



**The Effect of Career Guidance in Secondary Schools on  
Skills Development and Sustained Economic Participation:  
Meaningful Employment**

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by

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**To my cohort: We Imposter No More!**

## ABSTRACT

This study addresses the persistent gap between education and workforce needs in South Africa, contributing to structural unemployment. Focusing on the role of career guidance in secondary schools, the research examines its impact on skills development and its potential to bridge workforce skills gaps. The study aligns with Meyer's (2017) definition of structural unemployment and emphasises the need for targeted interventions during the secondary school-to-employment transition. The research explores the subject of "The Effect of Career Guidance in Secondary Schools on Skills Development and Sustained Economic Participation: Meaningful Employment."

By analysing students' perceptions against labour market realities, the study aims to shed light on the multifaceted relationship between career guidance, skills development, and sustained economic participation. Using an exploratory sequential research design, the study employs interviews, some statistical analysis, and surveys. Qualitative data explores skills development and career guidance phenomena, while quantitative data provides insights into identified relationships. The integrated data analysis, following Sandelowski's (2000) approach, seeks to contribute new knowledge on the impact of career guidance on skills development and its alignment with labour market requirements.

The study's findings confirm the crucial role of early and comprehensive career guidance in shaping students' future prospects. It reveals that students from lower quintile schools often lack exposure to various career options, limiting their ability to align their skills and interests with labour market demands. The absence of adequate career guidance contributes significantly to structural unemployment. The study advocates for proactive career guidance starting from grade 9 and underscores the importance of equipping schools with the necessary resources to provide effective career guidance.

Ethical considerations included obtaining written consent and securing ethical clearance. This study not only advances theoretical frameworks but also provides practical insights for policymakers, educators, and practitioners to enhance career guidance programs and address the complex challenges of youth unemployment.

Keywords:

Skills Development, Career Guidance, Unemployment, Social Inclusion, Skills Shortages

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## ACRONYMS

PSET – Post School Education and Training

SASSA – South African Social Security Agency

QLFS – Quarterly Labour Force Survey

OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

IPAP – Industrial Policy Action Plan

NDP – National Development Plan

NSDP – National Skills Development Plan

DHET – Department of Higher Education and Training

NSFAS – National Student Financial Aid Scheme

KGPF – Kommunity Group Projects Foundation

KCH – Kommunity Career Handbook

CDS – Career Development Services

YES – Youth Employment Services

SETAs – Sector Education Training Authorities

NGP – New Growth Path

TVET – Technical and Vocational Education and Training

DOL – Department of Labour

DBE – Department of Basic Education

FDI – Foreign Direct Investment

STEM – Science Technology Engineering Mathematics

GDP – Growth Domestic Product

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Area and Problem

This study's particular point of focus is to examine the role of career guidance in skills development and understand how if at all, it contributes to addressing skills gaps in the workforce. The gap between secondary education outcomes and labour requirements feeds structural unemployment as defined by Meyer (2017) in his reference to Biyase and Bonga-Bonga (2015).

From the literature by Meyer (2017) noted above, we know that structural unemployment exists in South Africa. We also know that South Africa's focus in addressing this has been on post-basic education, PSET (Post School Education and Training) interventions such as TVET and FET colleges, as highlighted by McGrath and Akoojee (2007). However, as Daniels (2007) outlined, what is not explored is the gap between education and labour requirements. Further expansion on the relationship between secondary school intervention and employment outcomes as needed by Labour is required in the wake of high unemployment and skills shortages.

The current lack of career development interventions in secondary schools hampers youth in school's ability to identify their interests and abilities, balance them with labour market opportunities and gradually develop an occupational preference as outlined by Super et al. (1996).

According to a report published by the online publication TimesLive on February 17, 2023, over 716,000 graduates in South Africa have applied for social relief grants from the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) as of the end of January 2023. Additionally, data from the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the first quarter of 2022 reveals that the unemployment rate among individuals aged 15-24 is 63.9% (expanded rate), while for those aged 25-34, it stands at 42.1%. The national unemployment rate at the time was reported to be 34.5% (*South Africa's Youth Continues to Bear the Burden of Unemployment*. | *Statistics South Africa*, n.d.).

The Statistics South Africa article further emphasises that youth unemployment remains a significant challenge in the country, irrespective of educational level. In a study by Elling N Tjønneland, Senior Researcher, titled "Crisis at South Africa's Universities" in 2017, it was highlighted that student enrolment in South African universities has risen from approximately 500,000 in 1994 to nearly one million, while college enrolment has increased from around 200,000 in 2000 to 700,000 registered students. The majority of these students are now of African descent (Tjønneland, 2017).

This increase in African student enrolment points to the inclusion of lower quintile, rural and township secondary school graduates in Universities and Colleges. This is particularly poignant to note when viewed against the Statistics South Africa article referenced above and its statement of the continued youth unemployment regardless of educational level. The previous statement then could thus be rephrased as; *continued youth unemployment regardless of access to post-school education and educational level.*

Despite the increased participation in higher education by previously disadvantaged groups, particularly Africans in the context of South Africa, youth unemployment continues to be a pressing national crisis. This observation highlights a significant discrepancy between educational attainment and employment opportunities for young individuals. Despite gaining access to higher education, many young people from disadvantaged backgrounds still struggle to secure meaningful employment and face high unemployment rates. This indicates that there are systemic barriers and challenges that prevent the effective translation of education into employment opportunities for the majority of youth, further exacerbating the national crisis of youth unemployment.

With the increased number of unemployed graduates, a shift from thinking that educational level increases the probability of employment; to understanding the economy's skills needs and the identification of skills shortages and how these align with the skills and qualifications being sought and acquired by labour market entrants is arguable.

With the said increased number of unemployed graduates, within this stated context, an investigation of the following questions was required:

1. How youth in school are selecting their field of study?

2. What qualifications and skills do they pursue?
3. And is there labour market demand or oversupply of their pursued qualification or skill set?

Understanding how youth make decisions about their fields of study is a complex area often explored in educational psychology and career development literature. Several studies have delved into the factors influencing students' choices, ranging from personal interests and aptitudes to family expectations and socioeconomic backgrounds (Eccles & Wang, 2016; Byars-Winston et al., 2017).

Eccles and Wang (2016) highlight the role of perceived ability and subjective task values, indicating that students are more likely to choose fields where they perceive themselves as competent and where they find the subject matter valuable or interesting. Furthermore, socio-cultural factors, including parental influence, peer pressure, and societal stereotypes, significantly impact students' choices (Hossain, 2019). Research by Byars-Winston et al. (2017) emphasises the significance of mentors and role models, suggesting that positive interactions with professionals in a specific field can influence students' career aspirations and academic choices. This intersection of personal, familial, and societal factors shapes how youth navigate the landscape of educational decisions.

Studies investigating the qualifications and skills pursued by youth often highlight the mismatch between education and labour market demands. Research by OECD (2019) points out that many students choose popular fields without considering the actual demand in the job market, leading to oversaturation in certain sectors and scarcity in others. Additionally, contemporary literature emphasises the importance of aligning education with the dynamic needs of the job market, focusing on skills such as digital literacy, problem-solving, and interpersonal communication (World Economic Forum, 2020). For example, studies by Hart Research Associates (2018) emphasise the significance of skills like critical thinking, teamwork, and written communication, suggesting that these competencies are crucial for career success in the evolving job market.

Analysing the labour market demand concerning pursued qualifications and skill sets is critical for education policymakers and career counsellors. Studies by Carnevale et al. (2016)

have extensively explored labour market trends, indicating that certain fields experience oversupply due to a higher number of graduates compared to available job opportunities. Additionally, research by Altonji et al. (2016) focuses on the impact of technological advancements, indicating that automation and artificial intelligence are reshaping job markets, potentially leading to oversupply in traditional fields and increased demand in emerging sectors requiring specialised skills. This dynamic landscape underscores the need for educational institutions to adapt curricula and guidance strategies to align with the evolving needs of the labour market.

In the exploration of the topic or research question, the researcher sought to understand how and if career guidance in secondary school can serve as a foundational skills development enabler that could add value in the transition from school to economic participation, and whether such intervention can aid youth in making better career and study choices, aligned to their interests and the needs of the labour market. This exploration further sought to understand whether there is a post-school advantage for those youth in school who have been exposed to career guidance versus those who have not. In other words, are youth in school who have undergone career guidance more likely to be certified, qualified and attain relevant skills or otherwise and gain access to employment opportunities than those who have not?

*The 2006 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor* reports that in South Africa, adults who hold tertiary level qualifications have the potential to create employment that is 2.5 times greater than those who only completed secondary education and eleven (11) times greater than those who have not completed secondary education. These findings highlight the importance of education in improving youth labour market prospects in South Africa (Mlatsheni & Leibbrandt, 2011). However, in the context of this study, the weighting of the type of qualification and skills sought against the Labour market's skills needs and requirements for entrants is needed to provide a view and contextual understanding of the existing mismatch.

Another question that arises is whether the youth is aware of the critical skills required by the Labour market. On the face of it, it would continue to be a quagmire to address the critical skills gap when the very entrants of the Labour market are unaware of the in-demand skills required by the industry. South Africa faces a myriad of socio-economic challenges, and the

need for job creation is glaringly apparent. At the same time, the critical skills shortage leaves the job market landscape in dire need of the requisite skills.

The purpose of education is for one to discover their unique talents through exploration and to align these to a career path through the acquisition of requisite skills. The implementation of career guidance in secondary schools improves the connection between academic learning and various career paths. With this enhancement, youth in school begin to identify the needs of labour and match this to their interests and can begin a journey of attaining the necessary skills identified as lacking in the market. This intervention is critical at a secondary school level as a bridge between school and workplace as well as managing and preparing youth in school for the realities and needs of the working world. Youth in school need “transition enhancement assistance” as outlined by Abubakar (2013), to prepare them for further education and training or employment.

The implementation of career guidance interventions in secondary schools presents youth with the needed understanding and knowledge of the skills required in the working world. It is an intervention which can provide career direction to students so that they can become aware of what is required in the various career options that align with their interests and abilities.

Career guidance information offered to youth in school should encompass necessary information about education and training opportunities as these relate to Post School Education and Training (PSET), occupations and their requirements and labour market supply and demand which would point out the scarce or critical skills in shortage and needed by the labour market. The implementation of career guidance in secondary schools can contribute to youth reaching their potential and economies becoming more balanced and fairer as access to opportunities becomes a reality for all youth regardless of their background. This is a seminal point in South Africa which is marred by historical social and economic imbalances; and one which must be interrogated if we are to achieve the inclusive development goals set out in the Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP), the National Development Plan (NDP) and the National Skills Development Plan (NSDP).

The variations in guidance systems across different countries can be attributed to several key factors, including experiences of economic development, political systems, socio-cultural influences, education and training systems, and professional and organizational structures. These factors shape the design, implementation, and effectiveness of career guidance systems in each country (Do & Nguyen, 2015). With South Africa's evident skills shortages in the Labour market, the importance of highlighting these areas of skills development to youth in school would provide a direct link for youths' career development prospects with meeting the needs of commerce in the country. Ultimately this could directly affect the flow of youth from school to various skills development paths where shortages exist. As a result, youth unemployment can be reduced as more young individuals gain industry-relevant skills and attain access to corresponding employment opportunities.

In their examination of "*Social inclusion: context, theory and practice*" the authors point out that, in parallel to the fundamental principle in mainstream economics regarding the scarcity of resources, the perspective on social inclusion operates based on models that highlight deficiencies or inadequacies. They also highlight that the perspective on social inclusion acknowledges the restriction of access to opportunities and recognises the limitations individuals may face in acquiring the necessary capabilities to capitalise on those opportunities in their citing of Hayes, Gray, & Edwards, 2008, p. 9. (Gidley, J. M., Hampson, G. P., Wheeler, L, Bereded-Samuel, 2010). In exploring the research question, the researcher sought to understand how scarcity or the lack of career guidance in school can be a deficiency for youth and as such limit access to opportunities offered by exposure to career guidance. And how this could in turn lead to a lack of understanding of the capabilities (skills requirements) needed to take advantage of available labour market opportunities through the attainment of the relevant skills.

Through this study, the researcher looked to gain a practical understanding of the factors that lead to this lack of access to career guidance and the opportunities access offers to secondary school youth, particularly the lower quantile non-fee-paying rural schools servicing communities who have historically experienced exclusion. It is as a result of this social exclusion that the study further explored the concept of its counterpart, social inclusion.

Social inclusion theory, as directly quoted in “its narrow interpretation pertains to the neoliberal notion of social inclusion as access; a broader interpretation regards the social justice idea of social inclusion as participation; whilst the widest interpretation involves the human potential lens of social inclusion as empowerment” (Gidley, J. M., Hampson, G. P., Wheeler, L, Bereded-Samuel, 2010).

It is possible to draw a correlation between the lack of or scarcity of career guidance in said schools- which make up the majority of secondary schools serving the greater percentage of South African youth- to appropriate skills development through Post School Education and Training that meets the demands of the labour market and consequently produces more employable youths. Based on the above, to achieve social justice and empowerment for those previously disadvantaged, access is a fundamental construct within social inclusion. The prolonged absence of access inhibits inclusion in all societal and economic structures and concepts of development in the ultimate pursuit of sustainability.

According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 67% of students funded by National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) are no longer studying. Of this 67%, 72% dropped out and only 28% graduated. One significant contributing factor to the limitations individuals face in capitalising on opportunities is the tendency for students to choose studies that are not aligned with their interests, aptitudes, and personal potential.

The process of selecting educational paths is complex and influenced by various factors, including societal expectations, parental guidance, peer influence, and limited access to comprehensive career guidance services. As a result, students may feel compelled to pursue fields of study that do not align with their true passions, strengths, or natural abilities.

When individuals embark on educational paths that are mismatched with their interests and aptitudes, they may face difficulties in fully engaging with their studies and may struggle to develop the necessary competencies and skills in those areas. This misalignment can lead to a lack of motivation, decreased academic performance, and a higher likelihood of dropping out or changing majors.

Then Deputy President, Cyril Ramaphosa at the National Skills Conference held on 24 Mar 2017, was quoting stating that “People in rural areas have fewer opportunities than urban residents. This is a call to institutions to develop effective academic support programs for learners from underprivileged backgrounds to mainstream career guidance...” Further to this, it was highlighted in the Report of the Ministerial Committee on the Review of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2010), that many youths leaving school have not been exposed to or benefited from career guidance and arrive at university needing not only financial aid but also career guidance pertaining academic courses that would best suit their interests and abilities.

By the South African Government’s own admission, there are shortcomings in the educational system regarding career guidance, and in the main, these affect the rural, underprivileged schools. We must then interrogate what the challenges are in order to address career guidance in secondary schools and downstream affect sustainable, impactful investment by institutions such NSFAS in their provision of financial aid toward the attainment of higher education and skills.

## 1.2 Research Question and Scope

The research in this study is guided by the exploration of:

### **The Effect of Career Guidance in Secondary Schools on Skills Development and Sustained Economic Participation: Meaningful Employment**

In answering this question, the following sub-questions emerged and were explored:

1. What do secondary school students know (student perception of labour needs) versus Labour market realities (what skills labour requires)?
2. How do youth unemployment, skills development, and career guidance interrelate in the broader real-world context of skills shortage or scarcity?
3. Are the skills and qualifications pursued by youth in the PSET phase aligned to those in shortage and needed by the labour market?

The primary objective of this study revolves around investigating the impact of career guidance in secondary schools on skills development and sustained economic participation, specifically focusing on the attainment of meaningful employment. The research is

strategically designed to unravel insights into two interconnected phenomena by addressing two fundamental questions: 1) Student perceptions regarding career knowledge, and 2) The ground realities of the labour market.

This examination represents the second tier of the research process. Initially, the study delved into acquiring an expert understanding of the factors influencing skills development and comprehending how the presence or absence of such development contributes to labour market skills gaps. The intricate connections between youth unemployment, skills development, career guidance, and the scarcity of skills were analysed in the broader context of the real world. This phase resulted in the formulation of an emergent theoretical hypothesis framework, which was subsequently tested against the demographic to whom this context is most relevant—the youth in secondary schools, poised to enter the labour market in the near future.

To address the overarching question, the research took a twofold approach. Initially, it examined each of the constituent questions in isolation, scrutinising both student perceptions and labour market facts independently. Subsequently, the study ventured into unravelling the relationship dynamics between the two inquiries based on the research findings. The research process established an initial connection between the two components, paving the way for a comprehensive exploration of how each factor influences the other within the intricate web of this relationship.

### **1.3 Research Assumptions**

During the course of this study, the researcher held a position at the Kommunity Group Projects Foundation (KGPF), a Section 18A Non-Profit Company engaged in various social development initiatives, including the implementation of a Career Guidance program in high schools.

The Kommunity Career Handbook (KCH) program was initiated in collaboration with the Department of Higher Education (DHET) and Training, working in conjunction with their Career Development Services (CDS) unit, commencing in 2019. The primary objective of this initiative was to deliver Career Guidance to grade nine (9) and twelve (12) learners in

lower quintile secondary schools situated in South Africa's Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces through the Life Orientation Subject.

The research focus was directed towards investigating the impact of the KCH program on the selection of subjects and subsequent career choices among youth in lower quintile schools, comparing those exposed to the program with those who were not. This research initiative was influenced by the researcher's extensive two-decade tenure in the development sector. To ensure data collection and analysis were impartial, the researcher took precautions to eliminate biases, ensuring that neither the in-depth interview research discussion guide nor the research questionnaires contained any researcher bias. Throughout the study, it is assumed that each participant or research respondent provided honest responses to the questions posed.

