 4 who reiterated that:

"*It is very sad that you find we as graduates being given a stipend of R 3 500.00 per month. We are graduates and employers should pay us accordingly. The employers should stop exploiting us*".

Participant 11 further explained that interns are not being recognised for their efforts. Soon after the internships is complete the intern will lose their job and become unemployed, especially in the government sector.

"*At these government institutions you find that the senior people will be busy and send interns for training for things that they will not use, but the people that are using the systems and in need of the training are not attending the training. After six months of training, the intern will be back home unemployed, and this is mostly happening among Black children. It is very sad to see that even after years after democracy today we see many high Black young people seated here like they have no purpose in life*".

Because of the gap between a bursary and internship stipend, participants opted to enrol for further studies. In addition, due to a lack of employment opportunities, participants had to register for further studies. Participants explained that they were wasting money trying to secure employment which they were unable to secure. Participant 10 gave some "*statistics*" on the return of people to university in which she stated that:

"*Basically 20 people are applying for school because they did not get jobs this year hoping after two years they will get jobs. Because they are tired of wasting money on applying for jobs, so they believe being a student is a cheap way to live life*".

Many of the participants indicated that education was no longer the key to employment. It was cited that "*we thought education was the key, but clearly it is not*". Most of the participants were losing hope in the education system due to unemployment and underemployment. They are always asking the following question: "*God do you love the Black child*?" Most of the participants hoped to work within the government sector which is evident from most of the comments which were mostly related to the government such as "*there are*

people in the government system who were our parents' colleagues, but they are now our work colleagues, but they have reached the retirement age of 65 years. These people should leave the system to create space for new graduates".

Moreover, most of the participants were considering becoming employees rather than becoming employers (entrepreneurs) which is a problem mostly found among "*Black graduates*". Such initiatives of becoming entrepreneurs were affected by a lack of social capital and funding to pursue such endeavours. Thus, most graduates opted to search for employment. Participant 16 indicated that:

"People in the labour market undermine us because we come from poor socio-economic backgrounds, it doesn't mean if we come from poor families we are unable to think, and no we are able think outside the box. I am now searching for employment because I am unable to get my business off the ground. I am doing this to provide for my family, the people who made sure I obtained this education".

Due to failure to secure employment, most graduates are moving to other provinces in search of employment as the Eastern Cape (EC) province is failing to absorb and provide employment for the graduates. One of the participants alluded that "i*t is very sad to see people study in EC but later on move to other provinces because they are unable to secure employment in the EC province*". Being located in the rural area did not make life easier for the participants as they were unable to fully explore the labour market. In the next section theme of geographical location will be discussed.

5.1.4. Perceived effects of geographical location.

Most of the participants believed that as they were in a rural area were at a disadvantage in the labour market. Many of them mentioned that being in the rural had not "*made them work ready*". Major issue was that they had no easy access to the so-called economic hubs of the country where most of the companies operated. As a result, they were not able to "*scan*" the labour market for employment opportunities and areas in which they can develop as future employees. All this was caused by being in a rural area and being a black student. Most of the students explained that the rural environment was not enabling in their pursuit to be ready for the world of work. To worsen the situation, they were Black students in a rural area. Participant 9 explained this predicament during the focus group as follows:

"A Black student at Wits (Witwatersrand University) probably faces the same difficulties as a Black student at UFH, but the environment in which a black student operates

at in Wits is more enabling in terms of opportunities. Students at urban areas have more opportunities than rural area students".

Furthermore, as most of the participants were from poor socio-economic backgrounds, were not willing to go back to their homestead without anything to show that they are university graduates. Many of the participants had enrolled for higher education hoping they will be able to provide for their families, as well as encourage other young people in the rural areas (village) to *"work-hard in school"*. However, due to unforeseen circumstances of failing to secure employment on completion of studies, many of the participants felt discouraged about how their lives had turned out. This was mainly caused by high expectations that the students had when they enrolled for tertiary studies. Participant 18 explained this by stating that:

"Coming from a rural village where not many people attend university, let alone graduate, it is tough going back home with nothing to show for my time away. People that are supposed to look up to you start doubting themselves. They wonder why they should work hard in high school to qualify for tertiary studies and push to go to university if nothing will come of it. People expect you to come back with a fancy job title, a car and to be that (high class) person living that (high class) life".

The participants had high expectations which were not being met. However, despite challenges in securing employment and a lack of work experience, the participants were demanding an increment of stipends. But there were some participants who understood that acquiring work experience, before demanding a high salary, was important for the career development. Although they did not have high salary demands, they still demanded some form of gratitude from the employers as they were from poor backgrounds. Participant 23 cited that:

"I expect to get a salary, if they do not offer me a salary, they should at least pay accommodation and transport, because for me what is important is that I get the experience".

Failure to secure employment led to other participants being *"mocked"* by their families as graduates who are unable to secure employment. However, there are some who were supported by their families in the pursuit of better lives. In the following section social support structure theme will be discussed.

5.1.5. Availability of social capital.

Initially, most of the participants received support from their respective families to pursue tertiary studies. The families supported the students hoping on completion of the qualifications they would be able to secure employment. Furthermore, studying at university allowed the participants to be kept out of the streets where they would have been at risk of

turning into criminals, being murdered or incarcerated. Participant 17 explained that, although his grandmother was unemployed she supported him in his pursuit of tertiary studies. In his own words:

"I stay with my grandmother and she understands me. She supports me every time. All she wants is to see me in school. Being in school is safer than being in the world because we kept away from various things happening to the people who are not in school. So, my grandmother is happy for me".

As the participants were from poor socio-economic backgrounds most of them were funded by the NSFAS. This meant that the financial support component of the participants' lives was under control, but the emotional support still had to come from the family and friends. However, on completion of their qualifications, it appears most of the participants lost the family support structure due to failure to secure employment. Most of the family members expected the participants to work as soon as they completed their qualifications, but this was not the case with most of the participants. Subsequently, most of the family members ill-treated the participants. Participant 19 cited that her own mother was treating her as the house help because she was unable to secure employment. In her own words she described her situation as follows:

"My own mother treats me like a domestic worker who must do house chores 24/7, she mocks me of being unemployed, and constantly tells me how useless I am, and I have lost self-confidence. Parents send their kids to study with hopes that one day they will have a better future and maybe in return take care of them, but there is no manual with specific dates and time of when will one "make it". As friends and family members, let us not mock each other's miseries but rather support one another. No situation is permanent".

This sentiment was shared by most participants as their families wanted them to work on completing of their undergraduate studies. The families were left disappointed by the decisions that were made by the participants on failure to secure employment. Most of those participants who managed to pass their qualification enrolled for further studies. However, instead of supporting the participants in their pursuit, the families were furious and angry as they wanted the participants to work. Participant 16 expressed that:

"One thing I have realized is that majority of our people just thrive to get to college or varsity to finish their first degree and go to work. Family backgrounds also play a hand in this, I remember when I finished my Bachelor's degree and told my family that I want to pursue my further studies, my dad was furious and said I need to go look for a job, so I can support the family since they sacrificed all they got to get through my bachelor degree".

The perspective was also shared with many of the participants. Participant 27 expressed that:

"My father was shocked. He wanted me to look for a job. He kept on asking me so when you go back to school is it training for a job. He was very disappointed, but I had to do this. I want an honours degree to further my chances of getting employment".

Most of the participants cited that the parents (family) expected them to work on graduation. However, this was not the case with many of the participants. On failure to secure employment, most participants enrolled for further studies (post-graduate studies) of which the families were unable to fund. Participant 22 mentioned that:

"Back home our parents expect us to find work so that we can look after them. They do not have the money for us to continue studying".

Furthermore, the participants highlighted that they did not have social connections to manoeuvre the open labour market. Most of the participants outlined that for an individual to be successful in the open labour market they required social connections. However, many of the participants did not have such networks. Due to the lack of social networks the participants experienced the labour market differently from those who had social networks. Participant 3 explained this by stating that:

"I feel like resources and opportunities are there, but they are hard to get because of the connections that you need to have in South Africa.

Participant 6 who had managed to secure an internship with the government on completion of his studies cited that he had utilised social connections to secure the internship. This shows that social connections are important in the employment search of all the students who will be completing their studies. Participant 6 cited that:

"It was a word of mouth, because I met this other guy I know from around, and this guy give me information on how to apply for the internship, and he said we will take it from there after I had applied".

Moreover, due to *"inferiority complex"* and *"society backlash"*, most participants were *"scared"* and were unable to receive proper guidance from lecturers and relevant people in the open labour market. Participants were scared to form close relationship with the relevant people in fear of what the society will say about the relationship. This was so especially for girls who were mostly surrounded by male lecturers. They were unable to develop a relationship with the lecturer in fear of that people will say *"they are sleeping together"*. Hence, most of them remained deprived of relevant information about the labour market. Further to that, those same

participants who did not have personal relationships with the lecturers cited the same lecturers as their referees in their curriculum vitae.

Sadly, most of the participants had not been involved in any form of social networks which could have enhanced employment chances while at the university. In the follow-up individual interviews most of the participants mentioned that the only group that they had attended that discussed about employability was the focus group (initial stage of the data collection of this study). Because of the focus group a few of the participants managed to secure internships after using the information that was discussed in the session. This shows that students need social networks with employers, lecturers as well as other students to gain a better understanding of the labour market. Most of the participants lack knowledge of the open labour market and do not know how to approach the environment.

The above narratives show that the participants are facing several challenges in their pursuit to have careers. The challenges vary from participants' background to the education system. However, despite all the cited challenges it is important to understand what the participants are personally doing to increase their employment prospects in the labour market. The next section will investigate the resolutions that were adapted by the participants in the midst of all those challenges.

5.1.6. Student Resolutions.

The participants had to play a role in enhancing their employability. Due to limitations from elements such as institution and geographical location, the participants had to make decisions to ensure they would be employable upon graduation. However, most of the participants, during their final year of study, did not engage in any activity to improve their chances of securing employment. Many of the participants were only focusing on completing the theoretical aspect of their qualifications. Participant 28 explained that:

"I plan on starting to apply for jobs when I finish my studies. At the moment I am only studying I am not doing anything else to enhance my employability".

Further questioning to why they had not yet started searching for employment none of them could provide an explanation of such behaviour. This shows that the participants were only reliant on other role players for their personal development. They were unable to take up initiative for their personal development.