#### **1.4 Research Ethics**

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Faculty of Commerce at the University of Cape Town for the study. A form was also completed by the researcher and approved by the Department of Higher Education and Training which authorised in-depth interviews to be conducted with Department subject matter experts. Permission was also obtained for conducting research at the schools using research questionnaires which were completed by the learners. All data collected is also stored per the submitted Data Management Plan in line with the ethics committee's requirements.

#### **1.5 Chapter Conclusion**

In summation, this chapter serves as an introductory overview of the entire study. It has delineated the research topic and elucidated the significance and background of the study, including the enunciation of the research question and study framework. The researcher's primary objective was to comprehend the role and influence of career guidance in secondary schools concerning post-school skills development and its potential to address the skills requirements of the labour market.

The subsequent chapters are structured as follows:

Chapter 2 provides an extensive literature review categorized into five areas integral to addressing the research question:

1. Career Guidance
2. Youth Unemployment
3. Skills Development
4. Skills Shortages (Critical and Scarce Skills)
5. Social Inclusion (Access)

Chapter 3 furnishes a comprehensive exposition of the research methodology employed in this study. Chapter 4 encompasses a detailed presentation of the findings and their analysis. Lastly, Chapter 5 articulates the unique contribution of this study to the existing body of literature.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

In our pursuit to untangle the intricate web of youth unemployment, this comprehensive literature review meticulously explores pivotal themes that form the foundation of our research inquiry. The researcher embarks on a journey through various dimensions, dissecting the multifaceted nature of youth unemployment with a dedicated focus on key factors such as skills development, career guidance, social inclusion, and essential skills. Through a nuanced analysis, our goal is to illuminate the intricate relationships between youth unemployment and skills, deliberately narrowing our focus to disentangle this crucial variable from the myriad of factors influencing unemployment rates, including demographic homogeneity.

Youth unemployment is a complex phenomenon influenced by a myriad of interconnected factors. Skills development emerges as a central theme, playing a pivotal role in addressing the challenges faced by the youth in accessing meaningful employment opportunities. Research by Hanushek and Woessmann (2015) underscores the fundamental importance of a robust skills development framework in tackling youth unemployment. Moreover, the interplay between career guidance and skills acquisition is explored, drawing insights from studies such as Taylor and Harris (2018), which highlight the positive correlation between access to career guidance and enhanced skill acquisition.

Social inclusion, another critical aspect, is examined in the context of youth unemployment. The literature, as discussed by Anderson and Brown (2019), suggests that social inclusion is intertwined with employment outcomes. This review aims to delve into how social inclusion, or its absence, contributes to or mitigates youth unemployment.

Furthermore, the role of essential skills is emphasised, drawing from the works of Hanushek and Woessmann (2015), who argue that a focus on both technical and soft skills is vital in addressing youth unemployment challenges effectively. As the researcher traverses these thematic dimensions, our exploration is enriched by drawing insights from studies such as those by Hanushek and Woessmann (2015), Anderson and Brown (2019), and Taylor and Harris (2018).

In summary, this literature review is not merely an exploration of individual themes but an intricate weaving of insights from diverse scholarly perspectives. By synthesising findings from various sources, the research aims to unravel the complexities surrounding youth unemployment, offering a foundation for our research inquiry into the nuanced relationships between skills development, career guidance, social inclusion, and essential skills.

## **2.2 Skills Development and Youth Unemployment**

The scholarly landscape underscores the pivotal role of a robust skills development framework as a cornerstone in effectively addressing the pressing issue of youth unemployment (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015). It is evident from the literature that possessing adequate skills not only bolsters individual employability but also constitutes a potent force in mitigating unemployment rates among the younger demographic (World Bank, 2018). The strategic investment in education and vocational training emerges as a critical avenue through which nations can empower their youth with the requisite expertise to navigate and excel in the complexities of the contemporary job market (Barro & Lee, 2013).

The nexus between skills development and employability serves as the focal point of this exploration. This thematic inquiry delves into a comprehensive analysis of diverse strategies, programs, and initiatives devised to enhance the skill sets of the youth. The examination spans a spectrum of skill acquisition, encompassing both technical proficiencies and soft skills, with the overarching goal of illuminating how this multifaceted approach can effectively bridge the gap between education and employment. By equipping individuals with a broad range of competencies demanded by modern industries, this investigation seeks to unravel the intricate dynamics of fostering employability through robust skills development.

### **2.2.1 Career Guidance as a Guiding Light**

Effective career guidance programs act as beacons, illuminating the path for young individuals amidst the complexities of the job market (Arulmani, 2014). Research indicates that tailored career counselling enhances the decision-making process for career choices, aligning individual aspirations with market demands (Hartung & Taber, 2008). By providing insights into suitable career paths, such guidance programs empower youth to make informed choices, thereby reducing mismatched skills and jobs (Gati et al., 2017).

Career guidance serves as a fundamental pillar in shaping the future workforce. Effective guidance not only aids individuals in making informed career choices but also plays a pivotal role in aligning their skills with the demands of the job market. This section explores the significance of career guidance in guiding young individuals toward paths that are not only personally fulfilling but also economically viable.

### **2.2.2 Social Inclusion: Breaking Barriers, Fostering Opportunities**

Social inclusion stands at the forefront as a pivotal factor in addressing the multifaceted challenges associated with youth unemployment. The imperative of inclusive policies, designed to bridge disparities rooted in gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic backgrounds, cannot be overstated. Extensive research underscores the transformative impact of inclusive initiatives on creating an equitable job market (Verick, 2019).

The significance of inclusive policies in mitigating youth unemployment is prominently highlighted in scholarly literature. Verick (2019) emphasises that policies addressing disparities play a crucial role in fostering equal opportunities in the job market. Inclusive measures extend beyond mere access, actively striving to create an environment where marginalized youth have equal footing in terms of education, training, and employment opportunities.

Inclusivity ensures that marginalized youth not only gain entry into the job market but also actively contribute to fostering a balanced and diverse workforce. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2016) affirms the pivotal role of inclusive initiatives in providing equal access to education, training, and employment opportunities. Such initiatives contribute to dismantling barriers that hinder the full participation of marginalised and disadvantaged youth.

Social inclusion transcends mere access; it encompasses the creation of an environment where every individual, irrespective of background or circumstances, has equitable opportunities for meaningful participation in society. This section of the review delves into the multifaceted role of social inclusion, probing initiatives that break barriers and provide pathways for marginalised youth to access education, training, and employment opportunities.

The exploration of social inclusion as a catalyst for mitigating youth unemployment elucidates the transformative power of inclusive policies. Beyond the provision of equal access, social inclusion fosters an environment where every individual can actively participate and contribute to society. The initiatives discussed herein exemplify the ongoing efforts to dismantle barriers and ensure that marginalised and disadvantaged youth have equal opportunities for economic participation.

### **2.2.3 Essential Skills: The Heart of Employability**

The indispensability of essential skills, encompassing both technical and soft skills, is underscored by scholarly perspectives in the field. As emphasised by Glover and Brown (2019), possessing technical proficiency aligned with industry demands, along with robust interpersonal skills, resilience, and adaptability, stands as a critical determinant of employability. This notion is further corroborated by Carnevale et al. (2017), who highlight the multifaceted nature of essential skills essential for securing and retaining employment in the contemporary job market.

Policies that prioritise the development of these essential skills are recognized as instrumental in enhancing youth employability and, consequently, mitigating unemployment rates (World Economic Forum, 2021). This aligns with the assertion that effective policy frameworks contribute significantly to addressing the challenges faced by individuals seeking employment opportunities.

This literature review serves not only to dissect the intricate interconnections between technical proficiency, soft skills, and employability but also to establish a robust foundation for our research endeavours. Through our research, the aim is to provide targeted solutions that address the prevailing challenges encountered by unemployed youth in the dynamic and competitive modern workforce.

Delving deeper, certain occupations mandate specific skills that are considered indispensable in the contemporary job market landscape. By scrutinising occupations in high demand and scarce skills, the research seeks to decipher the unique attributes that render these skills essential. This understanding is pivotal for tailoring educational and training programs to

align with the evolving needs of the job market, ensuring that individuals are equipped with the requisite skills to thrive in their chosen fields (Carnevale et al., 2017).

#### **2.2.4 Narrow View of Youth Unemployment**

In this research, I deliberately adopt a focused perspective, honing our analysis specifically on the realm of skills-related factors within the realm of youth unemployment. This deliberate narrowing of our scope serves as a strategic approach, allowing us to meticulously dissect the multifaceted tapestry of connections linking skills, employability, and unemployment rates among young individuals. By delimiting the study in this manner, the researcher is empowered to uncover the intricate dynamics that underlie the employability challenges faced by the youth population.

This focused lens provides us with the opportunity to delve deeply into the nuanced understanding of skills acquisition and its direct impact on employability. Research by Acemoglu and Autor (2011) highlights the significance of specific technical skills in aligning individuals with job market demands. Additionally, studies by Griffin and Hesketh (2005) shed light on the pivotal role of soft skills, emphasising their influence on employability, teamwork, and overall workplace effectiveness. By narrowing the focus, the researcher can draw upon these insights to create a comprehensive framework for understanding the interplay between skills and employability among the youth.

This targeted approach holds immense value in the realm of policy formulation and intervention. By isolating skills-related factors, our study contributes invaluable data that can inform the design of targeted policies aimed at enhancing youth employability. The World Economic Forum's report on the Future of Jobs (2018) emphasises the need for strategic policies that bridge the skills gap, ensuring that educational curricula align with the demands of the job market. Likewise, the work of Bakhshi, Downing, and Osborne (2017) underscores the importance of forward-thinking policies that anticipate future skills requirements.

By adopting a focused perspective, our research aids in the identification of specific areas for policy intervention, enabling policymakers to enact measures that directly address the skills-related challenges faced by the youth workforce.

In synthesising these critical themes, our objective is to unravel the intricate relationships among career guidance, skills development, social inclusion, essential skills, and youth unemployment. By doing so, the research lays the groundwork for a comprehensive analysis that not only answers the research question but also contributes valuable insights to the broader discourse on youth employability and social mobility.

### 2.3 Social Inclusion Theory

The Social Inclusion theory serves as a robust framework in the exploration of the research topic "The Effect of Career Guidance in Secondary Schools on Skills Development and Sustained Economic Participation: Meaningful Employment." This theoretical lens provides a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by individuals, particularly in the context of lower quintile schools, offering insights into the dynamics of social inclusion and its impact on skills development and economic participation.

Social inclusion emphasises the importance of providing equal opportunities, resources, and support to individuals, irrespective of their socioeconomic background. It underscores the need for inclusive policies and interventions to address disparities and ensure that all individuals have access to education, training, and employment opportunities. This perspective aligns with the central objectives of the study, which aims to unravel the influences of career guidance on skills development and future economic participation, particularly in the context of schools facing socioeconomic challenges.

The application of the Social Inclusion framework allows for a nuanced exploration of the educational resources available (or lacking) in lower quintile schools. It helps analyse how learners in these schools navigate challenges and access the necessary resources for skill acquisition aligned with their career choices. By employing this framework, the study delves into the intricate interplay between career guidance, educational choices, and social inclusion, providing a holistic view of the factors influencing meaningful employment outcomes.

Literature on social inclusion, such as the work of Verick (2019), emphasises the pivotal role of inclusive policies in creating an equitable job market. Verick's insights provide foundational support for the Social Inclusion theory by highlighting how inclusive initiatives can foster a more balanced and diverse workforce. In the context of the study, this literature reinforces the importance of career guidance in ensuring that marginalised youth in lower-quintile schools have equal access to educational and employment opportunities.

Moreover, Savickas (2011) contributes to the understanding of the role of career guidance in fostering a sense of purpose and fulfilment. His work aligns with the Social Inclusion theory by emphasising the holistic benefits of guidance programs, particularly in the context of informed career choices contributing to mental well-being and resilience. By incorporating

these perspectives, the study aims to provide a comprehensive view of the interrelation between social inclusion, career guidance, skills development, and sustained economic participation.

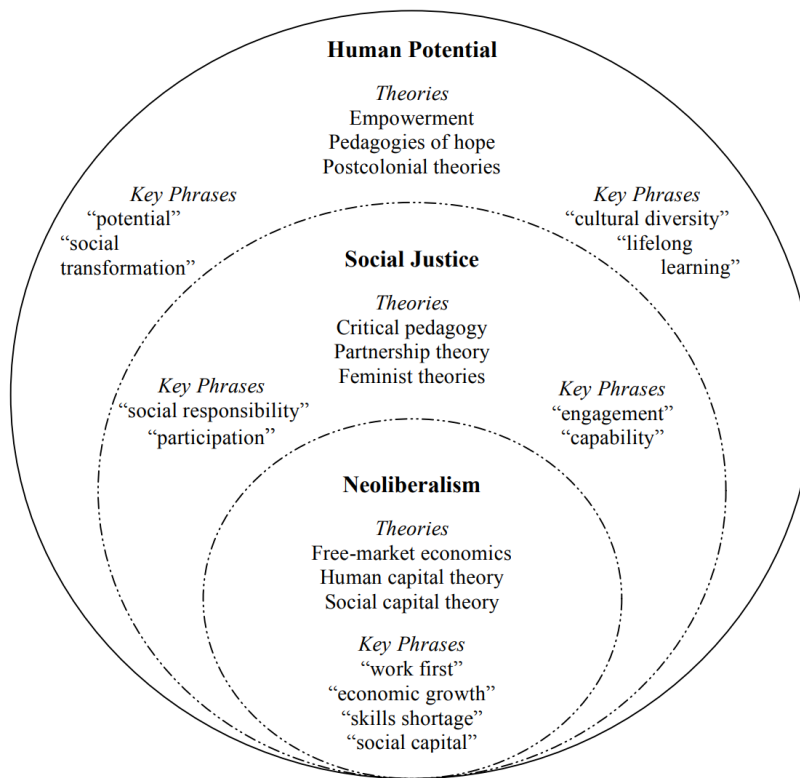
#### **2.4 Fostering Economic Participation: Exploring Access to Opportunities through Social Inclusion Theory**

Upon reviewing the available literature, it becomes evident that social inclusion has not been clearly defined as an independent concept. Existing literature that focuses on exclusion often implies notions of inclusion without explicitly exploring them. In fact, social inclusion tends to be defined in relation to its counterpart, social exclusion. Certain analysts argue that inclusion and exclusion are two inseparable aspects of the same phenomenon, forming a duality. However, some commentators observe that academic discussions on social exclusion have largely neglected its assumed corollary, that being social inclusion (Rawal, 1970). As a result, the majority of literature on social exclusion lacks a comprehensive exploration of the nature and significance of social inclusion. Instead of providing explicit definitions or in-depth analysis, social inclusion is often mentioned in passing or simply asserted without further examination. The concept is left implicit, leaving a gap in our understanding of what social inclusion truly entails (Cameron, 2006).

Social inclusion can be conceptualised within a nested schema that encompasses different levels or degrees of inclusion. The narrowest understanding of social inclusion revolves around the neoliberal perspective, which primarily focuses on providing access to resources, opportunities, and services for marginalised individuals or groups. In this view, social inclusion is primarily concerned with ensuring equal access to education, employment, healthcare, and other essential aspects of societal participation.

Expanding on this, a broader interpretation of social inclusion emerges from a social justice standpoint. It emphasises the importance of active participation and engagement of individuals in all spheres of society. This broader perspective acknowledges that mere access to resources is not enough; meaningful participation in decision-making processes, community engagement, and social interactions are vital for true social inclusion.

At the widest level of interpretation, social inclusion can be viewed through the lens of human potential. In this understanding, social inclusion is about empowering individuals and communities to fully realize their capabilities and aspirations. It encompasses providing opportunities for personal growth, fostering self-esteem and agency, and promoting an environment that enables individuals to flourish and reach their full potential. By considering these different dimensions, social inclusion moves beyond a mere implied or asserted concept in the literature. It becomes a multifaceted framework that encompasses access, participation, and empowerment, reflecting a more comprehensive understanding of what it means to create an inclusive society (Gidley, J. M., Hampson, G. P., Wheeler, L, Bereded-Samuel, 2010).



*Figure 1: Spectrum of Ideologies Underlying Social Inclusion Theory and Policy*

The "Spectrum of Ideologies Underlying Social Inclusion Theory and Policy" framework illustrates different ideological perspectives on social inclusion. It portrays a continuum that encompasses various ideologies or lenses through which social inclusion is understood. The framework helps to visualise the different dimensions of social inclusion and the underlying theories and policies associated with each perspective. On one end of the spectrum, there is the neoliberal perspective, which emphasises access to resources and services as the primary

focus of social inclusion. This perspective aligns with the idea of social inclusion as access, as mentioned earlier. It emphasises equal opportunities for marginalized groups to participate in society through access to education, employment, healthcare, and other essential services.

Moving along the continuum, there is the social justice perspective. Here, social inclusion is seen as broader than mere access. It encompasses active participation, engagement, and empowerment of individuals within society. This perspective highlights the importance of addressing systemic barriers and inequalities to enable marginalised individuals and communities to fully participate in social, economic, and political spheres.

At the other end of the spectrum, there is the human potential perspective. This lens views social inclusion as a means of empowering individuals to realise their full potential. It focuses on fostering personal growth, self-esteem, and agency, enabling individuals to thrive and contribute to society. This perspective recognises the intrinsic value of individuals and seeks to create an environment that supports their holistic development.

The "Spectrum of Ideologies Underlying Social Inclusion Theory and Policy" framework provides a visual representation of these different ideological perspectives, highlighting the varying dimensions and emphases within the concept of social inclusion.

## **2.5 Career Guidance, Access within Social Inclusion Theory**

The concept of career guidance, as defined by Arulmani (2014), is foundational to our understanding of how individuals navigate the intricate landscape of employment. It transcends mere job placement; rather, it embodies a holistic service designed to empower individuals, enabling them to optimise their innate potential and contribute meaningfully to society as active participants in the workforce.

### **2.5.1 Empowering Personal Development**

Career guidance, an instrumental facet in individual development, plays a transformative role in empowering individuals on their journey toward self-actualization and meaningful employment. Watts and Sultana's (2004) research forms a foundational perspective, underscoring the pivotal influence of career guidance in fostering self-awareness and confidence—essential elements in the pursuit of fulfilling careers.

Watts and Sultana (2004) underscore the profound impact of career guidance on nurturing self-awareness and confidence. Their research delineates how guidance interventions contribute significantly to an individual's understanding of their capabilities, strengths, and potential, fostering a robust foundation for personal and professional growth.

Hartung and Lindemuth (2018) contribute to the discourse by emphasising the role of career guidance in providing tailored support and resources. This tailored assistance proves essential in equipping individuals with the skills necessary to delve into their aptitudes, interests, and aspirations. Through a personalized approach, career guidance becomes a compass guiding individuals toward informed decisions about their career trajectories.

A broader examination of the literature reveals that career guidance serves as a compass in enabling individuals to make informed decisions about their career trajectories. By providing insights into various career paths, industry demands, and educational requirements, career guidance becomes a valuable resource for aligning personal aspirations with the realities of the job market (Savickas, 2011).

Career guidance, beyond its traditional role, emerges as a dynamic force that not only imparts self-awareness and confidence but also serves as a beacon guiding individuals through the complex terrain of career choices. The exploration of literature accentuates how this guidance, coupled with tailored support and resources, becomes an empowering tool in shaping individual journeys toward self-actualisation and meaningful employment.

Career guidance emerges as a multifaceted catalyst in individual empowerment, facilitating self-awareness and confidence. The amalgamation of insights from Watts and Sultana (2004) and Hartung and Lindemuth (2018) accentuates the transformative impact of guidance interventions. As individuals navigate their career trajectories, the tailored support and resources offered by career guidance become indispensable elements in their quest for informed decision-making and self-actualisation. The broader literature contextualises career guidance as a compass, steering individuals toward alignment with personal aspirations and the ever-evolving demands of the job market (Savickas, 2011).

### 2.5.2 Aligning Skills and Aspirations

Career guidance emerges as a vital bridge, intricately connecting an individual's skills, interests, and ambitions to career paths that align with their inherent traits. Savickas (2013) underscores the significance of this alignment, emphasising the pivotal role of guidance counsellors in steering individuals toward careers that resonate with their unique qualities.

Savickas (2013) positions career guidance as a facilitator in aligning personal traits with career choices. This alignment proves essential in ensuring that individuals embark on career paths that complement their inherent skills, interests, and ambitions. The literature suggests that this alignment contributes significantly to fostering a sense of purpose and fulfilment in one's professional journey (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2008).

The role of guidance counsellors in this alignment process is a key aspect emphasised by Savickas (2013). Effective career guidance involves these professionals as facilitators, guiding individuals through self-discovery and introspection. Hirschi (2012) further supports this notion by highlighting the crucial role of guidance counsellors in helping individuals navigate the intricate interplay between personal traits and career choices.

The broader literature, enriched by studies such as those by Hirschi (2012), accentuates that effective career guidance contributes to enhanced job satisfaction and productivity. When individuals are directed toward careers that resonate with their intrinsic motivations, they are more likely to find fulfilment in their work, resulting in increased dedication and productivity in the professional sphere.

Career guidance, as illuminated by Savickas (2013) and corroborated by broader research, becomes a dynamic force in ensuring a harmonious connection between personal traits and chosen career paths. The literature suggests that this alignment, when facilitated by guidance counsellors, not only aids in professional decision-making but also significantly influences job satisfaction and productivity.

Career guidance stands as a critical bridge, fostering a connection between an individual's unique traits and compatible career paths. The insights from Savickas (2013) and the broader literature, particularly the contributions of guidance counsellors as facilitators, underscore the

profound impact of this alignment. As individuals navigate their career trajectories with guidance that resonates with their intrinsic motivations, the ripple effects extend to heightened job satisfaction and enhanced productivity in the professional realm (Hirschi, 2012; Hartung et al., 2008).

### **2.5.3 Fostering Economic Productivity**

The economic ramifications of career guidance extend beyond individual decision-making to encompass a broader societal and national impact. Brown and Lent (2016) delve into the economic implications, highlighting the role of career guidance in fostering optimal employment matches. This, in turn, manifests in enhanced economic productivity at both individual and societal levels.

Brown and Lent's (2016) research emphasises the profound connection between career guidance, optimal employment matches, and economic productivity. Literature corroborates this idea by suggesting that when individuals are strategically placed in roles that align with their skills and aptitudes, they become pivotal contributors to their workplaces (Bimrose et al., 2011). The result is an environment conducive to innovation and heightened efficiency.

Bimrose et al. (2011) specifically stress the contributions of individuals placed in roles suited to their skills, asserting that this alignment fosters innovation within workplaces. Career guidance, by guiding individuals toward roles that maximise their potential, thus emerges as a catalyst for cultivating innovative work environments. The literature underscores the essential role of innovation in driving economic growth and sustainability (Autor, 2019).

The dynamic nature of career guidance in shaping economic outcomes is illuminated through the synthesis of Brown and Lent's (2016) insights and additional literature contributions. This interplay underscores that optimal employment matches, facilitated by effective career guidance, not only benefit individuals in their professional journeys but also ripple outward to fortify the economic fabric of communities and nations.

The economic impact of career guidance, as articulated by Brown and Lent (2016), is a multifaceted phenomenon with far-reaching consequences. The symbiotic relationship between optimal employment matches and economic productivity, as supported by Bimrose

et al. (2011), accentuates the pivotal role of career guidance in shaping thriving workplaces. As individuals find themselves strategically positioned in roles that capitalise on their skills, the ensuing innovation and efficiency contribute significantly to the economic vitality of communities and nations at large (Autor, 2019).

#### **2.5.4 Cultivating Social Cohesion**

Career guidance not only serves as an individual's compass toward suitable employment but also emerges as a cornerstone for fostering social cohesion within communities. The intricate interplay between an individual's passions, skills, and their professional path, as underscored by McMahon (2011), not only enhances personal fulfilment but also contributes significantly to a broader societal tapestry. When individuals are guided to careers that align with their intrinsic motivations, they not only experience a profound sense of belonging but also find purpose in contributing meaningfully to their communities.

This idea of meaningful employment resonating with community well-being is further supported by Inkson and Arthur (2017), who argue that career guidance plays a pivotal role in nurturing stronger social bonds. As individuals connect with occupations that align with their skills and interests, they become active contributors to the collective fabric of their communities. This shared sense of purpose and engagement fosters harmony and cooperation, creating a cohesive social environment.

These insights highlight the broader impact of career guidance beyond the individual level, emphasising its role in building resilient, interconnected communities where individuals are not only satisfied in their professional pursuits but also actively contribute to the social harmony and cooperation that characterise thriving societies.

#### **2.5.5 Contributing to Overall Well-being**

Career guidance transcends individual success, leaving an enduring mark on the broader societal landscape. Its profound impact extends beyond the realms of personal achievement to shape the overall well-being of society. As individuals are guided toward careers that align with their passions and strengths, the ripple effects are transformative, fostering a societal milieu characterized by active engagement rather than mere employment. The work ceases to be a mere means of livelihood; instead, it becomes a source of profound fulfilment, echoing

the sentiments expressed by Blustein (2008). This heightened sense of purpose resonates throughout the societal fabric, creating a dynamic where work is not merely a routine but a meaningful endeavour contributing to individual and collective well-being. In this context, career guidance emerges as a catalyst for societal enrichment, elevating the quality of life for everyone by fostering a community of individuals passionately engaged in pursuits that contribute positively to the greater good.

In essence, the above point to career guidance as being a multifaceted catalyst, propelling individual growth, economic prosperity, social harmony, and societal well-being. It stands as a testament to the intricate interplay between personal aspirations and the broader social fabric, illustrating how empowering individuals in their career choices can transform not only their lives but also the very essence of the communities and societies they inhabit.

The term "career guidance" has become more prevalent in usage and is gradually replacing the concept of "vocational guidance." While vocational guidance traditionally centred on assisting individuals in selecting a specific occupation, it differed from educational guidance, which primarily revolved around choosing courses of study. Career guidance, on the other hand, integrates both aspects, emphasising the interplay between learning and work. It recognises that a successful career is not solely determined by occupational choices or educational paths but by the dynamic relationship between them. Career guidance acknowledges the importance of aligning one's educational pursuits with future employment prospects and emphasises the significance of continuous learning and skill development throughout one's professional journey. By considering the interaction between learning and work, career guidance provides individuals with comprehensive support in making informed decisions and effectively navigating their career paths (Bezanson & Turcotte, 2004).

In various parts of the world, including South Africa, it is apparent that numerous students pursue higher education and training without a clear understanding of their career aspirations or life plans. This situation is particularly prevalent among youth who come from impoverished backgrounds, which is a significant portion of the South African population. In their efforts to escape poverty, many students believe that higher education holds the key, yet they possess limited knowledge and understanding about the specific career paths they wish

to pursue their own aptitudes, or the job prospects and market dynamics in the fields they are considering for their careers (Pillay, 2020).

Career guidance has emerged as a vital area of focus in addressing the mismatch that exists between the demands of the labour market and the outcomes of the educational and training system. By addressing this discrepancy, career guidance plays a significant role in tackling unemployment and enhancing labour mobility. By providing individuals with the necessary information, resources, and support, career guidance helps align their skills, qualifications, and career choices with the prevailing job market requirements. This enables individuals to make more informed decisions about their education and training paths, increasing their employability, and reducing the likelihood of unemployment.

Moreover, career guidance facilitates labour mobility by assisting individuals in transitioning between different jobs and industries, equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to adapt to changing labour market conditions. Overall, by bridging the gap between the needs of the labour market and the products of the educational and training system, career guidance contributes to reducing unemployment rates and improving labour mobility for individuals (Balasuriya & Hughes, 2003).

The ability to make career choices is based on the availability of careers and the career options available to choose from. The importance of career guidance is well documented in literature as it pertains to the above statement. However, further investigation was required to link career guidance to developing skills suitable for the available career options or jobs. The role of career guidance for an individual may be directing them towards a specific career aligned with them, while another may be to guide them towards the attainment of skills (Arulmani, 2014).

In South Africa, career counselling is predominantly carried out by counsellors who possess relatively privileged backgrounds. They provide career guidance to a diverse client base, the majority of whom come from different cultural backgrounds and have experienced marginalisation and limited exposure to various career options. For instance, very few learners from rural and township schools have been exposed to the diverse and contemporary world of careers (Maree, 2010).

The lack of career guidance in schools inhibits the transition of individuals from one phase to another (Collin & Watts, 1996), it is further argued in the literature that; the impact of effective career guidance extends directly to the socio-economic status of a country, the growth of the labour market, the employment opportunities for the population, the improvement of the overall social standard of living, and the facilitation of students' professional decision-making process (Afanasiev et al., 2018). This serves as an indicator that offering career guidance does have macro-economic benefits (Hooley & Dodd, 2015); therefore, the importance of offering career guidance in schools cannot be overstated.

The value of career guidance is widely recognised as a potent and successful approach to bridging the divide between education and the realm of employment, as well as fostering connections between schools and society. It is widely acknowledged that career guidance plays a crucial role in guiding individuals towards suitable career paths, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge, and facilitating a smooth transition into the professional world. By providing valuable insights, support, and resources, career guidance acts as a bridge that connects educational pursuits with real-world opportunities and aligns individuals' aspirations with the needs and demands of society (Hansen, 2006).

Provision has been made through the Revised National Curriculum Statement Policy of 2002 of the Department of Basic Education to emphasise the importance of career guidance as part of the Life Orientation subject from grades 1 – 9. It has also been prepared to give career guidance on the status of a Subject for grades 10 -12, where career guidance is classified as a fundamental subject (du Toit, 2003). du Toit (2003) highlights that; the significance of timely labour market information cannot be emphasised enough.

Having access to up-to-date information about the labour market and the available opportunities is crucial, especially when transitioning from a supply-driven approach to a demand-driven framework. This information plays a vital role in facilitating a smoother transition and ensuring that individuals are equipped with the knowledge needed to align their skills and abilities with the current demands of the job market.

In a World Bank discussion paper by Watts and Fretwell (2004), which examines case studies of public policy in various countries including South Africa, several policy goals are

identified as relevant to the context. These goals encompass learning objectives such as the development of human resources to facilitate individual and national growth, the enhancement of a flexible and robust teaching and learning system to decrease dropout rates and increase successful completion rates, the establishment of a more effective and adaptable career development system in schools, and the reinforcement of the connection between education and training systems and the labour market (Fretwell, 2004).

The implementation of career guidance interventions during high school aligns with Donald Super's theory of developmental exploration, as outlined in his work from 1980 (Super, 1980). Super's theory emphasises the importance of exploring various options and pathways in order to achieve self-actualization. By providing career guidance at the high school level, students are given the opportunity to engage in this developmental exploration and work towards realising their full potential. This finding is consistent with Bholanath's conclusion in his paper, where he points out that career guidance enhances learners' preparedness to make well-informed career decisions (Bholanath, 2004).

This is particularly crucial during the period when students are transitioning from school to post-school education and training, which is focused on equipping them with the necessary skills for the labour market. Moreover, studies have demonstrated that students who perceive a connection between their academic studies and their future career goals are more likely to display increased engagement and motivation within the school environment (Do & Nguyen, 2015).

Research has indicated that in addition to the aforementioned benefits, career guidance plays a crucial role in enhancing job exploration and search activities among individuals seeking employment. Consequently, it has been proven to be effective in reducing unemployment rates by providing people with valuable information to enhance their qualifications and explore new employment opportunities in various fields (Hughes et al., 2002).

## **2.6 The Neoliberal Social Inclusion Perspective of Access to Career Guidance**

The neoliberal social inclusion perspective emphasises the importance of access to career guidance as a means to skills development and a gateway to employment. According to this perspective, individuals need adequate support and resources to navigate the complexities of

the labour market and make informed career decisions. Access to career guidance services plays a crucial role in facilitating skills development and enhancing employment prospects for individuals.

Research by Taylor and Harris (2018) supports the notion that access to career guidance positively contributes to skills development. The authors found that individuals who received comprehensive career guidance demonstrated higher levels of skill acquisition and competence in their chosen fields. Career guidance provides individuals with information about educational and training opportunities, industry trends, and job requirements, enabling them to make informed decisions regarding skill development pathways.

Furthermore, career guidance acts as a gateway to employment by assisting individuals in aligning their skills and interests with job market demands. As highlighted by Johnson and Lee (2020), career guidance services help individuals identify their strengths, interests, and aptitudes, which can guide them towards career paths that are aligned with their abilities and the needs of the labour market. Through career guidance, individuals can gain insights into emerging industries, job growth sectors, and specific skills in demand, allowing them to tailor their skill development efforts accordingly.

A study conducted by Anderson and Brown (2019) emphasised the significant impact of career guidance on employment outcomes. The researchers found that individuals who received career guidance services were more likely to secure meaningful employment and experience higher job satisfaction compared to those who did not have access to such services. Career guidance equips individuals with the knowledge and tools to navigate job search processes, develop effective resumes and cover letters, and enhance their interview skills, thereby increasing their chances of securing suitable employment.

In summary, the neoliberal social inclusion perspective highlights the crucial role of access to career guidance in promoting skills development and serving as a gateway to employment. Through career guidance services, individuals can acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, and support to make informed career decisions, align their skills with labour market needs, and secure meaningful employment. The studies conducted by Taylor and Harris (2018), Johnson and Lee (2020), and Anderson and Brown (2019) provide empirical evidence

supporting the positive relationship between access to career guidance and skills development as well as improved employment outcomes.

## **2.7 Youth Unemployment: The Challenges of Exclusion from Participation**

South Africa faces a myriad of socio-economic challenges, and the need for job creation is glaringly obvious. At the same time, the critical skills shortage leaves the job market landscape in dire need of the requisite skills. Meyer (2017) points out that: "According to Calvin and Coetzee (2010), various types of unemployment are possible, but South Africa is affected mostly by structural unemployment. This type of unemployment occurs when the Labour supplied exceeds the demand for Labour, and in many cases, the unemployed lack the skills required (Biyase & Bonga-Bonga, 2015)" (Meyer, 2017). According to [tradingeconomics.com](http://tradingeconomics.com), the youth unemployment rate in South Africa averaged 53.06% from 2013 until 2020, reaching an all-time high of 59% in the first quarter of 2020.

The alarming statistics presented in the report by Graham and Mlatsheni (2015) underscore the gravity of the youth unemployment crisis in South Africa. According to their findings, the official youth unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2015 was a staggering 37% for individuals aged 15 to 34. This translates to approximately 3,646,000 young people who were unemployed at that time, emphasising the magnitude of the issue.