Some of the participants enrolled for post-graduate studies in hope of increasing their employability chances as they had not acquired relevant skills in their undergraduate studies. However, they continued succumbing to the same challenge of theoretical knowledge. Despite

being enrolled for further studies the participants continued just focusing the studies without taking any initiative to increase their employability. Participant 5 explained that:

"Besides studying I am not doing anything to enhance my employability, I am not even tutoring. I do not want to apply for a job now because I am afraid I will not be able to manage work and studies at the same time".

On other hand, some of the participants who were enrolled for post-graduate studies had become student tutors at the university. By becoming a tutor, the participants explained that it was a way to gain presentation and communication skills as they were required to deliver tutorials. Some even mentioned that being a tutor would help them overcome fear of standing in front of many people. Participant 18 expressed this by stating that:

"I am a tutor, so I am trying to get myself familiar with presentations, because it helps me to stand in front of the students. Maybe from that I will lose that fear of talking in front of people. Besides that, I am not doing anything else".

However, besides being tutor the participants were not involved in anything else to ensure they would be employable upon graduation. Most of the participants who had enrolled for further studies lacked initiative on their part.

On the other hand, there were those participants who did not manage to further their studies or secure employment soon after graduation. Most of these participants were not also involved in any activities to enhance their employment opportunities. All they could do was to apply for several vacancies. For those who were fortunate enough to have internet access were just submitting their CVs on different recruitment websites hoping to secure employment or even an interview. It is important to note that besides job applications the participants remained passive. Consequently, the participants became frustrated and stressed as they were unable to secure any type of employment. Participant 3 explained that she had become relatively confused with her situation that she was even considering becoming a sex worker. In her own words:

"I have become so frustrated since I completed my studies. I do not know what to do, I am no longer in school, at the same time I do not have a job. I am applying for jobs and I am not getting any responses. I am stressed and frustrated. Worse at home they do not have money for my graduation. I am thinking of becoming a prostitute, I do not know what to do. I am desperate".

A few of the participants had managed to secure employment, but they were underemployed. They had to settle for underemployment because of desperation due inability

to secure employment. Participant 6 expressed that she had taken up a job offer because she needed the money.

*"It's a not a job I studied for, I am just doing it for the sake of money until I get a job that I studied for. I am still applying for other jobs. I am using the internet to search for jobs as it is easier. However, I am scared to put up my profile on LinkedIn (Professional network) because I have seen some profiles that have great grades for their courses than I do (*Inferior*)".*

It appears that inferiority complex continued affecting the participants as they were afraid to even market themselves on social networks. Furthermore, many participants highlighted that location was not enabling to search for ways to enhance employability. Studying and coming from a rural area was major concern that the participants raised. Some of the participants explained that they were willing to search for vacation work but due the location they were unable to secure such employment. As a result, the participants ended up being at home. Participant 16 explained that she was afraid to join the labour market because of a lack of skills but could not do anything about it because of the location.

"Maybe if I could get a weekend or holiday job then start there, maybe I can get over the fear. Just a week to experience how is it like in the workplace. Then maybe I will be able to say I want to go to the workplace. But now it's just that here in Alice you cannot find any weekend jobs. When its vacation and we are home it is another story. For me being home means being home, my mum does not really want us to work during the vacation and the town where I am from (Tsolo) it is more like Alice you cannot really find any jobs".

A few of the participants were trying to build up social connections in order to secure employment or internships. Participant 5 expressed that she had to travel to Cape Town just to develop some social connections. She believes she can only be able to secure employment through these social networks.

"During the past holiday I had to some of my friends in Cape Town. One of my friends was launching a workshop club so I had to be there for their induction ceremony. I was supposed to meet a manager for a hotel to organise me a job in a hotel in the background, unfortunately I could not meet him. I met up with the manager of retail shop and he said he was going to see what he can do. Others were attorneys, they said they cannot really help me, but if they meet someone they will let me know. I am trying to create social networks, because without them I cannot make it".

From the above it is evident that most of the participants were and/or are not engaging in any activities that will lead to employment in the future. Most of them were and/or are only submitting various job applications, of which most of them they are not receiving feedback on

the applications. As much as the other factors, such as education system have an effect on employability, most of the participants were not taking an initiative to ensure that they could become employable. Consequently, most of the participants remained unemployed or underemployed.

In the following chapter, the results will be discussed in relation to the existing literature.

Chapter Six: Discussion of the Results

6. Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to explore student transition and experiences from tertiary education into the labour market and to understand how these transitions and experiences manifest in a context of high unemployment. The research sub-questions, in relation to the research objectives, that were addressed by the findings are as follows:

- *What were the students' transition and experiences from tertiary education into the labour market?*

- *How were the students preparing to enter into the labour market during their last quarter of undergraduate studies?*

- *What were the graduates' activities to obtain employment during their first year in the labour market?*

- *How can the policy-makers intervene to enhance employability of university students?*

The themes that were identified in the previous chapter will be used to address the above research questions. It is important to note that some of the generated themes addressed more than one question as there was an overlap. The discussion of findings will be in relation to the existing literature. The findings of this study also indicated casual links between factors which will be discussed. By addressing research questions suggestions were made on how to improve graduate employability and the process of university to work transition. The theoretical, methodological and practical contribution to knowledge from the study findings is also identified. A framework is suggested from the findings. The research limitations, future research suggestions and conclusion will be discussed.

6.1. Discussion of Main Findings

6.1.1. What were the students' transition and experiences from tertiary education into the labour market?

Perceived effects of the socio-economic background.

Participants enrolled in higher education in the hope of securing employment upon graduation due their socio-economic background. Many of these participants had been raised up in poverty and the families invested in their children hoping that these students will scourge their previously disadvantaged backgrounds. Participants had better access to higher education due to initiatives to redress past imbalances. However, despite increased access to higher

education the individuals continued living in poverty due to limited opportunities in the labour market. Like in other studies (e.g. Archer & Chetty, 2013; Jackson, 2013; Magagula, 2017) this study shows that many people from disadvantaged backgrounds are pursuing higher education in the hope of securing employment after graduation. The findings of this study also confirm the findings by Lourens (2016) that families invested in the education of the participants expecting them to make the transition into the labour market soon after completion of an undergraduate degree. Hence, the experiences of the students were not entirely up to them, the families play a critical role in most of their decisions whether to further studies or search for employment.

The country is still plagued with the legacy of apartheid. There is a still a huge gap between the haves and have nots. The country's socio-economic status is significantly divided and unequal. Several policies have been formulated by the government, but disadvantaged individuals continue living in poverty. Disadvantaged individuals are failing to obtain the best education due to their low socio-economic status. The students were failing to make the transition into the labour market because of being located in the rural areas. The families are poor and cannot afford to send their children to schools and universities in urban areas for more exposure. Consequently, most of the participants remained unemployed after graduation. This is in support of previous findings which indicated that the legacy of apartheid continues playing a significant role in the labour market outcomes (CHE, 2018; Maila & Ross, 2018; Pennington, et al., 2017). Because of the inequalities that continue persisting in the country, many disadvantaged graduates are under-prepared for university and labour market which skews the expected outcomes. The students were of the perception that their experiences were negatively affected by the legacy of the apartheid and were failing to make sense of the experiences.

However, in other previous studies it is indicated that graduates from disadvantaged communities make sense of the alleged disadvantaged context and utilise resources and social networks to thrive in school and enrol for higher education (Norodien-Fataar, 2016; O'Shea 2015). This is in contrary to the findings of this study which suggest that the participants were failing to make sense of their disadvantaged backgrounds. The findings are in contrary as the previous participants were based in urban areas where there are many opportunities and individuals were able to make sense of their backgrounds. The participants of this study did not have any other resources to use in the labour market to secure employment. Being from rural areas the participants lacked or had limited resources to use to navigate the labour market.

Moreover, the findings of this study show that the participants, despite their backgrounds, were concerned about employability which was expressed through their fear of

entering the labour market without the skills. The findings are in contradiction of suggestions by El-Feekey and Mohammad (2018) who pointed out that students from low socio-economic backgrounds might not be thinking of employability before graduation. However, it is important to note that even when the students were thinking of employability, they were not proactive to develop these skills and the reason being the geographical location which was not enabling. A lack of knowledge and resources resulted in an inability to improve employability. This is support of previous findings which indicated that due to the adversarial living and social conditions many Black graduates continue facing, evident by rate of unemployment, high unemployment in the labour market (Mmesi, 2015, Oluwajodu, et al., 2015; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). Although the environment is not enabling, it should not be perceived as a barrier not to be proactive in developing employability skills. The transition and experiences of the students was affected by a lack of skills and fear of the unknown.

The research findings point out that the students were highlighting their socio-economic backgrounds as a barrier to their transition into the world of work. This is similar to previous studies (e.g. CHE, 2016; Crawford, et al., 2016; Ismail, 2017; Magagula, 2017; van Broekhuizen, 2016) which indicated that the labour market experiences were determined by the socio-economic status of an individual. Taking cognisance of the several policies that have been formulated by the government, one can assume that these participants have a sense of entitlement. The students believe that because of their previously disadvantaged backgrounds, by attaining degrees they should be able to secure employment without the required employability skills. The findings of this study indicate that the background of the students played a significant role in how the graduates prepared to enter the labour market and how they experienced the transition process into the labour market. The background determines the university with which an individual enrols with, study program and labour market outcomes. Many participants were from poor socio-economic backgrounds and were exposed to poor educational quality which affected their employability. The rise in the youth population has resulted in socio-economic challenges. Moreover, in addition to an increase in youth population, the country has to deal with the education system which is of poor quality and irrelevant.

Perceived effects of the education system.

As discussed earlier, many of the participants, owing to their backgrounds, were exposed to poor foundational education, i.e. primary and high school. The schools in disadvantaged communities are under-resourced. The students were taught all subjects in the

local language and were not properly guided on what subjects to choose while in high school. The students thus found it difficult to cope with higher education because of a lack of preparedness while in high school. Being from poor socio-economic status the students were unable to attend better schools. In line with previous findings, this current study showed that poor foundation education was one of the major causes of failure to develop employability (Bhorat, et al., 2016; Chinyamurindi, 2016b; Walker & Fongwa, 2017; Van Broekhuizen, 2016). A lack of proper foundational education acted against the participants in how they coped with higher education demands which was detrimental to the development of employability skills. The students struggled to make a transition from high school to higher education, which also affected the transition from higher education into the labour market because of lack of preparedness.