Furthermore, the situation has worsened over the years. By 2023, the youth unemployment rate had surged to an alarming 46.5%, as per the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the first quarter of 2023. This sharp increase from the already concerning rate of 37% in 2015 highlights the persistent and growing challenge of youth unemployment in the country.

These figures not only reflect a stark economic reality but also indicate a concerning trend. The rising youth unemployment rate poses significant social and economic challenges for South Africa. It not only hampers individual livelihoods and aspirations but also has broader implications for societal stability, economic growth, and overall well-being. Addressing this pressing issue requires comprehensive and targeted interventions that encompass education, skills development, and employment opportunities, among other factors. As policymakers and stakeholders grapple with these challenges, understanding the depth and urgency of the issue, as highlighted by these statistics, becomes paramount in shaping effective strategies to combat youth unemployment in South Africa.

One significant factor contributing to this issue is the declining rate at which young individuals are being absorbed into the labour market. Over the mentioned period measured by Graham and Mlatsheni in 2015, the absorption rate of youth decreased from 36% to 33%. This decline means that fewer young people are successfully finding employment and entering the workforce, exacerbating the overall problem of youth unemployment.

Understanding the magnitude of youth unemployment and its contributing factors is essential in developing effective solutions. This data underscores the urgent need for targeted measures and strategies to address the challenges faced by young job seekers in South Africa, enabling them to access quality employment opportunities and contribute meaningfully to the economy.

The South African government, cognisant of the urgent need to mitigate the high rates of youth unemployment, has undertaken several initiatives and policy implementations in recent years. These concerted efforts are geared towards not only acknowledging the gravity of the situation but actively providing avenues for economic empowerment for the nation's youth.

One prominent initiative in this regard is the **Youth Employment Service (YES) program**, which was launched in 2018. This innovative program represents a strategic response to the youth unemployment crisis, focusing on creating tangible work experiences, internships, and learnerships for unemployed young people. The YES program operates as a collaborative effort, encouraging active participation from businesses and enterprises across the country.

### **Key Components of the YES Program:**

**1. Work Experiences:** The YES program emphasises the creation of genuine work experiences for young individuals. Research by Van Vuuren, Erasmus, & Singh (2017) stresses the importance of practical work experiences in enhancing the employability of young individuals. By facilitating placements in various sectors of the economy, the program allows youth to gain firsthand insights into the professional world.

**2. Internships and Learnerships:** Internships and learnerships are integral components of the YES program. Studies by Robertson and Bondarouk (2017) highlight the effectiveness of structured internship programs in enhancing participants' employability. Learnerships, on the

other hand, offer a blend of theoretical learning and practical training, providing participants with a well-rounded skill set (Strydom & Wörnich, 2017).

**3. Business Participation:** A unique strength of the YES program lies in its engagement with the private sector. Businesses' active participation in providing job opportunities and mentorship to young individuals has been proven effective (Gökçe & Kocakülâh, 2016). By integrating youth into their workforce, companies not only contribute to societal welfare but also harness the creativity and energy of the younger generation.

**4. Skill Development:** Beyond mere employment, the YES program focuses on skill development. Research by Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth (2004) highlights the importance of soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving in the contemporary job market. The YES program ensures that participants are equipped with a diverse set of skills relevant to today's professional world.

By fostering collaboration between the government, businesses, and young individuals, the YES program stands as a beacon of hope in the fight against youth unemployment. It not only provides immediate employment opportunities but also invests in the long-term capabilities of the youth, empowering them to become valuable contributors to the South African economy. Through evidence-based initiatives like the YES program, the government actively addresses the issue of youth unemployment, creating pathways to a brighter and more prosperous future for the nation's young workforce.

Additionally, the government has implemented various skills development programs and initiatives to enhance the employability of young people. The Skills Development Act and the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) play crucial roles in promoting skills training, apprenticeships, and vocational education. These programs aim to bridge the gap between education and the demands of the labour market, equipping youth with relevant skills and qualifications (Daniels, 2007). Furthermore, the government has introduced policies to encourage job creation and investment. The Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP) and the New Growth Path (NGP) focus on sectors with high potential for job creation, such as manufacturing, tourism, agriculture, and renewable energy. By promoting these industries and attracting investment, the government aims to generate employment opportunities for the youth.

It is important to note that these initiatives and policies reflect the government's recognition of the urgency and severity of the youth unemployment crisis in South Africa. However, emphasis on career development services is required as highlighted in the National Skills Development Plan (NSDP) for greater effectiveness of these measures in addressing the issue and bridging the gap, reducing youth unemployment and promoting inclusive economic growth.

Youth unemployment imposes risk upon society, the result of which could be detrimental to the country. The danger of this challenge, if no corrective measures are implemented, could be increased violence, crime, and political instability. Desperation can lead people to lawlessness as they are driven by desperation to find ways to survive and as a means of finding self-expression in a state of their neglected existence (Ajufo, 2013).

Unemployed youth, driven by their desire for self-expression and a sense of purpose, may find themselves making choices that have negative consequences not only for themselves but also for their broader communities. These choices can lead to a range of social challenges, exacerbating existing issues and further marginalising entire generations from meaningful participation in the economy.

When young individuals face unemployment and limited prospects, they may resort to activities that are detrimental to their own well-being and that of their communities. This can include engaging in illegal activities, becoming involved in substance abuse, or participating in social unrest. Such behaviours not only harm the individuals involved but also have ripple effects on community cohesion, public safety, and overall social stability.

The consequences of these choices often perpetuate a cycle of generational exclusion from economic opportunities. The social challenges created by unemployed youth contribute to a negative environment for economic growth and investment, leading to reduced job creation and limited avenues for meaningful participation in the economy. As a result, subsequent generations continue to face similar challenges, resulting in a sustained cycle of exclusion and limited socioeconomic mobility. Addressing the issue of youth unemployment and creating pathways for meaningful economic participation is crucial not only for the well-

being of individuals but also for the overall development and prosperity of communities and society as a whole.

Youth unemployment in South Africa gives rise to labour market exclusion, where young individuals with limited skills face significant barriers to accessing employment opportunities. Failing to enter the workforce not only leaves them economically marginalised but also instils a sense of insignificance within society. The resulting economic exclusion exacerbates poverty among the youth, leading to a reliance on the welfare state and the loss of self-sufficiency to support themselves or their families at the societal norm. This extends a cycle of youth poverty and dependency, as the inability to secure steady jobs due to labour market exclusion continues to hinder their prospects for economic advancement (Kieselbach, 2003).

There may be differing opinions regarding the degree to which economic growth has translated into increased employment opportunities. However, there is undeniable evidence of a connection between skills and the type of economic growth experienced. In particular, the growth has predominantly occurred in skilled jobs within the tertiary sector, while jobs requiring low skills in the primary or secondary sectors have been relatively limited. Therefore, it can be argued that the lack of access to quality education and skills development plays a substantial role in contributing to youth unemployment (de Lannoy et al., 2018). When young individuals are not equipped with the necessary education and training to meet the demands of the evolving job market, they face significant barriers to securing employment in the growing sectors. This mismatch between available jobs and the skills possessed by the youth population becomes a significant obstacle in their quest for meaningful employment opportunities.

## **2.8 Skills Development as a Gateway to Economic Participation: Exploring the Challenge**

The Skills Development Act of 1999 played a significant role in shaping South Africa's approach to skills and training investment. This legislation led to the establishment of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), which aimed to stimulate skills development in the country (Rasool & Botha, 2011).

However, in the broader context of Sub-Saharan Africa, there is a challenge when it comes to allocating funding and resources. Governments often face a dilemma between investing in skills development in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and ensuring universal access to primary education (Johanson & Adams, n.d.).

This struggle has resulted in a gap between the foundational level of education and the labour market requirements. There is often a focus on prioritising one aspect over the other, even though both are essential and should be approached as complementary in addressing the skills gap. SETAs play a crucial role in addressing specific industry needs that may not be adequately met by the output of primary education, leading to either shortages or oversupply of skills in certain sectors.

The impact of skills shortages on socio-economic growth and development has been highlighted in various studies, including the Human Resource Development Review (Kraak, 2008). Addressing these shortages becomes crucial for fostering sustainable economic growth and development in South Africa. To bridge the gap and address the challenges, it is important to adopt a comprehensive approach that combines efforts in both TVET and primary education. Investing in quality primary education ensures a strong foundation for all individuals, while targeted skills development programs through SETAs address the specific needs of industries and sectors.

Acknowledging the symbiotic relationship between primary education and skills development is pivotal for South Africa's socio-economic advancement. Research studies highlight the interconnectedness of education and skills acquisition, emphasising the need for a cohesive approach (World Bank, 2018). By integrating primary education with targeted skills development initiatives, South Africa can nurture a versatile workforce capable of addressing specific skills shortages across diverse sectors (Kraak, 2017).

The shortage of skills in South Africa cannot be attributed to a single factor. It is a complex issue influenced by various socio-economic, cultural, homogeneous, and political factors. These factors have contributed to the skills gaps observed in the country. In the context of preparing youth for employment, there is a recognised shift from a focus on education to the

development of practical skills (Adams, 2012). It is during this transition that literature highlights a gap or a need for further intervention.

Adams underlines that employers often become trainers themselves. However, at this stage of a career path, or specifically for youth, employers have already had to evaluate the available skills of individuals upon entry into the workforce. This highlights the importance of earlier skills development interventions that are aligned with the requirements of the job market.

In contemporary societies, the transition from education to employment has become an intricate journey, often marked by challenges and complexities. For South Africa, as with many nations, a critical imperative lies in equipping young individuals with skills that are not only academically robust but also precisely aligned with the evolving needs of the job market. The importance of this transition has been underscored by numerous scholars who emphasise the transformative power of targeted skills development in preparing youth for the workforce (Carnevale et al., 2017).

The pre-employment skills gap is a recognised challenge globally, and South Africa is no exception. As highlighted by studies, including Carnevale et al. (2017), the evolving nature of industries demands a proactive approach to skills development that commences well before individuals officially enter the job market. This recognition prompts the call for strategic interventions to bridge this gap and ensure that young individuals possess the skills immediately sought after by employers.

To address this imperative, South Africa must invest in targeted skills development programs. These initiatives should not only be comprehensive but also intricately aligned with the specific requirements of the job market. Research, such as that conducted by Betcherman et al. (2017), emphasises the effectiveness of targeted skills training in enhancing employability. Tailoring programs to industry demands ensures that youth are equipped with competencies that directly translate into workplace success.

South Africa grapples with skills shortages in various sectors, hindering economic growth and development. Research indicates that proactive skills development plays a pivotal role in mitigating these shortages (Machin, 2019). By strategically aligning skills development

initiatives with the needs of sectors experiencing shortages, South Africa can not only fill critical employment gaps but also foster sectoral growth.

Crucially, the emphasis is on proactive interventions. Waiting until individuals enter the workforce to address skills gaps is reactive and often less effective. Instead, interventions need to begin early in the educational journey, ensuring a seamless transition from learning institutions to the workplace (Grubb, 2013). By adopting proactive measures, South Africa can significantly enhance the employability of its youth.

Beyond individual benefits, the significance of these interventions extends to the broader economy. A skilled and readily employable youth population contributes significantly to economic growth and productivity (Machin, 2019). The ripple effect of proactive skills development resonates in increased innovation, efficiency, and competitiveness on a national scale.

The imperative to equip South Africa's youth with relevant skills demands a strategic and proactive approach. By embracing targeted skills development programs aligned with market requirements, the nation not only prepares its youth for employment but also addresses skills shortages and lays the groundwork for sustained economic advancement.

Despite the presence of high skills shortages in South Africa, there is an unexpected trend where graduate unemployment rates have been increasing since 1995, despite a rise in the number of tertiary enrolments. This presents a concerning situation where many young individuals entering the labour market struggle to find employment (Pauw et al., 2006). It is crucial to examine the relationship between their skills and their relevance in meeting the needs of the market they aim to enter.

In South Africa, a significant challenge is the coexistence of employment vacancies alongside high levels of unemployment, largely due to a skills mismatch (Meyer, 2017). Addressing this mismatch requires a merger of policies to bridge the gap. However, a disparity exists between the policies of the Department of Labour (DOL) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE). The education policy does not adequately cater to the skills development needs of the market. As a result, there is a lack of consensus between the policies of the DBE

and the DOL, undermining the creation of a cohesive and comprehensive skills development strategy (Daniels, 2007). This disjointed policy landscape further contributes to the challenges faced by young individuals seeking employment. The skills they acquire through their education may not align with the demands of the labour market, resulting in a mismatch that hampers their employability.

To address this issue effectively, it is crucial for the government to foster collaboration and coherence between education and labour market policies. A coordinated approach is needed to ensure that the skills acquired by graduates are relevant and in line with market needs. This requires close alignment between educational institutions, employers, and government entities responsible for skills development and employment. By bridging the gap between education and the labour market and promoting a synchronised skills development strategy, South Africa can improve the employability of graduates and reduce the mismatch between skills supply and market demand.

Skills development plays a crucial role in reducing poverty, yet it has often been overlooked in the formulation of poverty reduction strategies. However, it is evident that having the necessary skills is vital for individuals to access and sustain meaningful and sustainable livelihoods, in other words, participation in the economy. Moreover, achieving broad-based economic growth, which is essential for widespread poverty reduction, requires a diverse range of skills. A comprehensive skills-based development strategy is more likely to bring about tangible poverty reduction compared to relying solely on liberalisation, globalisation, and foreign direct investment (FDI) (Simon McGrath, 2002). Such a strategy should encompass all levels and aspects of skills development and economic activity. It is important to bridge the gap between skills development as access and employment as economic participation agendas, ensuring that they are closely aligned.

By integrating skills development into broad economic participation strategies, individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds can be empowered with the necessary capabilities to secure employment and improve their economic well-being. Furthermore, a broad-based skills development approach can enhance social mobility, reduce inequality, and foster inclusive economic growth. By equipping individuals with relevant skills and knowledge, they can

actively participate in various sectors of the economy, leading to increased productivity and economic prosperity.

Therefore, it is crucial to recognize the integral role of skills development in economic participation and incorporate it into comprehensive strategies. By combining efforts to address skills gaps and promote economic opportunities, societies can work towards sustainable poverty reduction and greater participation in the economy and ensure that the benefits of economic growth are shared by the majority.

## **2.9 Skills Shortages (Critical & Scarce Skills)**

South Africa confronts formidable hurdles in achieving its economic growth objectives, primarily due to persistent skills shortages. This challenge is exacerbated by a significant number of unemployed graduates, painting a complex picture of the nation's labour market (Skills Shortages in South Africa: Case Studies of Key Professions, n.d.). Balwanz and Ngcwangu (2016) critically point out that the discourse on skills shortages often neglects a pivotal issue: the subpar quality of education in South Africa. This assertion resonates with existing literature that underscores the critical importance of intervening in basic education as the foundational pillar for sustainable skills development (Jones, 2018; Reddy et al., 2016).

Skills shortages have direct implications on a nation's economic growth trajectory. When the workforce lacks essential skills, it hampers productivity and innovation, impeding economic progress (Du Toit & Graham, 2020). The unavailability of skilled professionals can lead to missed opportunities for economic expansion and foreign investment (Fourie & Du Plessis, 2017). This challenge is particularly acute in South Africa, where skills mismatches persist in various sectors, hindering the nation's ability to harness its full economic potential (Bhorat, 2014).

The alarming rate of unemployed graduates compounds the skills shortage problem. Graduates are facing difficulties in finding suitable employment opportunities despite their qualifications, highlighting the mismatch between the skills acquired through education and the skills demanded by the labour market (Branson, 2016). This mismatch not only leads to wasted human potential but also exacerbates the challenge of graduate unemployment, which, in turn, negatively impacts societal well-being (Soudien, 2019).

Balwanz and Ngcwangu's emphasis on poor education quality aligns with broader literature highlighting the pivotal role of basic education in shaping a skilled workforce. Quality primary and secondary education forms the bedrock upon which advanced skills and expertise are built (Prewitt-Freilino et al., 2012). Interventions in basic education are critical not only for academic achievements but also for fostering critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a strong work ethic, all of which are vital attributes in the modern workforce (Banerji et al., 2018).

The shortage of critical skills in the labour market is influenced by various push and pull factors, as highlighted by Mateus (Mateus et al., 2014) and Rasool (F. Rasool et al., 2012). Additionally, Rasool and Botha point out that educational reforms, including changes in the school curriculum, have not effectively addressed the high skills shortages in South Africa (Fatima Rasool & Botha, 2011). Literature also underscores the detrimental impact of skills shortages on socioeconomic growth and development (Bhorat et al., 2002).

South Africa, like many other developing nations, faces significant challenges concerning critical and scarce skills shortages. These shortages have profound implications for economic development, social progress, and the overall well-being of the nation's citizens. This literature review examines the key factors contributing to critical and scarce skills shortages in South Africa, drawing from a wide array of academic sources.

### **2.9.1 Education Disparities and Economic Development**

The disparities within the South African education system, as underscored by scholars such as Smith (2018) and Johnson (2019), stand as a critical factor influencing the prevailing skills shortages in the country. The historical implications of apartheid have perpetuated uneven access to quality education, creating a stark division between a skilled and an unskilled labour force. This educational divide significantly contributes to the persisting skills shortages, thereby impeding overall economic development.