From the findings it clear that the students were unable to enrol with better schools or HAIs. This was mainly because of the poor socio-economic background and sub-standard foundation education. Participants developed an inferiority complex due to a lack of confidence in their education and the type of institution where they studied (i.e. HDIs). As a result, the participants believed that they lacked the skills to compete with graduates from HAIs regardless of race. This is consistent with what has been found in previous studies which argued that graduates from HAIs are considered as more competent than graduates from HDIs (Kundaeli, 2015; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). This further supports findings by Ntikinca (2014) and Mncayi (2016) who suggested that graduates from HAIs were better equipped for the labour market than graduates from HDIs. The findings also concur with previous findings which suggested that the quality of foundational education (basic and high school) is poor (Maila & Ross, 2018; RSA DHET, 2018). A poor-quality education resulted in the participants being unable to prepare for the labour market and the university to work transition process was also negatively affected. The participants were stuck in the transition phase because of a lack of proper preparation to enter the labour market.

South Africa is regarded to be having some of the best universities in Africa, however the quality of the training and education system remains poor (Burger, 2016; Schwab, 2012, 2018; Jansen, 2017; Mlatsheni, 2014; Spaull, 2013; 2015). A poor education system is the heart of graduate unemployment in the country. Consequently, many people are now just studying for the sake of studying. Many individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds have lost hope and trust in the education system as they believe that it is not beneficial to enrol with higher education if one later fails to secure employment. This is in support of previous findings (e.g. Baldry, 2016; Kraak, 2015) which outlined that perceived benefits of higher education are on

a decline as most people, especially Blacks, remain unemployed resulting in an intensification of poverty among the Black families. Indeed, the education quality is poor, but the individuals are not searching for methods to develop themselves whilst enrolled as students. This clearly shows that the students are not critical thinkers and not problem solvers. It is evident that they lack generic skills which required in the labour market. As a result of a lack of employability skills, the experiences of the students in the labour market are mostly negative.

Labour market experiences

The graduates believed that because of the degrees which they had obtained they were entitled to employment than those who did not have the degrees. This again relates back to the policies that have been formulated which create a sense of entitlement in the labour market. However, such expectations cause a burden on graduates especially when the families financially look up to them soon after completion of studies (Kinash, et al., 2016). Such expectations caused a burden as most of the participants of this study struggled to secure employment. A qualification is important in the job market (Bhorat, et al., 2016), however an individual requires knowledge and skills in a particular domain to enhance employment chances (Lourens, 2016; Shivoro, et al., 2018). A mere qualification is not enough to make the transition into the labour market. Most of the participants were only able to produce a qualification without any skills to offer prospective employers.

The findings of this current study indicated that some of the participants believed that a mere qualification was enough to secure employment. The graduates invested in education in the hope of securing employment soon after graduation. However, the graduates lacked employability skills to compete in the labour market. These findings are in support of previous studies that indicated that a qualification alone is no longer enough to secure employment (Archer & Chetty, 2013; Van der Berg & Van Broekhuizen, 2016). Despite investments in education graduates from previously disadvantaged backgrounds struggled in the labour market (Altman, et al., 2014; Crawford, et al., 2016; Holmes, 2013a) because of a lack of employability skills. Unemployment and underemployment remains a major problem among graduates from previously disadvantaged backgrounds which is being caused by factors such as poor education quality and geographical location.

Despite lacking the relevant skills, participants had unrealistic expectations of stipends. Participants expected higher stipends because of a mere a qualification that they had obtained. The participants expected to be remunerated on a higher level as they were degree holders despite the fact that they did not have the relevant work experience and skills. These findings

are consistent with previous studies which indicated that graduates had unrealistic expectations (Kouh, 2013; Maharaj, 2015; Mlatsheni, 2014; Mncayi, 2016). Such perceptions are intensified by researchers like Hull (2016) who state that most South Africans are guaranteed high earnings after graduating. Furthermore, several policies that have been formulated give a sense of entitlement to employment after graduation. Employers are not looking at the qualification but the skills that the individuals will be bringing to the company and the skills are lacking among graduates.

It is no surprise that because of a lack of job search skills and failure to secure employment, the participants became frustrated, discouraged, stressed and depressed with the employment search process. The participants expected a smooth transition into the labour market after graduation which was not the case. As a result, some of them were discontinuing the employment search process due to failure to secure employment after various unanswered applications. Moreover, female graduates were contemplating in engaging in prostitution to earn some income because of poverty. The findings are similar to findings of previous studies (e.g. Edayi, 2015; Jolly, 2016; Lane, 2014; Maswanganyi, 2015; Mlatsheni, 2014) which indicated that failure to secure employment resulted in the psychological problems and other activities such as prostitution. Discouragement results in propagating intergenerational poverty among poor families as well as intensifying societal inequality (Baldry, 2016; Crawford, et al., 2016; Graham, et al., 2016). Like in previous studies (e.g. Artess, et al., 2017, Axelrad, et al., 2018; ILO, 2018) findings illustrate that the graduates were ending up being underemployed due to a lack of employment opportunities. Due to a lack of employability skills and desperation to provide for families, graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds were underemployed.

The findings also show that the participants lacked self-confidence, self-efficacy and self-esteem which was attributed to race and type of university where the qualification was obtained. The participants believed that they were inferior to the other races and people who had studied at HAIs. Consequently, the participants were of the opinion that they would not secure employment because of who they are. This is in support of other studies (CHEC, 2013; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016) that indicated that Black graduates were struggling in the labour market because of their race and university studied with. Furthermore, the findings support the notion that graduates from HDIs are perceived as incompetent (Ntikinca, 2014; van de Rheede, 2012). The findings of this study also highlight that the graduates were losing hope because of the struggle which they faced in the labour market.

Unsurprisingly, due to the high unemployment rates in the country, participants who managed to secure employment reported that they were being exploited. The graduates are so desperate for employment that they are prepared to engage in any activities as long as they can make some living from the job. Of the participants who managed to secure internships they ended up performing menial jobs and there was no guarantee of permanent employment. As a university qualification alone is not attractive anymore, participants were forced to engage in these non-beneficial internships to improve their employability. However, as there is no guarantee of employment after completion of the internships, the graduates become redundant and the acquired skills become obsolete due to the ever-changing labour market demands. These findings corroborates with previous studies (e.g. Campbell, 2018; El-Fekey & Mohammad, 2018; Reddy, 2016) that graduates were desperate in the labour market.

Nonetheless, involvement in such activities however leads to the development of social capital which influences success in the labour market. By acquiring work experience an individual develops their career identity, human and social capital. This is similar to previous studies (e.g. Botha & Coetzee, 2017; Forsythe, 2017; Tomlinson, 2017) which indicated that graduates had to be involved in these activities to enhance their employability. However, because of expectations, graduates were unwilling to engage in these internships which they labelled as exploitation.

Like in the findings of other studies (e.g. Baron-Puda, 2018; Jonck, 2017; Ismail, 2017) factors such as poverty, economic downturn, skills mismatch and a lack of work experience affect the employment search of young adults in South Africa. The success of students is determined by issues such as a lack of career guidance, schooling, social capital and geographical location which are directly linked to poverty. Previous studies (e.g. O'Connor & Bodicoat, 2017; Ndibunza, 2016) indicated that internships were source of confidence when applying for employment in the future. However, the findings of this study suggest that the graduates believed they were being exploited in the labour market as cheap labour and had not developed any confidence from these internships. Regardless of the perceived benefits of the internships it appears that the graduates are being exploited in the job market.

Perceived effects of the geographical location.

Findings show that the geographical location played a major role in how the graduates experienced the labour market. Most of the graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds are trapped in secluded locations with no easy access to the labour market mainly due to the legacy of apartheid. Such exclusions result in the graduates facing difficulties when searching for

employment. The rural areas have high unemployment rates as compared to urban areas due to a lack of employment opportunities. The graduates lacked financial resources to apply for employment in other well-developed provinces. The findings are in support of previous studies (Graham & Da Lannoy, 2016; Mncayi, 2016; Ranchhod & Mlatsheni 2016) who suggested that people in the poor areas struggled to make the transition into the labour market. People in the urban areas have better chances of securing employment than the ones in the rural areas. This has resulted in an increase in rural to urban migration in search of employment.

The geographical location thus plays a major role in determining the graduate labour market outcomes. Furthermore, due to limited or non-existent labour market exposure in the rural areas, graduates are unable partake in voluntary work to increase their skills to enhance their employability. Most graduates therefore remained unemployed due to limited employment opportunities in the rural areas. Being unable to secure employment, the participants needed social support from families and friends during the studies and in the transition process.

Availability of social capital.

Many of the graduates from previously disadvantaged backgrounds lack social capital to assist them to navigate the labour market. Findings suggest that graduates from poor families lacked industrious social capital, i.e. social networks, which resulted in a lack of employment information, employment connections, underemployment and unemployment. This so as many people from disadvantaged backgrounds lack such family social networks as the adults in the household will be unemployed or the students will be the first in their families to obtain a tertiary qualification. Social networks make the process of searching for employment easier. Many of the graduates owing to their poor backgrounds and a lack of social networks struggled to enter the labour market. These findings are in support of previous findings which state that poverty and a lack of social networks inhibits the information that graduates can obtain and that graduates from poor families are likely to remain in the poverty cycle (Crawford, et al., 2016; Kruss, 2016; Verhaeghe, et al., 2015; Walker & Fongwa, 2017). Social capital allows the graduates to access the jobs which are not advertised however many graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds do not have such social networks.

The other most critical variable when exploring the transition process of graduates is the family. The family members weakened the transition process due to limited support of the graduates. A lack of support resulted in feelings of worthlessness due to their inability to secure employment. Many of these participants were from families that were not educated or

employed hence it made it difficult for the family to assist the graduates. Similar to previous studies (Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017; Theron, 2016) which indicated that poor families were unable to assist the graduates during the transition phase. The participants knew the transition implications on family. As a result, most of the decisions they made about their careers was with the family in mind as they wanted to assist their families. This is in contrary to findings by Hendricks (2014) who indicated that individuals may overlook transition implications on family. This is probably because the participants of this study were from poor socio-economic backgrounds hence they wanted to assist their families.

The family plays a major role in the transition process as they can encourage or discourage an individual. Due to the possible depression and stress that may be caused by the transition process, it is important that an individual has a strong social support structure. The way in which young people adjust to the adversities of life or show resilience is determined by the social and intergenerational circumstances (De Jong et al., 2015). Young people are thus not solely responsible for their response to life's challenges. The achievement of life outcomes that are positive by young people is determined by social capital stakeholders which include cultural leaders, teachers, parents and policy makers (Lourens, 2016; Mandyoli, et al., 2016; Tomlinson, 2017; Reddy, 2016). These stakeholders have an onus of ensuring that young people have the adequate resources to deal with the life's challenges. Like in Theron (2016) findings illustrate that the graduates lacked family support and were ill-prepared for HE as they were the first to attend HE in their families. In order to enhance the employability, graduates have to take responsibility for the development of their own graduate identity that they can market to prospective employers. The following section addressed what did the students do to enhance their employability and develop an identity before graduation?