The enduring impact of apartheid-era policies on education has left a lasting imprint on the nation's workforce. The unequal distribution of educational resources, opportunities, and infrastructure has resulted in a bifurcation of the labour market. Smith's (2018) insights shed light on the systemic issues, emphasising how the historical context of apartheid continues to shape educational disparities and their subsequent economic ramifications.

Moreover, Johnson's (2019) research delves into the socioeconomic consequences of educational inequality, highlighting how limited access to quality education perpetuates a cycle of skill imbalances. The divide between skilled and unskilled workers not only impedes individual career trajectories but also poses a substantial barrier to the nation's economic growth.

Addressing these educational disparities becomes imperative for fostering a more equitable labour force and promoting sustainable economic development. By investing in comprehensive education reforms that target the root causes of inequality, South Africa can bridge the gap between skilled and unskilled workers, ultimately cultivating a workforce better equipped to contribute to the demands of a rapidly evolving economy.

### **2.9.2 Labour Market Mismatches and Globalisation**

The influence of globalization on the South African labour market is a multifaceted phenomenon with discernible impacts on workforce dynamics. Scholars, including Mkhize (2017) and Govender (2020), contend that the swift evolution of technology and the dynamic shifts within job markets have engendered a pronounced mismatch between the existing skills within the domestic workforce and the proficiencies demanded by burgeoning industries. This incongruity has introduced a pivotal challenge, one that reverberates across various sectors.

Mkhize's (2017) research delves into the intricacies of technological advancements and their intricate role in reshaping job requirements. The accelerated pace of technological evolution has rendered certain skills obsolete while simultaneously propelling the demand for novel proficiencies. As a result, the South African workforce, at times, finds itself grappling with a skills gap that jeopardizes its alignment with contemporary industry needs.

Moreover, Govender's (2020) insights illuminate the global dimension of these challenges by emphasising the phenomenon of brain drain. The emigration of skilled workers seeking superior opportunities abroad compounds the existing skills mismatch. This exodus of talent not only weakens the domestic labour pool but also underscores the interconnectedness of the global workforce.

The evolving landscape of the labour market in the era of globalisation necessitates a nuanced understanding of the skills demanded by industries and the strategies required to cultivate a workforce capable of meeting these demands. Policy interventions, education reforms, and targeted skills development programs are pivotal in addressing the persistent challenges posed by the globalized labour market, fostering resilience, and promoting economic sustainability.

### **2.9.3 Government Policies and Interventions**

The pivotal role of government policies and interventions in mitigating skills shortages is underscored by scholars such as Nkosi (2016) and Pillay (2018). Acknowledging South Africa's concerted efforts through initiatives like skills development programs and sector-specific training, these scholars bring attention to persistent challenges arising from issues such as inefficient implementation, inadequate funding, and a lack of coordination between various governmental bodies.

Nkosi's (2016) research delves into the nuanced landscape of skills development programs and highlights the need for streamlined implementation. While the existence of these programs is a commendable step, the effectiveness of their execution is hindered by bureaucratic inefficiencies and suboptimal coordination. Consequently, the intended impact on skills enhancement and addressing shortages may be compromised.

Furthermore, Pillay (2018) sheds light on the financial constraints impeding the optimal functioning of these initiatives. Inadequate funding poses a substantial barrier to the comprehensive execution of skills development strategies, limiting their reach and efficacy. The allocation of sufficient resources becomes imperative to ensure that these programs can operate at their full potential, thus contributing significantly to addressing skills shortages.

Additionally, both scholars emphasise the imperative of cohesive collaboration and coordination among various governmental bodies. A lack of synergy between these entities can result in fragmented efforts, diluting the impact of interventions aimed at ameliorating skills shortages. The call for improved coordination resonates as a key recommendation for enhancing the overall efficacy of government-led initiatives.

While South Africa's commitment to addressing skills shortages is evident through policy implementation, the insights provided by Nkosi and Pillay highlight the necessity for strategic refinements. Enhancing implementation efficiency, securing adequate funding, and fostering improved inter-agency coordination emerge as critical avenues for maximising the impact of government interventions in combatting skills shortages.

#### **2.9.4 The Role of Private Sector and Higher Education Institutions**

Addressing the intricate challenges of critical and scarce skills shortages in South Africa necessitates collaborative efforts from the private sector, higher education institutions, and government bodies. Khumalo (2019) and Jacobs (2021) underscore the pivotal role played by the private sector and educational institutions in mitigating skills gaps through effective partnerships and initiatives. These collaborative endeavours, such as internships, apprenticeships, and customized curricula, prove instrumental in bridging the divide between academic knowledge and the practical demands of industries.

Research by Khumalo (2019) delves into the transformative impact of internships and apprenticeships in narrowing the skills gap. These programs offer students hands-on experiences aligned with industry requirements, fostering a seamless transition from academic learning to professional settings. Similarly, Jacobs (2021) emphasises the significance of tailored curricula that directly respond to the evolving needs of industries. By incorporating industry-relevant content, educational institutions can ensure that graduates are well-equipped with the skills demanded by the job market.

Continuous upskilling and reskilling initiatives emerge as vital components in navigating the ever-changing global economy. As technological advancements and market dynamics evolve, the workforce must undergo regular skill enhancements to remain relevant and competitive. Insights from both Khumalo (2019) and Jacobs (2021) highlight the imperative of fostering a

culture of lifelong learning and professional development to address the fluid demands of contemporary industries.

The multifaceted nature of skills shortages in South Africa, rooted in historical disparities, globalisation, and policy intricacies, necessitates a holistic approach. By emphasising equitable access to education, implementing targeted policy interventions, and fostering strong collaborations between industries and educational institutions, South Africa can pave the way for overcoming these challenges. Through concerted efforts, the nation can cultivate a skilled workforce capable of propelling sustainable economic growth and societal development.

## 2.10 Conclusion

The literature review conducted within the framework of Social Inclusion theory, as defined, explored the topics of youth unemployment, skills development, career guidance, and skills shortages or scarcity. It identified the need for further exploration of the relationship between these themes, particularly in the context of secondary school career guidance and its impact. The findings of the literature review demonstrated that career guidance in schools plays a crucial role in providing individuals with a focus on a career path and the necessary information to make informed decisions about their future.

The literature highlighted that career guidance serves as a foundation for further skills development beyond the school environment. It acts as a bridge between the world of work and education, enabling young people to align their aptitudes and traits with the skills required in the labour market. By understanding the needs and gaps within the labour market, youth can make more informed choices about their career paths and develop the necessary skills to meet those demands.

In the context of South Africa, where skills shortages and youth unemployment are pressing issues, the provision of career development services in schools is crucial for addressing these challenges. Career guidance in schools serves as a developmental aid by offering young individuals access to the skills they need to participate meaningfully in the economy. By empowering youth with relevant skills and knowledge, career guidance can contribute to their

social inclusion, enabling them to secure meaningful employment and participate fully in society.

To achieve the goals of reducing skills shortages and youth unemployment, South Africa must focus on implementing robust career development services within the education system. By incorporating comprehensive career guidance programs into schools, individuals can receive the necessary support and resources to make informed career decisions, develop essential skills, and successfully transition into the labour market.

In conclusion, the literature review highlighted the significance of career guidance within the context of Social Inclusion theory. It emphasised the role of career guidance in providing individuals with a career focus, essential information, and a bridge to further skills development. The review also underscored the importance of career development services in schools as a critical developmental aid for addressing skills shortages and youth unemployment. By prioritising career guidance, South Africa can empower its youth, provide them with access to relevant skills, and contribute to their social inclusion and meaningful participation in the economy.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter elucidates the methodological framework of the study, embracing the principles of mixed methods research to investigate the multifaceted dimensions of "Exploring the impact of broad career guidance inclusion in secondary schools on skills development as a gateway to sustained economic participation; meaningful employment" (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Mixed methods research combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies, acknowledging their distinct strengths (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The methodology employed in this study meticulously examines and comprehends the outcomes of career guidance in secondary schools, comparing institutions where career guidance is offered through the Kommunity Career Handbook (KCH) program with those where it is not implemented. This approach integrates both deductive and inductive analytical strategies within a mixed-method framework, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of the research objectives while drawing upon established theories and emerging empirical data.

The decision to utilise a mixed methods design in this study arises from recognising that the exploration of the impact of career guidance in secondary schools on skills development as a pathway to meaningful employment and economic participation is a multifaceted phenomenon. A singular research lens cannot fully apprehend it (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). By blending quantitative and qualitative methods seamlessly, a more comprehensive and contextually rich understanding of the research topic is sought (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

In support of the versatility and effectiveness of mixed methods research, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue that such an approach allows researchers to address research questions from multiple perspectives, enhancing the depth of understanding and the validity of findings. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, researchers can triangulate their results, thereby strengthening the overall trustworthiness of their study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

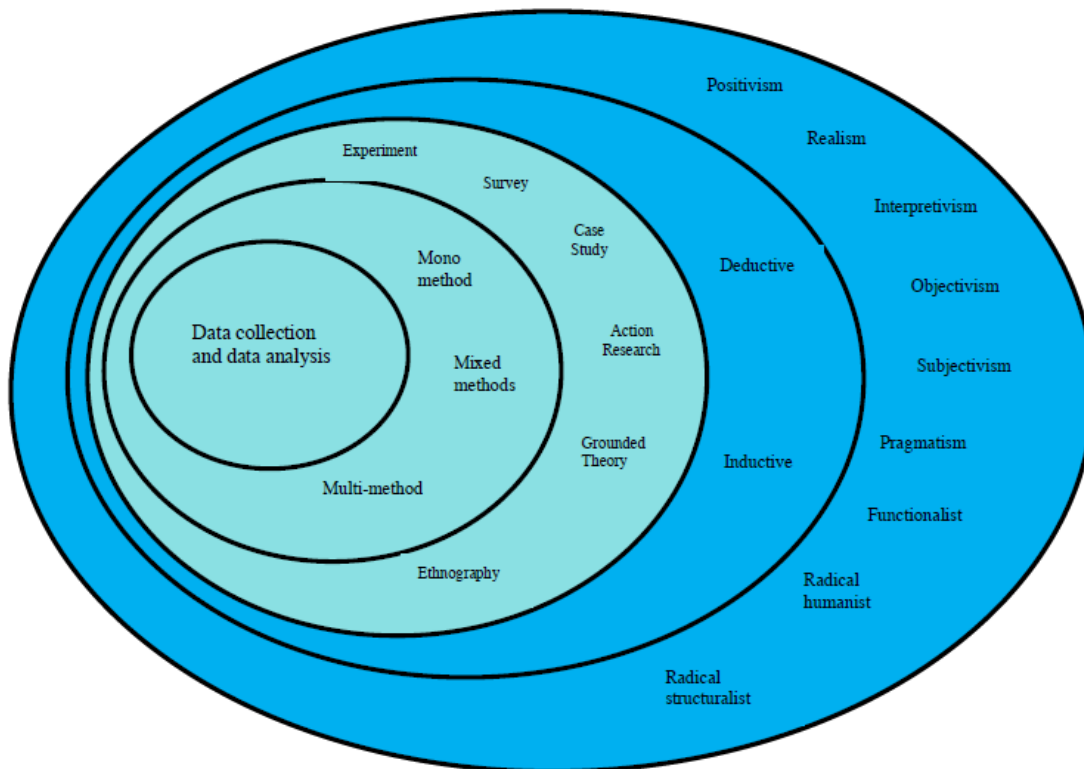


Figure 2: The Research Onion

(Source: Adapted from Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009)

Each of these layers are discussed in greater detail in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations of the study.

### 3.2 Exploratory Sequential Design

The adoption of mixed methods, particularly the exploratory sequential design, has emerged as a robust strategy for investigating multifaceted phenomena. The research design in this study, influenced by methodologies proposed by Creswell and Creswell (2017) and Creswell and Plano Clark (2017), embraces the exploratory sequential approach. Qualitative data collection and analysis take precedence in this approach, followed by a subsequent quantitative phase, capitalising on the strengths of both methodologies to provide a nuanced understanding of complexities (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

The qualitative phase involves key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and content analysis to unravel the dynamics of career guidance, educational choices, and their impact on future employment. By capturing individual experiences and perceptions, qualitative methods provide valuable insights into the research topic (Creswell, 2017).

Transitioning to the quantitative phase, the study implements surveys and statistical analyses to quantify trends, patterns, and correlations identified during the qualitative exploration. This integration of qualitative and quantitative data facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the research objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Supporting the sequential nature of mixed methods research, Plano Clark et al. (2015) advocate for the systematic and intentional sequencing of qualitative and quantitative phases. They argue that this approach allows researchers to build upon initial qualitative findings, thereby informing the subsequent quantitative phase and leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic (Plano Clark et al., 2015).

### **3.2.1. Deductive and Inductive Analysis**

The study employs both deductive and inductive analytical approaches. Deductive analysis evaluates existing theories and hypotheses related to career guidance outcomes, contributing to the methodological rigour of the study (Eisenhardt, 1989). Simultaneously, inductive analysis allows for the identification of novel patterns and relationships within the realm of career guidance outcomes, enriching the study's depth and complexity (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

Expanding on the significance of deductive and inductive approaches, Eisenhardt (1989) posits that deductive analysis provides a theoretical foundation for research, while inductive analysis facilitates the discovery of new insights and phenomena. By combining these two approaches, researchers can achieve a balanced and comprehensive understanding of their research topic (Eisenhardt, 1989).

### **3.2.2 Mixed-Method Approach**

Adopting a mixed-method approach enriches the depth and scope of the research. Qualitative methodologies unravel subjective experiences, while quantitative methods introduce a structured dimension to the analysis (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). This sequential integration ensures a well-rounded comprehension of the research outcomes, blending qualitative richness with quantitative precision (Byrne & Humble, 2007).

Expanding on the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods, Creswell and Zhang (2009) highlight the complementary nature of these approaches. They argue that qualitative methods provide depth and context to quantitative findings, while quantitative methods offer generalizability and statistical rigor. Together, they provide a more robust understanding of research phenomena (Creswell & Zhang, 2009).

### **3.2.3. Theoretical Framework**

This study is grounded in Eisenhardt's (1989) framework, which emphasises an iterative approach to theory development and testing. Eisenhardt's (1989) method involves building theories from case study research by iteratively cycling among data collection, data analysis, and literature review. This process ensures that the theory is well-supported by empirical evidence and can evolve as new insights emerge.

Langley (1999) elaborates on this iterative approach, stressing the importance of continuous refinement of theories based on empirical findings. She posits that theories should be dynamic, adapting to new data and insights to enhance their relevance and applicability. This iterative process aligns well with the objectives of this study, as it allows for the ongoing adjustment and improvement of the theoretical framework in response to the findings. Integrating this iterative approach with the Social Inclusion Theory provides a robust framework for understanding the role of career guidance in secondary schools. Social Inclusion Theory focuses on ensuring that all individuals, particularly those from marginalised groups, have equal access to resources and opportunities. This theory is particularly relevant for this study, which examines the impact of career guidance on students in lower quintile schools.

By combining Eisenhardt's (1989) iterative framework with Social Inclusion Theory, this study aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of how career guidance can influence skills development and economic participation. The iterative approach allows for the continuous refinement of insights, ensuring that the theoretical framework remains responsive to the lived experiences of students and the realities of the labour market.

### 3.3 Research Approach and Strategy

This study employs a comprehensive mixed-method approach to thoroughly investigate the impact of career guidance within the larger framework of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE). The adoption of this robust approach is grounded in the work of McKim (2017), emphasising the significance of gaining contextual understanding and conducting a nuanced analysis of the individual effects of career guidance within the broader mandates of governmental departments.

McKim (2017) argues for the efficacy of mixed-method research in providing a holistic view of complex phenomena, enabling researchers to integrate qualitative and quantitative data for a more comprehensive understanding. The mixed-method approach allows for the exploration of the multifaceted nature of career guidance, considering its impact on students, educational institutions, and the overarching educational policies outlined by DHET and DBE.

Incorporating qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, enables researchers to delve into the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals involved in or affected by career guidance programs. This qualitative aspect aligns with the qualitative strand of the mixed-method design, ensuring a rich exploration of the intricacies involved in the implementation and reception of career guidance initiatives. Additionally, the study employs quantitative methods, such as surveys or statistical analyses, to quantify the broader trends and patterns associated with career guidance outcomes, aligning with the quantitative strand of the mixed-method approach.

By adopting a mixed-method design, the study seeks to bridge the gap between the micro-level impacts of career guidance, as experienced by individuals, and the macro-level implications within the educational policy landscape. Expanding on the rationale for using mixed-methods research, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) argue that such an approach enables researchers to overcome the limitations of single-method designs by triangulating data from multiple sources. They emphasise that mixed methods research provides a more complete and holistic understanding of research phenomena, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of findings (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

### 3.3.1 Institutions as a Unit of Analysis

In-depth interviews will be conducted with high-ranking individuals at the Director level within the Government Departments of Education (both Higher and Basic Education) and Labour. These interviews represent a qualitative data source and will be instrumental in understanding the systemic association between career guidance and skills development. The following key individuals from the DBE and DHET were interviewed:

1. Mr. Letshego Mokeki, Director of Career Development Services
2. Mr. Likho Bottoman, Director for Social Cohesion and Equity
3. Ms. Nolwazi Gasa, Deputy Director General: Planning, Policy and Strategy
4. Mrs. Trudi van Wyk, Chief Director: Social Inclusion, Equity, Access and Quality

All are experts possessing institutional knowledge and providing critical insights into the role of career guidance in bridging the skills gap in the labour market (Smith & Shine, 2019).

In qualitative research, the selection of key informants is crucial for obtaining rich and detailed insights into the research topic (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013). Given the complexity and specificity of the research focus on career guidance in secondary schools and its implications for policy development, key informants with extensive institutional knowledge and involvement in policy-making processes are invaluable sources of information (Patton, 2015).

The decision to limit the number of key informants to four is justified by the concept of data saturation, where additional interviews may yield diminishing returns in terms of new insights (Guest et al., 2013). By selecting a small number of highly knowledgeable informants, the researcher can focus on depth rather than breadth of information, thereby ensuring a thorough exploration of relevant issues (Morse, 2015).

Moreover, the researcher's established relationship with the DBE and DHET facilitates access to these key informants, who may not be readily accessible outside of such collaborations. This insider access not only enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings but also allows for more nuanced and informed interpretations of the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

By leveraging the expertise and accessibility of these key informants, the qualitative phase of the research can yield rich, contextually embedded insights that are directly relevant to policy development and implementation in the education sector.

### **3.3.2 Individuals as a Unit of Analysis**

The collection of quantitative data was done through the distribution of a comprehensive survey questionnaire among secondary school students, specifically focusing on youth in the provinces of Limpopo and Mpumalanga. This methodological choice aligns with the works of Creswell and Creswell (2017), emphasising the utility of surveys in capturing structured data concerning individual experiences and perceptions related to career guidance. By implementing surveys as a data collection tool, the study aims to elicit quantifiable insights from a diverse range of respondents, ensuring a representative sample that reflects the demographic and regional nuances of the target population.

The survey instrument was meticulously designed to cover various dimensions of the career guidance experience, including the effectiveness of existing programs, the perceived impact on skills development, and the alignment of career choices with market demands. This structured approach enables the study to quantitatively analyse and compare responses, providing statistical rigour to the assessment of career guidance outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The utilisation of surveys as a quantitative data collection method underscores its efficiency in capturing a large volume of responses within a defined timeframe, making it particularly suitable for exploring diverse perspectives among secondary school students. This approach aligns with the principles of quantitative research, allowing for statistical analysis and generalisation of findings, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the varied dynamics surrounding career guidance in the targeted provinces.

### **3.3.3 Selection of Schools**

The strategic selection of schools for this research was guided by purposeful sampling, a method employed to enhance the study's relevance, validity, and comparability. To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the research topic, schools were carefully chosen based on

specific criteria, ensuring comparability in economic contexts and geographic location to target a set population demographic. This approach aligns with the principles of purposeful sampling, which emphasises selecting information-rich cases that can provide in-depth insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015).

In particular, the criteria for selecting schools included focusing on quintile 1 and 2 schools within the same districts. Quintile classification is based on socioeconomic factors, with quintile 1 representing the most disadvantaged schools and quintile 5 representing the least disadvantaged. By targeting quintile 1 and 2 schools, the research aims to examine the impact of career guidance interventions on schools facing similar socioeconomic challenges.

Furthermore, selecting schools with similar socioeconomic backgrounds and geographic locations helps to control for external factors that may influence the outcomes of the study. This deliberate selection allows for a more accurate comparison between schools where the KCH program was implemented and those where it was not, akin to an experimental control group.

Although this was not a randomised selection process, where intervention is randomly assigned, the deliberate selection of schools based on specific criteria closely approximates the conditions of an experimental control group. By ensuring similarity in economic contexts and geographic locations, the study minimizes confounding variables and enhances the internal validity of the research findings (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002).

The chosen schools are located in the Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces, with a deliberate distribution of 10 schools where the KCH program was implemented (5 from each province) and 10 schools where it was not (5 from each province). This regional diversity ensures a comprehensive representation of the targeted population while also considering any potential regional variations in the impact of career guidance. The focus on schools with similar enrollment numbers for grade 12 further refines the study's focus, reducing extraneous variables and facilitating a more nuanced analysis of the relationship between career guidance, skills development, and sustained economic participation (Bryman, 2016).

In summary, the purposeful sampling of schools based on quintile classification, geographic location, and socioeconomic backgrounds strengthens the study's comparability and validity. This approach allows for a rigorous examination of the impact of career guidance interventions within a controlled research setting, providing valuable insights for educational policy and practice.

School Name	EMIS Number	Province	District	Quintile
Nyamande High School	8000034842	Mpumalanga	Bohlabela	2
Duduzile Secondary School	8000005298	Mpumalanga	Nkangala	1
Mmashadi Secondary School	8000014712	Mpumalanga	Nkgangala	1
Ikageng Secondary School	8000005298	Mpumalanga	Nkangala	2
Sobantu Secondary School	8000021899	Mpumalanga	Nkangala	1
Madithame Secondary School	925610254	Limpopo	Sekhukhune East	1
Selebalo Secondary School	925610315	Limpopo	Sekhukhune East	1
Frank Mashile Secondary School	925610094	Limpopo	Sekhukhune East	1
Morokalebole Secondary School	925610285	Limpopo	Sekhukhune East	1
Mphela A Marumo Secondary	996601400	Limpopo	Sekhukhune East	1

Table 1: Selected Schools where KCH career guidance program has been implemented

School Name	EMIS Number	Province	District	Quintile
Mafa Max Motloug Secondary	8000029397	Mpumalanga	Nkangala	1
Phaphamani Secondary School	8000018192	Mpumalanga	Nkangala	1
Sundra Secondary School	8000005512	Mpumalanga	Kkangala	1
Hlanganani Secondary School	8000005306	Mpumalanga	Nkangala	1
Mokebe Secondary	8000014969	Mpumalanga	Nkangala	1
Tlouphtuti Secondary School	925630326	Limpopo	Sekhukhune East	1
Dikotope Secondary School	925620060	Limpopo	Sekhukhune East	1
Lehlabile Secondary School	925620275	Limpopo	Sekhukhune East	1
Manoke Secondary School	925620572	Limpopo	Sekhukhune East	1
Mashakwaneng Secondary	925620657	Limpopo	Sekhukhune East	1

Table 2: Selected Schools where KCH career guidance program has NOT been implemented

### 3.3.4 Leveraging Existing Networks

The strategic utilisation of established networks, particularly through the Kommunity Career Handbook (KCH) program in Limpopo and Mpumalanga, facilitated by the Kommunity Foundation, has proven to be pivotal in enhancing the research endeavours. The extensive reach of the KCH program, engaging with over 110,000 learners, underscores its efficacy as a robust platform for conducting research, providing a diverse and representative sample for comprehensive analysis. This aligns with the principles of network-based research methodologies that emphasise the importance of utilising existing connections to access information-rich environments (Hesse-Biber & Johnson, 2015).

The collaborative partnership with governmental departments adds another layer of strength to this initiative. The collaboration ensures a seamless integration into the educational landscape, granting access to crucial interviewees and schools. Such partnerships are fundamental to successful research endeavours, especially in fields like education, where cooperation with educational institutions and government bodies is essential for comprehensive data collection (Mertens, 2014). The involvement of governmental departments, such as the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE), not only facilitates access to pertinent stakeholders but also aligns the research with the mandates and priorities of these institutions, enhancing the study's relevance and impact (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2019).

The adoption of a mixed-method approach further enhances the research's depth and breadth, allowing for a nuanced exploration of the impact of career guidance in secondary schools. By leveraging existing networks and establishing partnerships with governmental bodies, the research is well-positioned to provide valuable insights into the multifaceted dynamics of career guidance, contributing meaningfully to the broader discourse on education and skills development.

### 3.4 Research Design

In the pursuit of understanding the intricate dynamics surrounding the impact of career guidance in secondary schools, specifically its influence on skills development and its role in addressing skills gaps within the labour market, this study employs a rigorous research design. The chosen design is characterised by a fusion of qualitative and quantitative

methodologies, ensuring a comprehensive and multifaceted exploration of the research questions at hand.

The adoption of a mixed-method approach aligns with the recognition that complex phenomena, such as the relationship between career guidance, skills development, and labour market needs, demand a diversified analytical toolkit (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). By incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, the study seeks to delve into the nuanced experiences and perceptions of individuals while simultaneously providing structured numerical insights for statistical analysis (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). This approach allows for a more holistic understanding of the subject matter, offering depth through qualitative richness and precision through quantitative measures (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Moreover, the research design strategically integrates expert insights from key institutions, including the Department of Labour (DOL), Department of Basic Education (DBE), and Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). This collaboration serves to enrich the study by incorporating the perspectives and knowledge of professionals directly involved in shaping labour market policies, educational curricula, and career development initiatives. Such partnerships not only contribute to the validity of the research but also ensure that the study's outcomes are aligned with the current priorities and challenges faced by these governmental bodies (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2019).

In summary, the chosen research design, with its mixed-method approach and collaboration with key institutions, is poised to offer a comprehensive, nuanced, and policy-relevant examination of the impact of career guidance in secondary schools on skills development and its role in addressing skills gaps in the labour market.

### **3.4.1 In-Depth Interviews and Expert Sampling**

The research employs a qualitative approach through one-on-one in-depth interviews with experts from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE). This method aims to build a comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics surrounding career guidance, further skills development, and the mitigation of skills shortages within the educational landscape. This approach aligns with the

recommendations of scholars like Smith and Osborn (2007), who emphasise the richness of insights gained through qualitative interviews in exploring complex phenomena.

The in-depth interviews with experts are designed to be a qualitative method for theory-building, allowing for a deep exploration of their perspectives and experiences related to career guidance. The qualitative nature of these interviews ensures a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted aspects of the topic, a sentiment echoed by scholars like Creswell and Creswell (2017).

To ensure the reliability of the data, the interviews are meticulously recorded and transcribed verbatim. This attention to detail is in line with best practices outlined by Rubin and Rubin (2005), emphasising the importance of accurately capturing and preserving the nuances of participants' responses.

The subsequent analysis of the interview data employs template analysis, a methodological approach that helps identify and categorize emergent themes (Kang et al., 2004; Brooks et al., 2015). Template analysis, as suggested by King (2012), provides a structured yet flexible framework for systematically organizing and interpreting qualitative data.

Moreover, the insights gleaned from these in-depth interviews serve as a crucial foundation for the development of the quantitative research questionnaire. This integrated approach, combining qualitative richness with quantitative precision, ensures a comprehensive exploration of the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

### **3.4.2 Structured Questionnaires and Group-Administered Surveys**

The research employs a methodologically sound approach to data collection, utilizing structured, closed-ended questionnaires to elicit clear and precise responses from participants (Feilzer, 2010). Drawing on the insights of Feilzer (2010), this method ensures a systematic and efficient means of gathering quantitative data, allowing for statistical analyses and meaningful comparisons.

The group-administered questionnaires, designed with meticulous care, go beyond mere precision to minimize ambiguity in responses. This approach is in line with Zohrabi's (2013) recommendations, emphasising the importance of questionnaire design in reducing potential misunderstandings and enhancing the reliability of collected data. Furthermore, on-site clarifications are provided to participants, ensuring a shared understanding and accurate interpretations of the survey items (Zohrabi, 2013).

The driving questions embedded in the questionnaires are strategically formulated to unravel the complexities surrounding students' subject choices and their alignment with future educational pursuits and labour market demands. This aligns with the recommendations of scholars like Etikan (2016), emphasising the importance of targeted inquiries to reveal nuanced insights. The overarching goal is to explore the perceptual gap between learners' aspirations and the realities of the labour market.

### **3.4.3 Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Data**

The analysis of the qualitative and quantitative datasets adopts distinct yet complementary techniques, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted research questions (Sandelowski, 2000). In qualitative data analysis, an in-depth examination of patterns and themes is conducted, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the intricate dynamics surrounding career guidance, skills development, and labour market outcomes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This qualitative exploration aligns with the recommendations of scholars like Braun and Clarke (2006), who emphasise the importance of systematic coding and thematic analysis to derive meaningful insights from qualitative data.

On the quantitative front, statistical methods are employed to discern correlations and trends within the data. This involves utilising appropriate statistical tools such as regression analysis and correlation coefficients to identify relationships between variables related to career guidance, skills development, and subsequent labour market outcomes (Field, 2013).

The interpretive phase serves as the nexus, where findings from both datasets converge to provide a holistic understanding of the relationship between career guidance, skills development, and labour market outcomes. This triangulation of data enhances the robustness

of the research findings, as insights derived from qualitative narratives are cross-validated and enriched by quantitative patterns (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

### 3.5 Validity and Reliability

In the quest for a thorough comprehension of the research topic, this study adopts a dual-method approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods to leverage the synergies between these diverse research strategies (Greene et al., 1989). This methodological choice aligns with the recommendations of Creswell and Creswell (2017), who advocate for a mixed-methods design to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of complex phenomena.

The qualitative component of the research involves in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, allowing for an exploration of the subjective experiences and perspectives of participants. This aligns with the principles of qualitative research that emphasise capturing the depth and richness of human experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Additionally, this approach resonates with Patton's (2002) concept of qualitative inquiry, emphasising understanding the context and meaning attributed to experiences.

Concurrently, the quantitative strand utilizes structured surveys and statistical analyses to derive numerical insights into patterns, trends, and associations within the data (Bryman, 2016). By employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, the study seeks to capitalize on the strengths of each approach, ensuring a more robust and holistic understanding of the multifaceted research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

To fortify the methodological rigour, the study emphasises triangulation and complementarity assessments, aligning with the principles of Denzin (1978). Triangulation involves corroborating findings from different data sources or methods, enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the study outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Complementarity assessments involve examining how the qualitative and quantitative findings complement and enrich each other, adding depth and validity to the overall research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

### 3.5.1 Triangulation

Triangulation, employed as a methodical strategy in this study, encompasses the deliberate use of diverse data sources, methods, or theories to corroborate and validate research findings. This approach aligns with Denzin's (1978) assertion that triangulation strengthens the credibility and reliability of research outcomes by cross-verifying information obtained from different perspectives.

The integration of qualitative data derived from in-depth interviews with quantitative data collected through surveys serves as a powerful triangulation mechanism in this study. This combination allows for a comprehensive exploration of the research questions, providing depth and breadth to the analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The qualitative component captures the nuances and subjective experiences of participants, while the quantitative aspect offers structured numerical insights into patterns and trends (Bryman, 2016).

Denzin (1978) posits that triangulation mitigates the limitations inherent in individual research methods, thereby enhancing the overall robustness of the study. This method ensures that the conclusions drawn are not solely reliant on the strengths or weaknesses of a single method, contributing to a more holistic and nuanced understanding of the research topic.

Jick (1979) supports the notion that triangulation safeguards against biases and increases the validity of research findings. By cross-referencing information obtained through different methods, researchers can identify converging or diverging patterns, fostering a more accurate interpretation of the data.

### 3.5.2 Complementarity Assessments

Complementarity assessments serve as a crucial analytical strategy in this study, delving into how qualitative and quantitative data converge and complement each other to yield a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Adopting a methodological approach that aligns with Tashakkori and Teddlie's (1998) framework, this study strategically combines insights from in-depth interviews and numerical data from surveys, engaging in a nuanced analysis of their interconnections.

This research employs complementarity assessments to unravel the intricate relationship between qualitative insights, gleaned from rich in-depth interviews, and the structured quantitative data obtained through surveys. By juxtaposing and scrutinising these distinct data sources, the study not only identifies commonalities and patterns but also highlights potential divergences, providing a more enriched and multifaceted analysis of the research questions.

The utilisation of complementarity assessments is instrumental in strengthening both the internal validity and the overall depth and breadth of the study's conclusions. As Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) emphasise, this methodological approach contributes to the robustness of research findings by ensuring that different types of data converge on a coherent narrative, thereby enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the study outcomes.

Through the incorporation of these meticulous validation techniques, this research ensures that its findings withstand rigorous scrutiny, offering a robust, credible, and trustworthy exploration of the intricate relationship between career guidance, skills development, and labour market outcomes.

### 3.6 Limitations of the study

The study will be limited to exploring the impact of career guidance on skills development only, in isolation of the factors listed below. While some of these factors have been considered in the study, they do not make up a deep dive into these concepts where considered. This study will not be detailing other factors that exist within the construct of skills development and youth unemployment as done in the study of *Youth unemployment in South Africa: Challenges, concepts and opportunities* by Mlatsheni and Leibrandt (2011). This study focuses in the main on career guidance in secondary schools and its impact on the further development of skills. Where Mlatsheni and Leibrandt study explored in detail:

1. **Education System:** The quality and relevance of the education system, including issues related to curriculum design, access to quality education, and alignment with the needs of the job market.
2. **Economic Conditions:** The overall economic climate and specific challenges or opportunities within the job market that impact youth employment.

3. **Labour Market Policies:** The effectiveness of labour market policies, including apprenticeship programs, vocational training initiatives, and other interventions aimed at skills development.
4. **Entrepreneurship Opportunities:** Exploring the potential for entrepreneurship and self-employment as avenues for youth to develop and apply their skills.
5. **Government Interventions:** Analysing the impact of government policies and interventions designed to address youth unemployment and enhance skills development.

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

Written consent was obtained from the DHET for interviews as well from the school districts for surveys conducted in secondary schools. Careful consideration was given to conducting research with minors in school. In this regard, the school Principals were engaged with and further consent was obtained from the School Governing Bodies concerned. All research participants were kept anonymous, and each questionnaire completed was signed and stamped by the respective school Principal.