6.1.2. *How were the students preparing to enter into the labour market during their last quarter of undergraduate studies?*

Perceived effects of the education system

The quality of education obtained by an individual determines the success of the graduates in the labour market (Ntikinca, 2014). Many of the participants went through a poor schooling system which had an effect on how they developed as students as well as employment seekers in the labour market. This is comparable to Rogan and Reynolds (2016) who suggested that a poor schooling system had a significant effect on employment prospects especially for Black students. The legacy of apartheid continues to negatively affect the education sector as well as the challenges and stresses posed by poor socio-economic

backgrounds have an influence on the education system in South Africa (CHE, 2016; Lebeloane, 2017). Like in other studies (Edayi, 2015; Maila & Ross, 2018) findings of this study illustrate that students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds lack English proficiency. Many of these students fail to secure employment due to linguistic limitations. Linguistic difficulties resulted in the participants taking longer to understand the concepts of their studies and led to a repetition of studies. It is a major problem to adapt to the university environment coming from a school where the language of instruction was local language.

Several previous studies appear to be in consensus that the type of university determines the labour market outcomes (e.g. Crawford, et al., 2016; Kundaeli, 2015; Van Broekhuizen, 2016). The studies concur that employers select their candidates from the universities with good reputation. Thus, graduates from institutions that are not well recognised by the employers are screened out in the early stages of the recruitment process (Holmes, 2013a). This would have been the case with the participants of this study as they did not receive any feedback from the employers. Many of the participants were of the perception this was caused by the educational quality that was offered by HDIs. As a result of such perceptions, the participants were left discouraged to continue applying for employment in the labour market. The participants lacked resilience to continue searching for employment. The study findings are in support of previous findings (e.g. Matsilele, 2015; Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017) which alluded that continued unemployment led to discouragement. Although there is a perception that employers prefer graduates from HAIs than from HDIs, graduates from HDIs appear to be unprepared for the labour market.

Such unpreparedness was mainly caused by a curriculum that focused on theoretical component neglecting the practical component of the degree programs. Graduates cannot be competitive in the labour market through theoretical knowledge as it is not enough alone. A qualification is unquestionably important but without necessary work experience and skills in the labour market, a qualification becomes a mere paper. The participants lacked the necessary skills because of how the curriculum was designed. The way that the curriculum was designed made it difficult for the students to obtain employability skills. The findings of this study, similar to previous studies (e.g. Artess, et al., 2017; Baron-Puda, 2018; Hooley, 2017; Selvadurai, et al., 2012; Walker & Fongwa, 2017), calls for the revision of the curriculum to include a practical component for all university qualifications.

As a result of a lack of work component in management and commerce qualifications the participants enrolled for PGCE as a way to increase their employability and chances of making the transition. The findings reveal that the participants enrolled for this qualification

not because of choice but because of poverty. This qualification was regarded as an easy way to secure employment because the government placed the students at different schools. However, previous studies (Edayi, 2015; Ntikinca, 2014; Walker & Fongwa, 2017) indicated qualifications in the field of education had poor employment prospects than commerce qualifications. Such uninformed decisions by the participants potentially led to unemployment (Van Broekhuizen, 2016). A lack of knowledge about the qualifications and the labour market requirements affected how the employability skills were developed.

Most of the participants called for the incorporation of the practical component into programs, provision of assistance to students for easy transition between university and work. Nel and Neale-Shutte (2013) indicated that programs should have a work component as a compulsory aspect as well as that first-year students should be advised about the labour market trends and career guidance should be a must for students. However, this was not happening at a HDIs. Many of the participants had not received any career guidance or advice about the labour market or which qualifications to pursue. Comparable to Walker and Fongwa (2017) findings of this study show that most students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds enrolled in higher education simply to obtain degrees and improve their chances of employment without relevant knowledge about the qualifications.

The findings of this study thus indicate that any changes of pedagogy and university curriculum changes will not yield positive outcomes in human capital development as long as the society is marred by inequality and injustice. The education system is not preparing the students well enough for the labour market. Students graduate from high school and university without the relevant skills. The students failed to develop employability skills owing to the location and type of university, curriculum design, and linguistic difficulties. Given all these shortcomings, with increased accessibility of universities, the following section addresses how the students attempted to resolve the foresaid hindrances to employability development.

Student Resolutions.

A mere degree is no longer enough to guarantee employment in the labour market. Graduates have to develop a graduate identity in order to market themselves to potential employers. Unfortunately, the findings of this study highlight that the participants were more concerned about obtaining a degree rather than develop employability skills. The participants neglected the component of personal development, but mostly focussed on applying for employment. This is in support of Zwane et al., (2014) who suggested that graduates were regarded by employers as unwilling to be hands-on. Students can direct their own objective to

acquire work experience through placements and casual work (Artess, et al., 2017; Evans & Richardson, 2018). However, findings of this study indicated the environment was not enabling and as a result graduates could not engage in such activities to improve their employment prospects.

The findings also highlight that the participants only considered searching for employment after graduation. The participants waited to complete their studies to start searching about the labour market. Such behaviour can be attributed to the area, lack of information and/or knowledge and lack of career counselling and guidance. Furthermore, the participants lacked self-confidence because of how the curriculum was designed which limited how the participants could develop their own identity. The findings are similar to previous studies by Edayi (2015) and Magagula (2017) who suggested that students worried about employment after graduation and lacked knowledge of the labour market trends. Employability is a continuous process hence students have to understand that the process commences before graduation.

Participants were not proactive to improve their employment opportunities through the development of employability skills. All this goes back to the social factors which continue affecting how the Black students, especially from HDIs, experienced the labour market. Most of the participants who took part in this study only made job applications to various companies while at home after graduation. This goes to show that they were mostly reliant on their qualification to secure employment. International studies (e.g. Evans & Richardson, 2018; Holford, 2017; Kinash, et al., 2016) highlighted that to enhance employability, graduates adopted strategies. The strategies include networking, career advice, volunteering, community engagement and employment skill development. Such strategies enhanced the employment prospects of the graduates. However, this was not the case in this study because of lack of career guidance, geographical location and lack of opportunities.

Most participants of this study were not taking responsibility of their personal development. Most of the graduates thus remained inactive during their final year of studies. This concurs with Clements and Kamau (2017) who argued that undergraduate students are not dealing with employability at an early stage. Similar to the findings by Tymon (2013) that undergraduate students did not know the importance and lack clear understanding of employability before the final year of study. Tomlinson (2017) argued that individuals should be responsible for their own career development and success. It was difficult for the graduates to take control of their own career development due to the factors already discussed.

6.1.3. What were the graduates' activities to obtain employment during their first year in the labour market?

Labour Market Experiences

Most of the graduates did not have proper guidance on the process of job application. The graduates lacked knowledge of employment opportunities as well as job market information on the required skills. Without relevant information it made it difficult for the graduates to understand the labour market. Furthermore, most of the graduates resided in communities that did not offer employment services. These findings are in relation to previous studies which highlighted that people in the disadvantaged communities struggled to scan the labour market due to their location (e.g. Graham & Da Lannoy, 2016; Graham, et al., 2016; Mncayi, 2016; Maswangayi, 2015). Graduates in disadvantaged communities are finding it difficult to make the transition into the labour market because of limited opportunities.

In addition, the graduates struggled to fund their job search process owing to their backgrounds. The graduates had to rely on newspapers and/or internet cafes which are expensive for an unemployed previously disadvantaged graduate. The circumstances were exacerbated by the fact that the graduates were located in rural areas which made it difficult for them to access employers. Moreover, the participants lacked job search skills. The findings concur with previous studies (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Patel et al., 2016) that disadvantaged graduates resorted to using these methods to search for employment. Most of the graduates lacked financial resources to navigate the labour market which was further inhibited by the rural environment in which the graduates lived.

Student Resolutions

Due to a lack of information and access to the labour market, many participants were unable to improve their skills and be relevant in the labour market, as such most of them remained unemployed. An extended period in the transition stage will cause the acquired knowledge and skills to become obsolete. The participants were not involved in activities to enhance their employability. This is in support of previous studies that have indicated that employability is improved by constantly improving one's skills and keeping abreast of labour market changes (Donald, et al., 2017; Ismail, 2017; Minocha, et al., 2017). The graduates lacked opportunities to be actively involved in the development of their employability owing to their geographical location.

Previous studies (e.g. Cai, 2013; Ngoma & Ntale, 2016; Tomlinson, 2017) indicated that the career adaptability of an individual is substantially predicted by self-esteem. Like the findings of previous studies (e.g. Chetty, 2012; Coetzee & Potgieter, 2014; Potgieter, 2012; Ismail, 2017; Lourens, 2016; Mncayi, 2016) a properly developed self-esteem allowed individuals to confidently develop their graduate employability abilities and sustain a competitive business advantage. In support of previous findings, this study indicates that graduates lacked self-esteem. The graduates felt inferior to other graduates from other institutions because of the education quality which was regarded as being poor in comparison to other universities which affected their perceptions of the labour market.

Previous studies have highlighted that young people participate in several strategies in seeking employment (Graham & Da Lannoy, 2016). Newman and De Lannoy (2014) argued that the job seekers encounter daunting challenges and due to repeated unsuccessful employment applications, applicant's express disillusionment. Such disillusionment may cause depression and discouragement which may inhibit any further structured employment search (Magagula, 2017; Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017). The process of job application for people from disadvantaged communities is expensive hence the discouragement to continue with the job searching process. The graduates were not receiving feedback from the employers hence the feeling of discouragement and perception of racial inequalities.

Kundaeli (2015) discovered that employers cited that an individual should be responsible for developing their own employability. Lourens & Malherbe (2017) argued that an individual has to be responsible for personal development in preparation to enter the labour market. However, due to the financial investment in schooling graduates expected the universities to empower them with graduate employability skills (Kundaeli, 2015). The graduates were of the opinion that the university had not prepared them well for the labour market but they were not proactive in their own development. The students had placed their entire hope on the university to make them employable. However, this was not the case as the institution only focused on theoretical knowledge and the graduates lacked the relevant skills.