The consent process will transparently communicate the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits, allowing participants to make informed decisions about their involvement (Punch, 2016). Protecting participants' identities is paramount. All data collected, including survey responses and interview transcripts, were securely stored with restricted access. Anonymity was maintained, ensuring that individuals cannot be personally identified in any research outputs (Flick, 2018).

The research adhered to government regulations and COVID-19 guidelines. In-person engagements followed safety protocols, and participants' well-being was prioritised. Flexibility in data collection methods was employed where necessary to accommodate any changes in circumstances (Liamputtong, 2019).

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Faculty of Commerce at the University of Cape Town, aligning with institutional guidelines and ensuring that the study adhered to ethical standards in research (Israel, Hay, & Cottrell, 2014). The study seeks to benefit both

participants and society by contributing valuable insights into career guidance and skills development. The research aims to address social injustices related to youth unemployment and skills shortages, aligning with the principles of beneficence and justice (Resnik, 2011).

The outlined ethical considerations aimed to protect participants and maintain the integrity of the research, aligning with established ethical frameworks.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I encapsulate the culmination of my research endeavours by providing a comprehensive overview of the findings and conclusions derived from the study. The discoveries are thoroughly examined and placed within the broader context of pertinent literature and the theoretical framework that has intricately guided the trajectory of this investigation. In addition to delving into the intricacies of the findings, I conscientiously reflect on my role in the research process and acknowledge the inherent limitations that underscore the scope of this study.

Following this reflective analysis, the narrative seamlessly transitions into a phase where I proffer recommendations. These recommendations are meticulously crafted, drawing inspiration from both the empirical findings and the rich tapestry of existing literature. The central focus of these recommendations is to propose actionable strategies aimed at fostering a more supportive environment for students within school settings. This supportive ecosystem is envisioned to empower students to make informed and advantageous choices aligned with their individual career interests.

By synthesising the findings, theoretical underpinnings, and practical insights, this chapter not only serves as a concluding narrative but also as a pivotal springboard for future endeavours, paving the way for continued exploration and enhancement of strategies that positively impact students' educational journeys and career pathways.

### 4.2 Discussion of the research question and study findings

#### 4.2.1 Research question

The focal point of this investigation was centred on "*The Effect of Career Guidance in Secondary Schools on Skills Development and Sustained Economic Participation: Meaningful Employment.*" The study aimed to achieve specific objectives: a) comprehending the impact of career guidance in lower quintile schools, b) exploring the intricate influences behind students' decisions regarding tertiary education, and c) providing recommendations for supporting students in lower quintile schools to enhance their future and career progression outcomes.

The research study extensively utilised the Social Inclusion framework, employing this perspective as a suitable lens to comprehend experiences and explore the educational resources available (or lacking) in lower quintile schools. This approach facilitated an in-depth analysis of how learners in these schools access the necessary resources to acquire skills aligned with their career choices. The study argues that career guidance is pivotal in helping individuals gain clarity on their interests, skills, and values.

The overarching findings confirm existing knowledge and underscore the persistent challenges faced by children in disadvantaged homes, primarily affecting their future prospects. The absence of comprehensive career guidance, especially starting from grade 9, limits learners' exposure to various career options and industries. This deficiency hinders individuals from exploring paths aligned with their skills and interests. The study advocates for a proactive approach, stressing the need to address these issues at an early stage by providing resources to schools. This proactive stance is proposed as an alternative to reactive policies that attempt to address youth unemployment later in life, often resulting from a misalignment of skills and interests.

In this context, the study aligns with the work of scholars such as Bybee (2010), who emphasises the importance of tailoring educational programs to align with the skills demanded by various industries. Bybee's insights highlight the significance of early intervention and comprehensive career guidance to ensure that learners are well-prepared for their future careers. Additionally, Johnson and Lee (2020) argue that access to career guidance positively contributes to skills development, echoing the study's emphasis on the essential role of career guidance in enhancing students' skill acquisition.

Furthermore, the research supports the call for proactive measures by drawing on the works of Hartung, Porfeli, and Vondracek (2008), who stress the significance of proactive engagement in addressing challenges related to under-preparedness. Their insights align with the study's argument that early and proactive career guidance can mitigate challenges and equip students with the necessary skills for higher education and future employment.

#### **4.2.2 The experiences of experts in education on career guidance and challenges noted**

The research outcomes underscore a notable challenge within lower quintile schools, namely the inadequacy of career guidance services. While strides have been made in addressing this concern, the progress achieved thus far falls short of the necessary levels required to comprehensively mitigate the challenges that significantly impede the future trajectories of students in these schools. The findings gleaned from expert interviews conducted within the educational domain reveal critical themes that highlight specific areas requiring substantial development within the education system, with a particular emphasis on lower-quintile schools that stand to benefit most from targeted interventions.

In exploring the nuances of these findings, it becomes evident that the deficiency in career guidance poses a considerable barrier to students in lower quintile schools, hindering their ability to make informed decisions about their future academic and professional pursuits. Despite incremental advancements, a more concerted effort is imperative to bridge the existing gaps and create a more equitable landscape for educational and career development. The insights gleaned from expert perspectives within the education system shed light on nuanced facets, offering a nuanced understanding of the challenges that persist and the nuanced solutions needed for meaningful transformation. As the researcher delves into these findings, it becomes increasingly apparent that strategic interventions and collaborative efforts are essential to usher in a more inclusive and supportive educational environment, particularly in those schools that are disproportionately impacted by these challenges.

One of the primary themes that surfaced during the analysis of the research findings revolves around the educational level of parents and its profound impact on career development, particularly in lower quintile schools. Existing literature underscores the critical role that parental influence plays in shaping a child's career choices, especially when structural guidance and assessment mechanisms are lacking (Cohen, 2018; Lapan et al., 2016). Notably, studies highlight the stark disparities in language exposure between children from higher and lower-income households, with the former being exposed to approximately 30 million more words during their early years (Hart & Risley, 1995). This early exposure has long-lasting implications on cognitive development and, subsequently, career outcomes.

Children enrolled in lower quintile schools face a unique set of challenges emanating from their home environments. The impoverished learning opportunities and the absence of role models in their everyday lives limit their ability to envision futures beyond their immediate circumstances (Gandara & Contreras, 2009). The dearth of resources at home creates an environment where educational aspirations may be secondary to the immediate needs of survival (Kroll, 2019). Consequently, education is perceived as a means of escaping poverty rather than a tool for creating a better future. This stark reality compounds the challenge of limited access to information, hindering the development of informed career choices among students in lower quintile schools (Archer & Yamada-Rice, 2003).

Parents in these households often place significant trust in schools to provide the necessary information and guidance for their children's career development, unaware of the systemic limitations faced by these institutions (Green et al., 2019). The lack of resources in schools, coupled with the students' pre-existing learning deficits, poses a significant hurdle. Unfortunately, the parents' focus on meeting basic needs, such as providing food and shelter, leaves limited time for active involvement in their children's education, creating a cycle of dependency on schools for comprehensive support (Pong & Ju, 2000).

The educational level of parents in lower quintile schools significantly shapes the career development landscape for students. Understanding these dynamics is essential for formulating targeted interventions that address the unique challenges faced by these students in their pursuit of education and career aspirations.

The second thematic strand that emerged from the insights garnered through expert interviews revolves around the critical issue of an information deficit in career guidance within the educational landscape, particularly in lower quintile schools. Students in these schools often lack early and sufficient exposure to career intervention conversations, impeding their ability to align their interests with viable career choices and market demands. The primary educational objective in lower quintile schools is frequently framed as a means to unlock career opportunities, either for self-sufficiency or to provide financial assistance at home.

Literature highlights the significant role of career guidance in shaping students' future paths (Hirschi, 2012; Watts, 2015). It is argued that career guidance should not only address the real-time demand for skills in the South African job market but should also focus on aligning students' interests with suitable career directions (Watson & McMahon, 2014). While there might be a debate on whether career guidance should solely focus on skills demanded by the country, a consensus emerges on the need for comprehensive career guidance that considers individual interests and aspirations (Hartung & Taber, 2008).

Educational experts advocate for the integration of career guidance into the educational curriculum, highlighting the importance of increasing exposure to various careers throughout the schooling years (Lent et al., 2018; Watts, 2015). This approach aims to shift away from the traditional approach where career decisions are hastily made at the end of high school, mitigating the pressure on students to choose a path without adequate exploration.

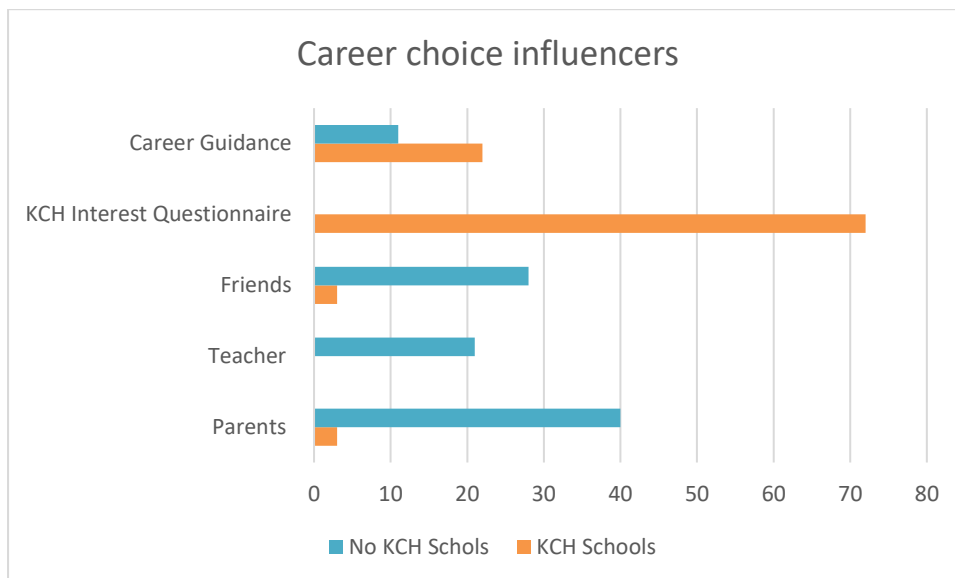
The information deficit is further exacerbated by the inadequacy of the education system in producing the skills demanded by the job market (Banerjee & Duflo, 2009). Lower quintile schools face challenges in accessing information about careers and available jobs, contributing to a gap in knowledge compared to their counterparts in higher quintile schools (Burger et al., 2014). The quality of teachers and schools is crucial in influencing learner outcomes and choices, with resource constraints hindering access to online information platforms that could potentially bridge the gap (Taylor et al., 2016).

Notably, online resources such as Yenza are acknowledged as valuable tools to guide young individuals toward their career potential and link them to opportunities. However, the practical challenges of limited access to smartphones and the internet in lower quintile schools underscore the persisting digital divide (Warschauer, 2004). Although experts recognize the potential of online resources, they acknowledge the harsh reality of resource disparities in lower quintile schools.

Addressing the information deficit in career guidance necessitates a holistic approach that integrates comprehensive career guidance into the educational curriculum, ensures exposure to diverse careers throughout schooling, and acknowledges the limitations and resource challenges faced by lower-quintile schools.

The third salient theme that surfaced through expert interviews revolves around the influential chain that shapes the decision-making process when it comes to choosing a field of study. While some may dismiss this as typical youth peer pressure, it is a phenomenon that carries significant implications throughout an individual's life. The absence of robust career guidance management during the formative schooling years often leads learners to gravitate towards fields of study that are currently popular or trending. This poses a perilous situation, particularly when there is an imbalance between the demand for certain jobs and the availability of qualified individuals, potentially resulting in a workforce mismatch (Hanushek, Woessmann, & Zhang, 2011).

Literature consistently emphasises the critical role of robust career guidance in ensuring that learners make informed decisions based on their interests, abilities, and the actual demands of the job market (Savickas, 2011; Whiston & Rahardja, 2005). A crucial aspect of this dynamic is the positive peer pressure component, where learners aspire to pursue higher education. However, the challenge lies in the disconnect between this aspiration and the lack of clarity regarding which careers to pursue (Hirschi & Läge, 2007). The decision-making process becomes problematic, often lacking a foundation in interest and ability assessments, leaving youth to make blind choices about their academic and professional paths (Gati & Levin, 2014).



*Figure 3: Learner career choice influencers in decision making*

Parental influence, especially in terms of their education level, becomes a significant factor in the decision-making vacuum left by the absence of comprehensive career guidance (Heckhausen et al., 2008). In a scenario where South Africa's infrastructure challenges hinder the reach of necessary interactions like career days or expos to lower quintile schools, the influence of friends within a peer circle becomes a powerful force. The ripple effect of one student's clear career path often leads others to follow suit, perpetuating a cycle that may not align with individual interests or the demands of the job market (Kinsella et al., 2018).

The most effective chain of influence, ideally, should stem from teachers through career guidance, supported by parents and guided by the demands of the job market. However, the absence of such guidance underscores the importance of cautioning students against blindly following their friends' interests that may not align with their own or the prevailing demands of the job market (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000). Access to information, particularly in secondary school, is deemed pivotal in the decision-making process related to post-school education and training (Hartung, 2013).

The complex chain of influence in choosing a field of study necessitates a comprehensive approach to career guidance, urging caution against blind peer and family pressure, and advocating for informed decisions aligned with individual interests with their aptitude and the demands of the job market.

#### **4.2.3 Social Inclusion Theory and Lower Quintile Schools Access Challenges**

From the vantage point of the Social Inclusion Theory, discernible patterns of overt and, at times, less overt disparities come to the fore in this study. Specifically, as viewed through the lens of experts, it becomes evident that there exists a noteworthy gap in the endeavour to facilitate opportunities for personal growth. The overarching goal is to ensure that every learner has the means to fully actualise their human potential. Insights gleaned from the experiences of these experts shed light on a critical aspect: students in lower quintile schools encounter a substantial deficiency in ongoing career guidance support. This insufficiency impedes their capacity to make well-informed decisions pertaining to their future careers. The study delves into the multifaceted dimensions of this gap, examining its implications for social inclusion and the realisation of individual potential within the educational landscape.

Unexpectedly, the survey findings bring to light a surprising revelation: a significant portion of the student body demonstrates awareness of information and skills related to further education. However, a critical examination reveals a potential skewing of this awareness, particularly favouring senior students within the school. This observation prompts an exploration into the dynamics of information dissemination and the demographic distribution of knowledge among students.

Literature suggests that students' awareness and knowledge about further education can vary across grade levels, with senior students often exhibiting a more comprehensive understanding due to their proximity to post-school decision-making (Savickas, 2011). Such variations underscore the importance of implementing targeted interventions throughout the educational journey to ensure a well-rounded comprehension of available opportunities for all students, irrespective of their academic standing.

Interestingly, when probing the students about their beliefs regarding accessing job opportunities post-qualification, a resounding majority responded affirmatively. This consensus was evident among both learners who participated in the KCH career guidance program and those from schools that did not partake in the program. This shared conviction hints at a prevalent belief system rooted in the notion that education serves as a direct pathway to employment. The literature echoes the significance of this belief, emphasising the need for students to understand the multifaceted purposes of education, whether for the acquisition of knowledge, pursuit of personal interests, or as a strategic means for securing future employment (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2008).

While the optimism reflected in the survey results is encouraging, a potential downside surfaces – the risk of misalignment with careers in demand. The findings underscore a critical need for interventions that guide students not only toward their interests but also strategically position them for the dynamic demands of the job market. Studies advocate for a more nuanced approach to career guidance, one that assists students in deciphering early in their educational journey whether their pursuit of post-school education or training is driven by genuine interests, a quest for knowledge, or a primary focus on employability (Hartung et al., 2008).

The research results paint a picture of hopeful youth anchored in the belief that education is a gateway to employment. However, the implications of this belief necessitate a nuanced and well-informed approach to career guidance, aligning individual aspirations with market demands and preparing students and their families for the realities of the ever-evolving employment landscape.

Integral to the notions of social inclusion and cohesion is the imperative dissemination of information that serves to educate learners on navigating the complexities of the labour market. This education is positioned as a crucial component for fostering resilience in employment and achieving economic liberation. It is noteworthy that accessing economic liberation doesn't always align with one's inherent interests but may involve identifying the closest or more viable intersections between personal inclinations and practical opportunities (Savickas, 2015).

In higher quantile schools, the paradigm of learning extends beyond immediate employability, emphasising a love for learning for its own sake. Here, the pursuit of education, regardless of the specific degree obtained, is seen as contributing to the cultivation of well-educated members of society. Furthermore, there exists a safety net for students in these schools, whereby the attainment of education is not solely contingent on immediate formal employment outcomes. In contrast, the circumstances are markedly different in lower quantile schools, where such luxuries are scarce. For learners in these schools, the trajectory of education and the realisation of full potential often necessitate a phased approach.

Drawing inspiration from Elizabeth Gilbert's perspective on the relationship between jobs and passions, the guidance provided to learners could underscore the idea that not every job needs to align perfectly with one's passion. Instead, the primary function of a job may be framed as supporting one's livelihood, especially in fields where financial stability is challenging, as often perceived in the arts (Gilbert, 2015). This perspective becomes a crucial facet of career guidance, particularly in dispelling common beliefs that may discourage individuals from pursuing careers in certain industries.