Kundaeli (2015) indicated that employability was positively affected by self-confidence, however the study did not suggest how and where an individual can develop self-confidence. The findings of this study suggest that self-confidence should be developed when the students enrol for HE and when they are about to leave HE. Turner (2014) who cited that higher education provided an opportunity for students to develop self-confidence. However, the findings of this study show that despite being enrolled at an HEI the participants still lacked self-confidence. Self-confidence is a personal choice. A person has to work towards being self-

confident. However, the institution plays a role in how it prepares the students for the labour market. The more an individual understands and develops skills the more self-confidence is developed.

From the above it is evident that graduate unemployment was being caused by a lack of work experience, a lack of employment search skills, a lack of influential social networks, mismatch between the skills of the graduates and demand skills in the labour market, geographically secluded from economic hubs, a lack of self-esteem, confidence and efficacy as well as the type of HEI attended by the graduates. The following section will look at the link among perceived casual relationships from the findings of this study.

6.1.4. Casual relationships from the findings

The findings of this study indicate that the concepts of graduate employability and university to work transition are enabled and enhanced by various factors in the South African context. The relationships that exist among the factors are shown in Figure 4.
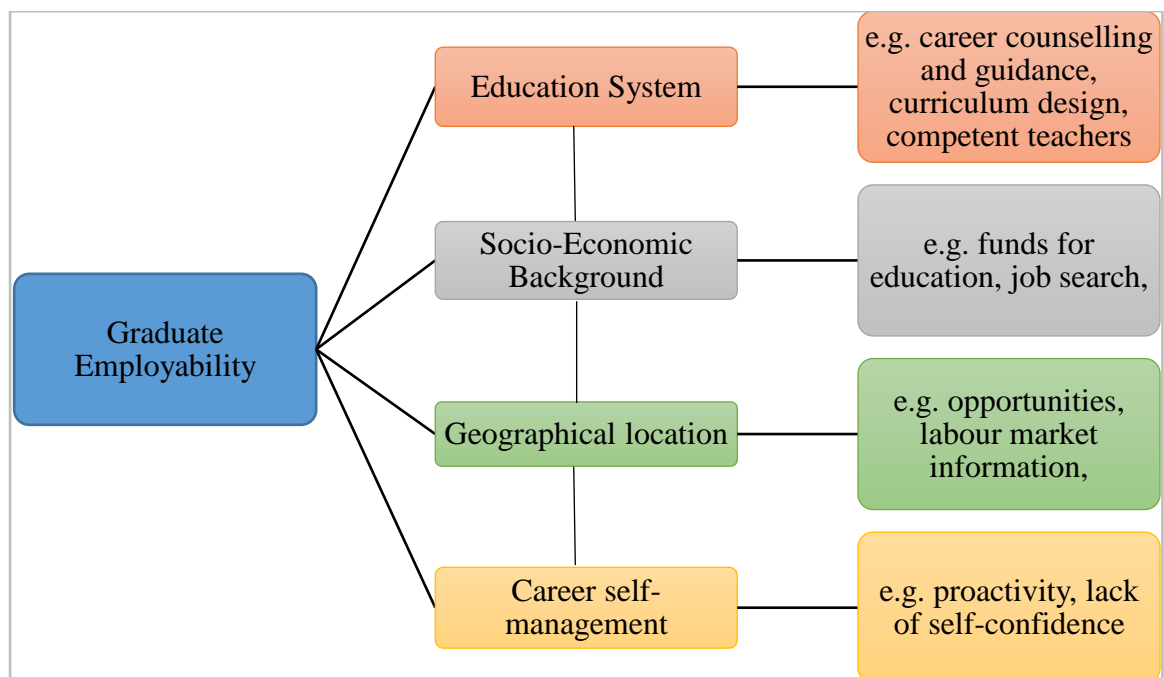

Figure 4: Graduate Employability Predictors. Source: Author own creation

Graduate employability is a concept that is affected by various factors. A poor education system which does not involve activities such as career counselling and guidance will affect the development of employable graduates as the students will enrol for qualifications just for the sake of obtaining a degree. Further to that, the way the curriculum is currently designed negatively affects the production of employable graduates. The universities are

focusing on theoretical knowledge and the students are not being given an opportunity to develop practical skills. In addition, most people in the disadvantaged communities are exposed to schools that are underperforming which results in under preparedness to cope with the demands of higher education. Subsequently, the students fail to develop employability skills as they will be struggling to cope with the demands of higher education. Hence, you find that most students from these communities focus on passing their degrees neglecting the component of proactively developing employability skills. As a result of a lack of knowledge, the students are not managing their own career development. Unsurprisingly, because of a lack of career counselling and guidance, the students lack relevant knowledge about the qualifications which they will be enrolled for, and results in unawareness on how manage one's own career development. Moreover, people from disadvantaged backgrounds do not have funds to benefit from the best schools and universities in the country which also negatively affects how the students develop. Similarly, being based in the rural areas where there are limited employment opportunities and labour market information, the students find it difficult to develop employability skills.

Although these factors play a major role in determining graduate employability, some of the factors are not interrelated. There are some people from poor socio-economic backgrounds who are fortunate to benefit with quality education which increases their employability. Moreover, being from a socio-economic background should not significantly affect how an individual develops employability when the person is enrolled with a university. Enrolment with a university should be an opportunity to ensure employability through proactive career development management regardless of socio-economic background. Higher education is an environment that should offer the students an opportunity to interact with employers, lecturers and other students from different socio-economic backgrounds to gain an understanding of the outside world. This means that factors such as socio-economic background and geographical location should not play a major role when a person has been registered with a HEI.

A lack of employability skills is a major barrier when it comes to university to work transition. Many students remain stuck in the transition phase because of a lack of skills. However, it is not only skills that affect university to work transition as outlined in Figure 5.
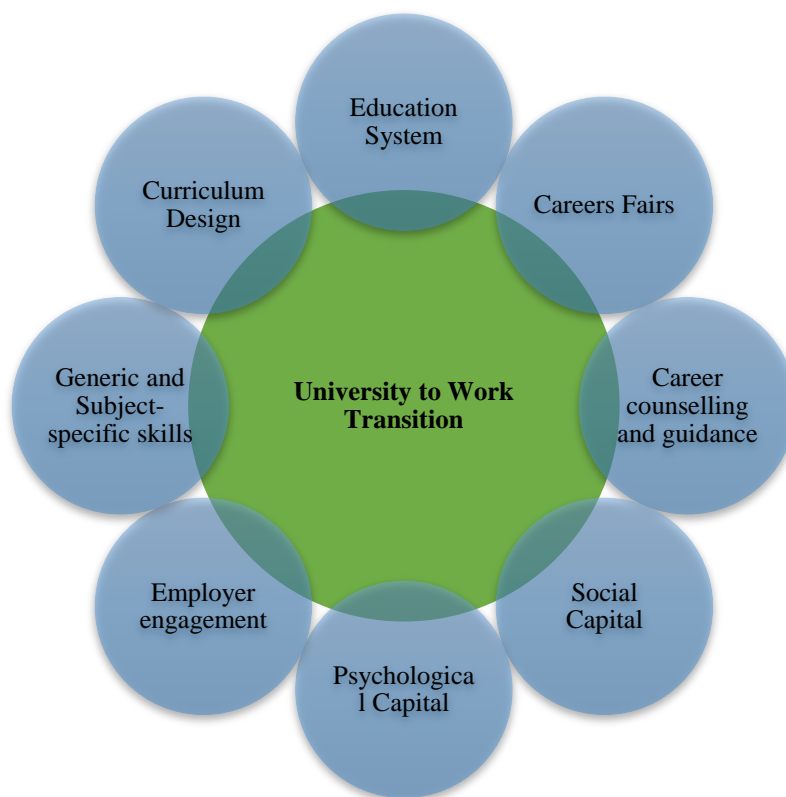
Figure 5: University to Work Transition Enablers. Source: Author own creation.

University to work transition is a phase that is characterised by several factors and difficulties. The above factors play a significant role in the process. In order to develop students who will be able to cope with higher education and develop employability skills, it is important to first address the issue of the *education system*. The quality of the education system has to improve from primary levels. HEIs should work in collaboration with employers (*employer engagement*) to develop *curriculums* that address the skills needs of the labour market. The collaboration should be with both private and public sectors. Furthermore, HEIs and employers have to play a critical role in the development of *generic and subject-specific skills*. The university should not only focus on the development of subject-specific skills but also on generic skills (transferable skills) such as communication skills, emotional literacy, critical thinking and logical reasoning skills. Such skills will enable the graduates to make a smooth transition into the labour market. Having these skills, however, does not guarantee employment it enhances a person's employability. With employability skills a person is more likely to secure employment than a person who does not have the skills.

Moreover, most graduates in the disadvantaged communities lack *social capital* which can make it easy for them to make the transition. However, activities such as *career fairs* at universities will assist the students in building these social networks through engaging with the employers (*employer engagement*). In addition, career fairs will help the students to gain *labour market information* especially for the people in the secluded areas. Further to that, students are lacking proper *career counselling and guidance* resulting in the students making uninformed decisions. Such services should be encouraged from high school through to higher education. These services will enlighten the students on the various possibilities that will be there for the various qualifications. A lack of such services causes confusion among the students not knowing what they can do with their qualifications and how to improve their employability in those particular fields. Students lack direction in their careers hence activities such as career counselling and guidance will help the students map out the way forward after obtaining a qualification. The process of university to work transition is a process that has inevitable adversities regardless of having employability skills. As a result, graduates must be able to adjust and respond positively to these challenges hence the need for *psychological capital*. The process of transitioning is not straightforward, and the graduates must always keep this in mind, despite all the policies that are being formulated by the government such as Affirmative Action, without employability skills the process will always be difficult.

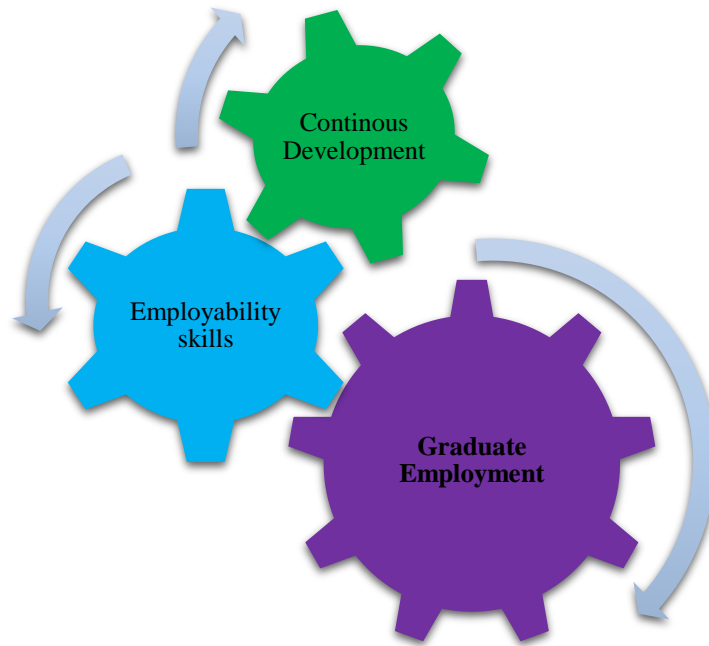There is a strong relationship between graduate employability and graduate employment as shown in figure 6.

Figure 6: Graduate Employment

A graduate needs employability skills to be able to secure employment in the open labour market. A lack of these skills often results in graduate unemployment. Without these skills graduates are more likely to remain unemployed or be underemployed. However, on the other hand, having employability skills does not guarantee employment, but enhances the graduates' opportunities of securing employment. Furthermore, a person has to continuously develop themselves by furthering their knowledge and skills, whether the person is employed or unemployed, to ensure that the person remains relevant in a world that is always changing. Although this current study focussed on graduate employability, it has shown that there is a strong correlation between employability and labour market outcomes.

6.1.5. Discussion Conclusion

Sharing of experiences was an enlightening exercise for most of the participants. Students were able to gain a reflective understanding of their experiences as Black students from multiple perspectives. The students were able to understand the challenges they faced, both as students and as employment seekers, as well as discuss solutions to those challenges. Despite several challenges that they were facing, the students continued hoping for the best outcome from their studies. It is important to note that the participants were afraid of failure and lacked confidence and were scared to expose themselves in the labour market.

Based on the narratives of the participants, the individuals are driven by the prospect of securing employment on completion of studies, and the need to be someone in the communities

where they come from. The narratives further highlight that the qualifications that they had enrolled for only focussed on the theoretical aspect, and neglecting the practical aspect, subsequently the participants were not ready for the world of work. Inability to secure employment led to losing social support structure of the family. The participants originated from poor socio-economic backgrounds, hence the families were unable to fund the students' further studies after failing to secure employment. Due to the poor socio-economic backgrounds, the participants were exposed to poor education system which inhibited their employability.

The narratives further show that the participants were affected by the location of where they studied and lived. Being based in the rural areas constrained the participants' experience of the labour market as they did not have access to various employers. Furthermore, being based in the rural areas made the employment search process unbearable as the participants had to pay a lot of money, which they did not have, to apply for employment, and were not receiving any feedback from the employers. Having obtained their qualifications at a historically disadvantaged institute, the participants felt that their qualifications were being undermined in the job market. The overall impression from the narratives is that the participants enrolled for tertiary studies to secure employment. Despite having several factors against them, most of the participants were not taking on individual initiatives to ensure that they became employable. Most of them were relying on other role players such as the government and institutions to enhance their employability. Thus, many of the participants remained unemployed due to a lack of relevant skills to offer prospective employers.

Should graduates be made to believe that because of obtaining a higher education qualification it will be easy for them to make the transition into the world work (which is the case in South Africa because of the various employment policies developed by the government) it is highly probable that a discordant with these expectations will result in apprehension. It is thus clear that lecturers must play a significant role in addressing the importance of resilience and devising ways to manage one's career in a proactive manner to minimise the inevitable disappointment in the labour market. Several role players must be engaged in improving graduate employability skills and enhance chances of securing and sustaining employment in the labour market.

6.2. Contribution

6.2.1. Theoretical Contribution.

Many stakeholders are concerned with the issue of graduate employability, that is, the society, government, and students (Hooley, 2017). As a result, governments and institutions have an onus to improve the employability of graduates (Tomlinson& Holmes, 2016). On completion of studies, graduates are expected to possess general skills and attributes to be competitive in the labour market (Artess, et al., 2017; Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013; Tran, 2015). However, most graduates from HDIs are not well prepared for the labour market, this is despite holding the same qualifications with other graduates from other institutions. Employers have developed a negative perception about qualifications from HDIs which has led to high unemployment of graduates from these universities. The findings of this study support the postulations by human capital theorists that education is an important aspect of enhancing employability. It is not only about the level of education that an individual obtains but it includes the quality of the education. The theories do not address the issue of quality of education. In South Africa we find that people are managing to complete higher education, but because of the quality of the education struggle to make the transition into the world of work.

Many individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to higher education in South Africa. The findings of this study are in support of theoretical assumptions that most people were investing in education to have better careers and social mobility. However, findings indicate that participants presented with a genuine fear of not knowing what awaited them upon graduation. Many people are investing in human capital to acquire skills and knowledge which will place them in a better position when competing in the labour market (Lourens, 2016; Ntikinca, 2014). Such investments are expected to yield positive results such as employment after graduation (Jog, 2015). Individuals enrol for higher education expecting to obtain life skills which would make them competitive in the labour market (Archer & Chetty, 2013; Van der Berg & Van Broekhuizen, 2012). The findings of this study suggest that investments in higher education do not always yield a positive return on investment. Most of the graduates from HDIs struggle to make the transition into the world of work because of the quality of education. The theorists do not consider factors such as socio-economic background, geographical location and social capital as these factors are playing a significant role in determining the labour market outcomes in South Africa. These findings are also supported by previous studies (e.g. Altman, et al., 2014; Graham & Da Lannoy, 2016; Kundaeli, 2015).

Investment in education does not always lead to positive outcomes in the labour market, especially in South Africa where social inequalities continue to prevail. It should also be noted

that a mere qualification will not lead to employment, graduates, especially for HDIs graduates as the inequalities of apartheid are still persistent.

The consensus theory states that institutions should instil generic skills to enhance employability of the graduates (Selvadurai, et al., 2012). This can be done through incorporating generic skills into the curriculum (Hooley, 2017). The findings of this study support the notion that generic skills should be instilled in students at university level. However, despite several calls for incorporation of generic skills, some universities continue focusing on the theoretical aspect. Many participants complained due to the lack of the practical component in their degree programs (Magagula, 2017; Rogan & Reynolds, 2016). Participants enrolled in higher education in expectation that they would gain the relevant skills which they can apply in the labour market. However, many participants remained unprepared for the world of work due to a lack of skills.

As in previous studies (Hooley, 2017; Mncayi, 2016) HEIs the study suggests that the practical component has to be included in the degree programs to better equip the graduates. It is the responsibility of both universities and employers to develop graduates that are employable. Both parties must work in collaboration for the development of the economy of the country. Curriculums should include a practical component while employers must provide opportunities for development such as internships. Furthermore, individuals have to play a critical role in their personal development. Individuals should take the responsibility of ensuring that they are employable than waiting for the institutions and employers to act.

The employability of the graduates is a responsibility of many stakeholders such as government, employers, and universities. Many people are investing in education. To realise a return on investment, universities must develop curriculums that have practical component and employers as well as the government have to offer opportunities for the individual to develop through activities such as internships and school visits to talk with the students, to enlighten them about what they have to do to be employable. Employability cannot be developed by a single stakeholder. There are vast changes that are occurring in the world of work today thus individuals have to manage and facilitate the transition process successfully. People can no longer rely on HEIs or organisations for career identity but have to become more responsible for their own career paths. This study has shown that graduate employability is a collaborative process between an individual, university and employers. Each of these parties has a major unique role in the development of employable graduates.

It is imperative that we as Africans develop our own theories of employability which are more inclined to our contexts. We cannot rely on Western or European employability

theories as the contexts are overtly different. The theories are out of touch with the realities in Africa, this does not mean the theories are entirely not applicable, but they are limited. The theories that were employed in this study cannot be considered in isolation. All the theories have limitations and in order to overcome the limitations it is important to use them in collaboration. Furthermore, in the African context factors such as socio-economic background, the legacy of apartheid and quality of education also have to be included in the theories when being adopted in the African context.

6.2.2. Practical Contribution and Recommendations.

This section addresses the following research question: *how can policy-makers intervene to enhance employability of university students?*

Overall, this study contributes to the graduate employability debate and extant literature as well as providing an understanding of the concept in a South African perspective. Given the discussed sub-standard South African education system, there is thus a definite need for the whole education system to be improved to enhance graduate employability. The main focus of the government should not be limited to the quantity of graduates but also the quality of the graduates. The government has to provide schools in the disadvantaged communities with adequate resources such as textbooks and computers. Furthermore, there is a need to employ competent school teachers who will add value to the learning of the children in the disadvantaged communities.

Moreover, it is important to learn in one's home language, however in a country like South Africa where there is a limited number of South African Black academics contributing to the body of knowledge it is difficult to implement such strategies. All the universities in the country use English as a language of instruction, but there are some schools who use the local language for instruction making it difficult for the students to adapt when in higher education. A reasonable method to tackle this issue is through the use of English as the language of instruction throughout the schooling careers, especially for people in the disadvantaged communities.

In addition, career counselling and guidance should be made compulsory to assist the students in making informed decisions about their subjects from high school and the qualifications they will enrol for in university. Most people from disadvantaged backgrounds enrol with higher education for the sake of having a degree hoping that the qualification will be a way to secure employment. Further to that, students end up changing programs which usually is a result of inability to cope with the demands of the registered qualification. Hence,

there is thus a definite need for the government to employ school/university based career counsellors or psychologists to assist the individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds who will not be able to afford such services.

Furthermore, most curriculums, as the one in this current study, focus on the theoretical component of qualifications neglecting the practical component. The universities therefore need to re-design their curriculum to incorporate the practical component. Such an addition will allow the students to gain an understanding of how the world of work operates. Further to that, it will give the students an overview of what skills they should develop to be employable in the future. The university has to work with employers, both private and public sectors, to develop curriculums that will cover the skills that are needed in the workplace. The curriculums should be constantly revised rather than using the same curriculum for several years.

HEIs and employers also need to cooperate to provide graduates with proper career guidance for the students to select courses that will lead to employability. Such initiatives would help bridge the skills gap that exists between prospective employers and graduates. Furthermore, awareness of the importance of vocational employment should be raised among students and graduates. Vocational employment enhances an individual's prospects of securing employment in the labour market. Moreover, exposure in the labour market will increase the level of confidence of the participants. Most of the participants felt inferior because they did not have the required skills in the labour market and did not know what direction to take to be employable and secure employment. The employers have to thus provide students with the opportunities to gain work experience through vocational employment.

Likewise, employers, in association with universities, should conduct career fairs at different institutions, not only at HAIs. This will allow the students to build and develop social networks with the relevant people in the labour market. This will also provide an opportunity for the students to understand the labour market. Networking with the people already in the labour market gives the students an opportunity to gain self-confidence and develop the required skills by gaining knowledge from the employers. It was evident during the initial focus group that most of the participants lacked knowledge about the labour market and had developed a negative perception about the labour market. Hence, such fairs will provide students, especially in the secluded areas, to gain an understanding of the labour market.

The results of this current study are useful to various parties as employability is an imperative concept in the world of work. It is useful for students and graduates that are willing to enhance their employability as well as for career development. The results are also useful for career counsellors and employers who intend to manage student/graduate careers

strategically. Furthermore, curriculum designers who have to embed employability in curriculums to improve graduate employability as well as universities and policy makers may find the results of this study useful.

However, as long as the society is marred by inequality and injustice any developments to the education system will not result in positive results. The government has to redress the inequalities that continue existing between races. Many policies have been developed to redress the inequalities, but it appears that the problem is persisting. It is thus suggested that the government apply these policies and develop new policies that will be applied in all circumstances without exception to avoid persistence of inequalities. Unless the government also focuses on quality rather than on quantity alone, graduate unemployment will continue to persist in the country.

6.2.3. Methodological Contribution.

A longitudinal narrative inquiry was adopted for this study to explore student transition and experiences from tertiary education into the labour market. The sample was drawn from students who were enrolled at a HDIs as most students who study at these institutions struggle in the labour market. A longitudinal study was chosen as a research method as it allowed the researcher to live experiences which the participants went through during their studies and in the transition process. Several graduate employability studies that have been conducted in South Africa have utilised quantitative research approaches (e.g. Archer & Chetty, 2013; Bezuidenhout, 2011; CHEC, 2013; Edayi, 2015; Mtebula, 2014; Mncayi, 2016; Ntikinca, 2014). Calls have been made to understand the realities that graduates experience in search of employment during the transition process (Theron, 2016) and explore how the graduates perceive themselves in view of this.

This study sheds light into understanding graduate employability from the perspectives of the graduates. It provided the graduates with a platform to share their lived experiences as students and as graduates. Other graduate employability studies have utilised the qualitative approach (Hendricks, 2014; Lourens, 2016; Bell, 2016). These studies however have collected at one point either before or after graduation. This study contributes to the understanding of employability from the perspective of the graduates before and after graduation. A longitudinal study allowed the researcher to understand the changes that occurred over time and experiences of the graduates with the transition process (Vogl, et al., 2017). Reddy (2016) noted that there was a shortage of longitudinal studies to understand the transition from university into the world of work. This study therefore utilised a longitudinal qualitative to understand the

transition process. A longitudinal study allowed the researcher to understand the factors that are involved in the development of graduates to become self-confident individuals as they made the transition (Ismail, 2017). Furthermore, a longitudinal qualitative study allowed the researcher to understand the processes that the graduates went through when searching and applying for employment in the labour market (Paterson, 2017). It also provided information to understand how the graduates perceived their employability as students and as graduates.

The research method that was applied in this study may be applied in other provinces in the country as well as in other country to understand the concept of graduate employability. This research forms the base for future studies to explore and understand the experiences of students using longitudinal qualitative methodology, before and after graduation.

6.2.3. Suggested framework – Graduate Transition Model

The following framework is proposed from the findings and perceptions of the graduates with regards to their transition and experiences from higher education into the labour market. A successful transition of graduates in the labour market is not only affected by the skills and work experience, but by other factors which include social, psychological and cultural capital. These capitals help graduates to be prepared for the labour market. The model shown in Figure 3 illustrates these capitals and how they help graduates to make a successful transition. Having these capitals does not guarantee employment but it enhances the chances of a graduate to secure employment.
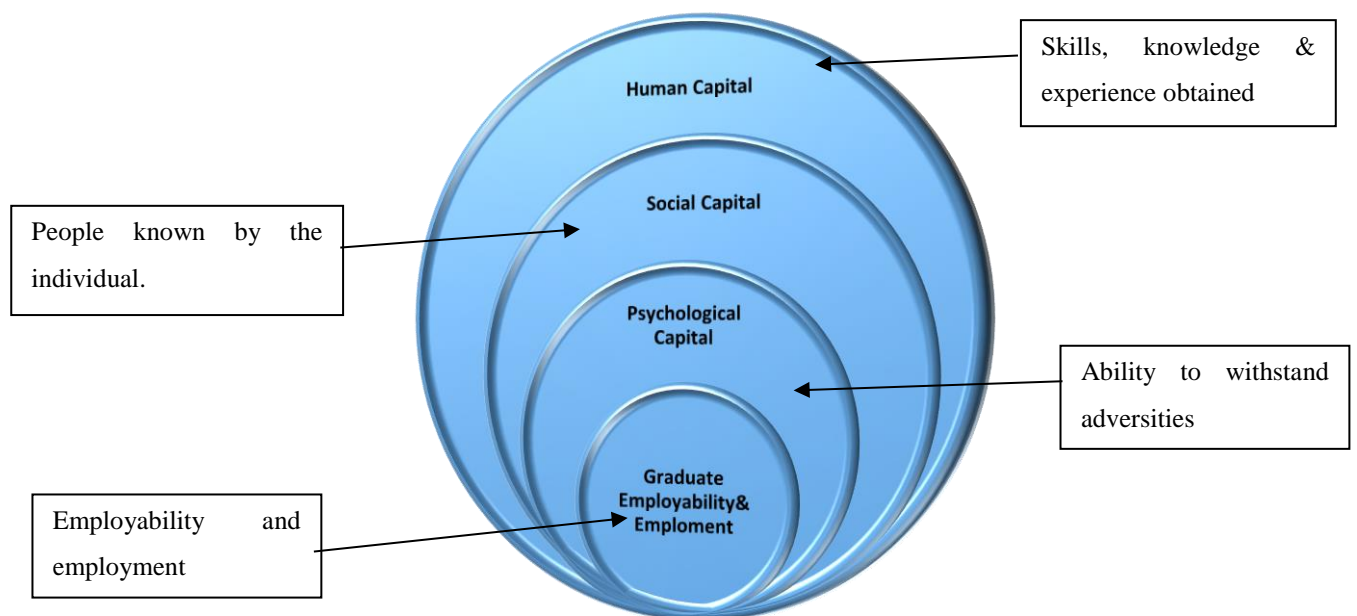

Figure 7: Graduate Transition Model (GTM) –

Human capital is the knowledge, skills (generic and specific) and work experience acquired by a graduate. This is the foundation of developing an employable graduate. These resources can be acquired through education. Although the resources can be obtained through education, graduates have to be involved in the development of the skills and knowledge. This can be done through extra-curricular activities such as voluntary work or unpaid internships. This will help in developing an identity which the graduates will be able to market to prospective employers. As the labour market conditions are always changing, graduates should not only develop degree specific skills but generic skills as well to adapt to the changes.

Social capital refers to the people that you know. As humans we are social animals, we need other people in order to succeed. Having social capital allows a graduate to have access to jobs that are not advertised, understand the labour market conditions through people who have knowledge, and referral to other jobs. A lack of relevant social capital may result in difficulties in accessing the labour market. The graduates have to build relationships with people from various backgrounds in order to develop their cultural intelligence. Globalisation has been increasing it is thus important for graduates to understand different cultures to be able to adapt in the workplaces. Social capital includes stakeholders like teachers, lecturers, community leaders, career practitioners, friends and family. All these stakeholders are there to support graduates, i.e. financial support to psychological support.

Psychological capital refers to what you want to be become and who you are. To be successful an individual has to believe in themselves. It is important to have self-belief (confidence) in one's abilities. Furthermore, a graduate has to be optimistic about succeeding (i.e. securing employment, being successful in the position) in the future. Persevering towards goals despite setbacks (having hope to succeed). Lastly, in a world where the labour market outcomes are unpredictable, one must be resilient in the face of adversities to succeed. Graduates have to understand that they will make several applications, and most of them will not be responded. In life there are inevitable challenges (life or career) that an individual will come across. Having psychological capital will enable the graduates to overcome such challenges. The above capitals can assist graduates in their transition into the labour market.

6.3. Limitations and Future Research Areas

This study mainly focused on students who are enrolled at HDI which is based in the rural areas of South Africa, and the findings may not be applicable to other HDIs that are in

the urban areas or in other countries. Furthermore, the sample of the study was restricted to one institute, if other universities were incorporated it is possible that a variation of narratives could have been documented. The findings of this study are enlightening but cannot be generalised to other students who are studying at other institutes. It is unfortunate that the research did not include employers to understand their perspectives on graduate employability.

Future studies should therefore focus on utilising samples of students from other HDIs which are in the urban areas. Furthermore, comparative studies should be conducted among Black students at HDIs and Black students at HAIs. Moreover, further comparative studies are needed between White and Black students to understand the processes they go through to be employable. In addition, future studies should focus on the perceptions of employers towards graduate employability. Lastly, more longitudinal qualitative studies are needed to understand the experiences of students as well as when they are graduates.

6.4. Conclusion

This research explored student transition and experiences from tertiary education into the labour market and to understand how these transitions and experiences manifest in a context of high unemployment. It specifically examined the perceptions of students and graduates who studied at a HDI. The experiences of graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds are negative. It is also apparent that governments are mostly concerned about equality of opportunity rather than the quality of the graduates. Given the high rates of unemployment experienced in the country, graduates are more focussed on not being able to secure employment after graduation, neglecting the need to develop employability. Graduate employability is a means to employment; however, it does not guarantee employment, but enhances the chances of securing employment. Graduates have to realise that employability is a process that needs time investment. They have to engage in extra-curricular activities that will enhance their employability and develop an identity which they can market to prospective employers. Engaging in extra-curricular will improve the prospects of the graduates of securing employment. Such activities should thus be done throughout an individual's university studies.

Furthermore, the onus is also with the HE to ensure that they produce employable graduates through offering extra-curricular activities as well as revising curriculums to include practical component to qualifications. However, as long as there is inequality and injustice in the society any changes to curriculum will be unsuccessful. Many students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds are struggling in the labour market due to social exclusion. As much as the education system is blamed for the production of unemployable graduates,

individuals need to understand they are also responsible for improving their own employability. An effective transition to employment from university is influenced by a range of factors which include, personal values, qualities, labour market realities and behaviours. Individuals must be involved in activities such as self-confidence and proactivity to improve chances of employment in the labour market.

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance from University of Fort Hare
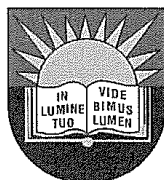
University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE
REC-270710-028-RA Level 01

Certificate Reference Number: CHI151SHAR01

Project title: **A longitudinal investigation into employability: student transaction and experiences form tertiary education into the labour market.**

Nature of Project: PhD in Industrial Psychology

Principal Researcher: Tinashe Timothy Harry

Supervisor: Dr W.T Chinyamurindi
Co-supervisor: N/A

On behalf of the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) I hereby give ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project and research instrument(s). Should any other instruments be used, these require separate authorization. The Researcher may therefore commence with the research as from the date of this certificate, using the reference number indicated above.

Please note that the UREC must be informed immediately of

- Any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the document
- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research

The Principal Researcher must report to the UREC in the prescribed format, where applicable, annually, and at the end of the project, in respect of ethical compliance.

Special conditions: Research that includes children as per the official regulations of the act must take the following into account:
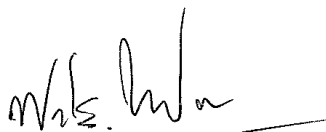
Note: The UREC is aware of the provisions of s71 of the National Health Act 61 of 2003 and that matters pertaining to obtaining the Minister's consent are under discussion and remain unresolved. Nonetheless, as was decided at a meeting between the National Health Research Ethics Committee and stakeholders on 6 June 2013, university ethics committees may continue to grant ethical clearance for research involving children without the Minister's consent, provided that the prescripts of the previous rules have been met. This certificate is granted in terms of this agreement.

The UREC retains the right to

- Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance Certificate if
  o Any unethical principal or practices are revealed or suspected
  o Relevant information has been withheld or misrepresented
  o Regulatory changes of whatsoever nature so require
  o The conditions contained in the Certificate have not been adhered to

- Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project.

- In addition to the need to comply with the highest level of ethical conduct principle investigators must report back annually as an evaluation and monitoring mechanism on the progress being made by the research. Such a report must be sent to the Dean of Research's office

The Ethics Committee wished you well in your research.

Yours sincerely

Professor Wilson Akpan
Acting Dean of Research

26 October 2016

Appendix B: Informed Consent

University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the research I am carrying out as part of my Doctoral studies in Industrial Psychology. My study focusses on graduate employability and school to work transition. Your input into the research will be kept completely anonymous. There will be nothing in the research to identify the ideas or the thoughts you express. The digital audio recording I make of our meeting will be transcribed and I will email you with a summary of our discussions before deleting the recording. If at any point you would like to stop the meeting or choose not to answer a question or to ask for the recorder to be switched off, you may do so. You are also very welcome to offer additional ideas into the work. My intention is to disseminate the findings from the research in the form of academic and / or practice-based papers. Should you wish to be identified (in order to promote your best practice) you will need to advise me so in writing, otherwise your contribution will continue to be kept anonymous.

If you would like to discuss this interview or my research with anyone else, my lead supervisor is Prof. W.T. Chinyamurindi. He can be contacted at wchinyamurindi@ufh.ac.za.

Your time and support is very much appreciated. Thank you.

With best regards,

Tinashe Timothy Harry

I agree to take part in the research outlined above: YES   NO

I agree for interview to be audio-recorded   YES   NO

Signed……………………………………………. ………Date…………………

Email address :……………………………………………(to view transcribed copy of interview)

Appendix C: Conceptualisation of themes

Theme	Meaning	Illustrating quotes
Perceived effects of socio-economic background	The effect of socio-economic background on education attained and employment.	Back home our parents expect us to find work so that we can look after them. They do not have the money for us to continue studying (Participant 1). I am feeling pressure to find a job early, the pressure that I am getting from my family and friends that studied at TVET Colleges who engaged in practical work and I am stuck with theory (Participant 4). All the parents will be happy if you want to further your education, but the problem comes back to us, we are old enough now, we are starting to see that the situation is not good at home and I bet 75% of us are having children, they are suffering back at home (Participant 8). People in the labour market undermine us because we come from poor socio-economic backgrounds, it doesn't mean if we come from poor families we are unable to think, and no we are able think outside the box. I am now searching for employment because I am unable to get my business off the ground. I am doing this to provide for my family, the people who made sure I obtained this education (Participant 19). There is a vast gap between the have and have nots, black majority continue to suffer and white minority continue to benefit in the democratic SA (Participant 7).
Perceived effects of the education system	Perceived effects of education system on employability and transition into the labour market	**Language** These problems (unemployment) we are currently facing can be traced back to primary school. The education system is contributing to the high rates of unemployment. You find that in high school there are some schools still teaching other subjects in Xhosa for example Mathematics. (Participant 18).

Because of the language that we are taught in while in high school, when we come to university it will be difficult to for us to put our views because we are unable to speak proper English (Participant 1).

Career guidance and counselling

We do not have knowledge of any other career options in the programmes we are doing. We just registered from high school no one bothered to advise us on what to do (Participant 20).

Some of us enrolled with HE backing on the advice we received from our uneducated parents telling us that if you do this degree you get employed because they had seen other people who had done the same program and were in employment. It is very sad to see that even after years after democracy today we see many high black young people seated here like they have no purpose in life (Participant 22).

I have never received any proper guidance in my life. I think I need it. I don't know what to do with my career or life. I wanted to do accounting but my matric results were not good enough that is how I ended up doing business management and IPS (Participant 8).

Curriculum Design

Students from other institutions are engaging in practical doing work placements, here at this university we are busy cramming doing the theoretical part only. Of which now when it comes to the field, theory part yes it is needed but how do you do your job if you have never engaged in the practical part (Participant 27).

We are scared to go to the labour market and expose our skill, so I think now this is a challenge. That's why you find many people want to do PGCE. In terms of opportunities, with PGCE you do practical and go to work. It is the government that actually places you. We want to do this qualification for easy employment. (Participant 13).

| | | We are calling for decolonisation of the education system. But they have to include both international and local concepts because we, as Africans, having been using those international policies and they have been working for us, however now we need to include the African perspective. We have the intellectual capacity in Africa to come up with our own policies. Africans should not be seen as they are inferior in terms of knowledge.

Type of institution
We sit here discussing about the issue of unemployment, and if you look next to you there is no white person. Even if you go for an interview you hardly find a white person in the same interview with you which tells you there is problem. In my view this caused by the institutional culture. There is a difference between university of fort hare and Stellenbosch University. You find that most CEOs recognise themselves more with the graduates from SU. You find that graduates from HDIs are frustrated, you find that even the learning environment is not conducive. The students just want to pass and go to the working field, therefore graduates from HDIs continue to suffer. This is something that has to be addressed by the government (Participant 7).

What happened to that institute that groomed the likes of OR Tambo and R Sobukwe? You find that in the democratic SA these universities are being neglected by the very same government and the white people continue investing in their own institutions. Now find that if you go for an interview and there two CVs one from SU and other from UFH, employers will prefer the one from SU. This can only be addressed by the government as it needs a political whip (Participant 29). |
| **Labour market experiences** | Being from previously disadvantaged backgrounds participants struggled to make the transition into the labour market. | How many White graduates are doing internships? If not, where do they get experience? We must interrogate this internship nonsense which now looks like a new form of Black slavery. Shockingly, it's championed by a Black government. Why do White graduates go straight into permanent positions while |

		Black graduates must sweat for two years being paid R3500? The very same White graduate gets a job and gets paid R15000. Now you will be surprised why we will never close this gap (Participant 30).
		We do these one and two-year internships and the worse part of it, you will complete the internship and then not get employed afterwards, saying that there are no vacant posts (Participant 7).
		Black graduates report to White matriculants in some companies. No reason not to like whites direct your anger towards us the black population who have failed to establish businesses, we don't even own any businesses in our and it's only the taxi industry that we own all other businesses are owned by foreigners and White people. Then you think Black South Africans will ever rise? And this will happen for generations to come because very few people are willing to take risks and start their own businesses. They play it safe. Given isituation yase khaya (the situation back home) of people relying on them nga leyo (with that) qualification and first pay (Participant 12).
		I left my previous company because of such fuckery, she found me there, I trained her, she only got matric and zero work experience and boom, within the first month she got a better salary and was my senior plus received all the perks I could only dream of, you don't have to guess which race she belonged to! (Participant 10).
		White matriculants have their jobs ready before they even write the final exams.... we see this every day in Corporate. Now where do you see the same thing for a Black child? (Participant 7).
		Even if you gain that 5 year experience you will still work under a white man even though he doesn't have any paper to back him. like in my case I'm qualified and I have gained the experience i know everything there is to know about the company but when an opportunity arose for me to be promoted to

		manager they hired a white person with no papers instead he doesn't know anything like literally and yet i work under him (Participant 16). We do not undermine internships, but we believe internships are exploiting our beloved graduates. They believe the internships are undermining their education. You find that those internships last a maximum of one year but you will never find a job opportunity that requires a one year experience (Participant 2).
Perceived effects of geographical location		The other requirement is a driver's licence as a requirement for a job. It is difficult for some of us who are based in rural areas to obtain a licence (Participant 12). We have to pay for transport, make photocopies, fax, and e-mail and buy envelopes. For someone who is unemployed, job hunting becomes expensive, especially considering we are the rural areas (Participant 14).
Availability of Social Capital		We cannot be all job seekers, some can become entrepreneurs. It does not need a lot of money to start an own business but what is important is the right networks. How can we then get these networks so that we can start our own businesses? (Participant 5). White people either a family member or relative owns something, we as black people we do not have that luxury. Hence these black millionaires must scrap out internships and stop writing books about excess to the market and create that market and offer Black graduates jobs (Participant 5). People will make this a racial issue whereas it's not. White people are smart. When their kids are still in high school, they take them to work, train them on how to run a company. By the time they matriculate they already have experience. While u darkie (Black person) has to wait to matriculate, then head to varsity for year. After graduating he goes straight to White owned company and report to White matriculants (Participant 4).

		We do not have access to people that know what is out there (in the labour market). We are not connecting with the relevant people. We are scared to approach these people (this goes back to inferiority complex. (Participant 26).
Student Resolutions		We live in a poverty stricken society that has made us look like we are unable to generate ideas. We have made several applications to organisations such NYPD for funding but even now we haven't received response (Participant 23). All we are doing is sending in job applications to various companies but we are not receiving any responses (Participant 21). Some of us have been focussing on achieving high marks so that people will recognise us through our marks (Participant 13).

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