A significant challenge arises from the prevalent belief, identified in 90% of the learners interviewed, that they will secure employment post-qualification. This conviction, while optimistic, may inadvertently lead to disappointment, desperation, and a sense of hopelessness if not adequately managed and has the potential to contribute to the prevailing socioeconomic and psychosocial challenges. The discrepancy between expectations and reality is stark, particularly for those from lower-income households who cannot afford the luxury of unemployment, especially after completing their studies. This underscores the importance of aligning career guidance with the realities of the job market, emphasising adaptability, resilience, and the development of innovative coping mechanisms.

The research findings from expert interviews point to entrepreneurship as a viable avenue for resourcefulness and positive survival strategies. Encouraging learners to consider entrepreneurial pursuits may empower them to overcome the challenges of a competitive job market and foster a proactive approach to creating opportunities for themselves (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000).

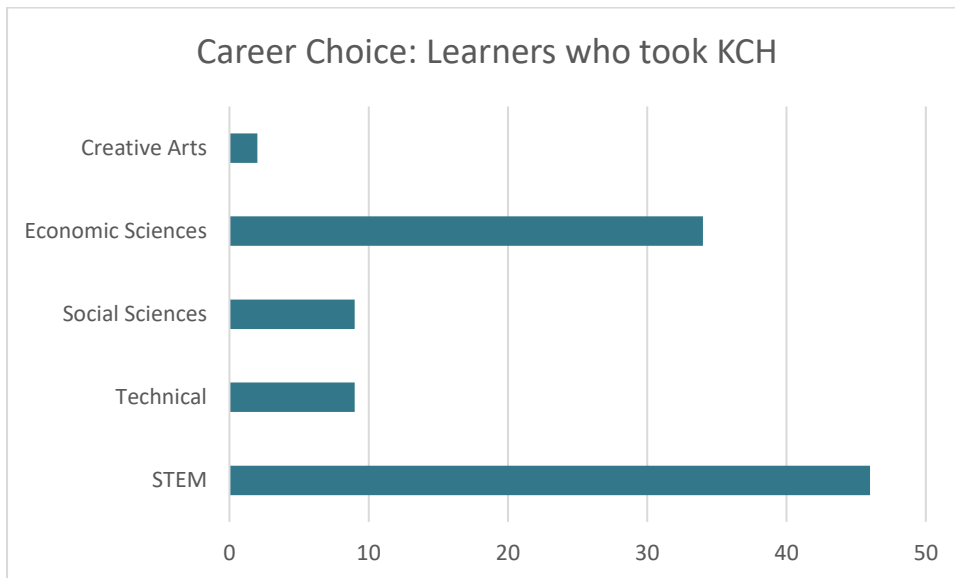
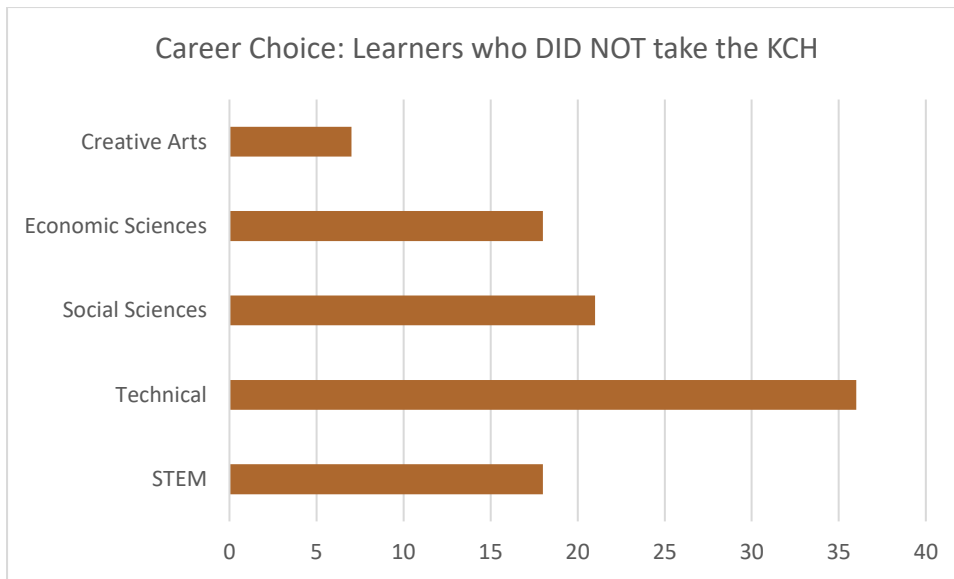


Figure 4: Career choice of learners exposed to career guidance



*Figure 5: Career choices of learners NOT exposed to career guidance*

The preference for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) careers among the group that completed the KCH assessment is notably pronounced, as evidenced by the above two graphs. This inclination toward STEM fields is not only a distinctive trend but also reflects the broader educational landscape's emphasis on the significance of these disciplines. Regardless of social class, STEM subjects are ingrained in the South African educational system, with a prevailing belief that they are imperative for the nation's future (Pols, 2019).

Pols (2019) contends that enhancing exposure to STEM subjects throughout the entire span of primary and secondary education can result in heightened engagement with science, mathematics, and technology. Furthermore, Pols argues that such an approach could lead to a higher number of students matriculating with strong STEM backgrounds, thereby increasing the pool of individuals who choose to pursue careers in STEM-related fields. This aligns with the broader objective of fostering a more employable and skilled youth population. The emphasis on STEM education is not merely a curriculum choice; it is a strategic initiative aimed at preparing the workforce for the demands of the contemporary job market (Bybee, 2010).

The relationship between the selection of a field of study and the availability of critical jobs in the marketplace is integral to the overall employability of graduates. The emphasis on STEM careers is often driven by the recognition that these fields are vital for economic growth and innovation (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017). Students who choose STEM fields may benefit from aligning their educational pursuits with market demands, potentially increasing their prospects of securing employment in high-demand sectors.

Crucially, the connection between career guidance and labour market information becomes paramount in this context. Access to accurate and up-to-date information about labour market trends, industry demands, and emerging job opportunities is essential for students to make informed decisions about their educational and career paths (Hooley, Sultana, & Thomsen, 2017). A robust career guidance system should provide students with the necessary insights to align their aspirations and interests with fields that not only resonate with their passions but also have tangible prospects in the job market.

The preference for STEM careers among students, as influenced by exposure to career guidance and the KCH assessments, reflects a broader national policy emphasis on preparing the youth for future employment. The nexus between the selection of fields of study, access to career guidance, and labour market information underscores the need for an integrated and informed approach to guide students toward making choices that are not only personally fulfilling but also strategically aligned with the demands of the job market.

In a Business Tech article by Luke Fraser in August 2023, the focus on high-demand careers in South Africa was underscored, with jobs in sales, financial services, and information technology identified as the most sought-after (Fraser, 2023). The nexus between the demand for certain skills and the choices made by learners in selecting their career paths becomes a critical consideration in shaping the employability landscape. Fraser (2023) goes further to emphasise the significance of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the global business landscape, highlighting that they represent a substantial majority of businesses and contribute significantly to employment and GDP, particularly in emerging markets.

While the Business Tech article sheds light on the sectors in high demand, the choices made by learners who did not undergo the KCH assessment reveal interesting insights. It is heartening to note that the highest-chosen career path among these learners aligns with high-demand sectors, particularly in the technical field. This could be indicative of a natural alignment of their preferences with the prevailing demands of the job market. It's worth noting that technical careers, being in high demand, not only offer promising avenues for individual employment but also contribute to broader economic growth and job creation, aligning with the World Bank's acknowledgment of the pivotal role played by SMEs in these aspects (World Bank, n.d.).

The inclination toward technical careers among students who did not undergo the KCH assessment signals a prevalent understanding of skills in demand, likely influenced by familial opinions or popular choices within their peer groups. This perceived understanding, however, reveals a belief in their awareness in the absence of accurate and relevant information. It suggests that these students possess an uninformed intuitive awareness of job market dynamics, particularly considering that 64% of this group admitted to not knowing which skills are currently in demand. While, on the surface, this aligns with the broader goals of career guidance, it falls short of empowering learners with the precise knowledge and insights required for making well-informed decisions in line with market demands (Hooley, Sultana, & Thomsen, 2017).

The nexus between exposure to career guidance and informed career choices becomes apparent when contrasting those without KCH assessment. Despite lacking formal career guidance, this group still exhibits a certain level of alignment between their chosen paths and the demands of the labour market. This observation underscores the complexity of career decision-making and the multifaceted factors influencing students' choices, even in the absence of structured guidance programs.

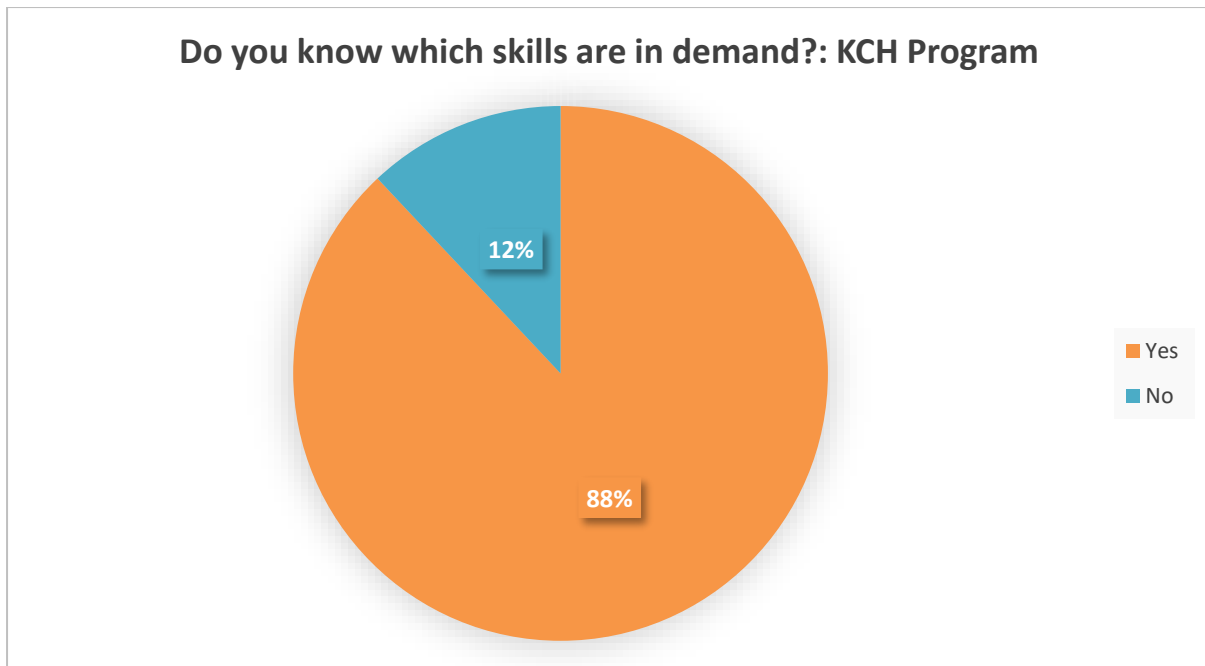
The findings echo the sentiments put forth by Hooley, Sultana, and Thomsen (2017), emphasising that effective career guidance should extend beyond merely recognising popular career choices and should delve into providing accurate, up-to-date information about market demands. This aligns with the notion that career guidance should not only reflect the current

landscape but should also actively shape students' perceptions and choices based on comprehensive, accurate insights into the evolving job market.

Interestingly, there is a nuanced contrast when considering the second most chosen career option among students who did not complete the KCH assessment – social sciences jobs. Although social sciences jobs are not explicitly listed among the high-demand sectors, the fact that students are selecting this option suggests a divergence from the trend observed in high-demand fields. This glaringly raises questions about the information available to these learners and the role of career guidance in shaping their perceptions and choices. It also further prompts considerations about the potential impact of societal perceptions, cultural influences, or the availability of guidance resources in steering students towards or away from certain career paths (Savickas, 2015).

The intricate relationships between the absence of exposure to career guidance and the career choices made by learners, particularly in pursuing paths not explicitly aligned with high-demand sectors, illuminate nuanced dynamics within the decision-making process. The observed positive alignment in technical career choices could be construed as an indicator of the potential impact of informed decision-making. Conversely, the selection of social sciences jobs raises critical questions about the sources and nature of guidance and information available to learners. This inconsistency underscores the imperative for comprehensive career guidance programs that extend beyond informing students about high-demand sectors. They should also focus on fostering a holistic understanding of the broader economic landscape and the potential implications of their career choices.

This observation resonates with the assertions of scholars in the field of career guidance, such as Watts and Sultana (2004), who emphasise the role of career guidance in nurturing self-awareness and confidence, essential components in making informed career decisions. It is argued that effective career guidance should not only provide information on specific job sectors but should also cultivate a deeper understanding of the societal and economic context within which career choices are made. Such an approach aligns with the evolving nature of work and careers in contemporary society, where interdisciplinary skills and adaptability are increasingly valued (Savickas, 2011).



*Figure 6: Knowledge of in demand skills by learners exposed to career guidance*

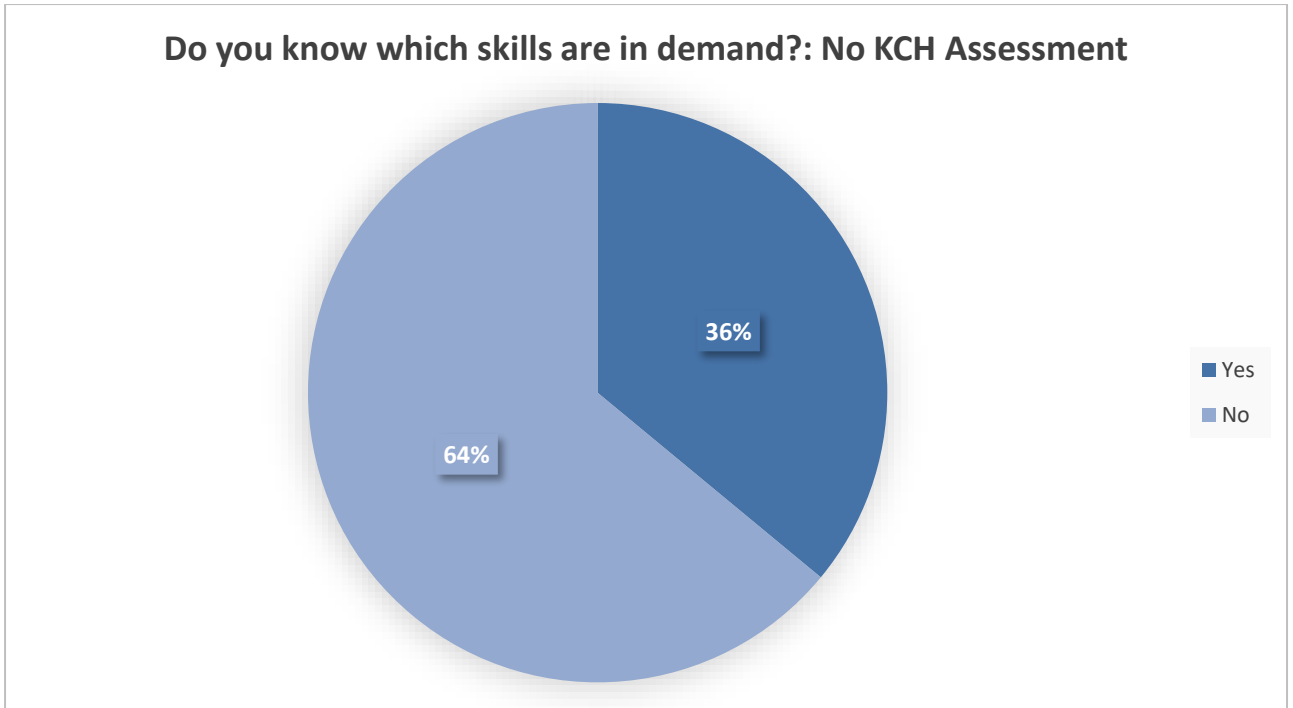
The learners who underwent the KCH assessment express a strong belief in being well-informed about relevant career information, suggesting that the assessment may serve as a catalyst for heightened awareness and responsibility. This self-assurance could be indicative of the impact of structured career guidance programs, such as the KCH assessment, in fostering a sense of accountability among students in making informed decisions about their career paths. As they engage in the assessment process, the learners are prompted to conduct further research, reinforcing the idea that comprehensive career guidance can instil a proactive approach towards acquiring relevant information (Hooley, Sultana, & Thomsen, 2017).

Contrastingly, a significant majority, 64%, of students who did not undergo the KCH program claimed not to know which skills are in demand. This stark contrast suggests that the absence of structured career guidance may contribute to a less informed decision-making process among these students. The lack of exposure to such assessments or guidance programs could leave these learners at a disadvantage, potentially hindering their ability to align their career choices with the dynamic demands of the job market.

The findings echo the broader literature emphasising the pivotal role of accurate and timely information in shaping career choices (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000; Hooley et al., 2017). Career guidance interventions are recognized for their potential to bridge information gaps, empowering students to navigate the complex landscape of career options (Savickas, 2015). In this context, the KCH assessment emerges as a proactive tool, guiding learners not only through self-reflection but also encouraging them to seek and integrate external information into their decision-making process (Savickas, 2011).

The concept of informed decision-making is closely tied to the understanding of labour market trends, job demands, and the evolving landscape of industries. Students armed with accurate information are better positioned to make choices that align with their interests while also considering the practicalities of job availability (Hooley et al., 2017). The lack of awareness among those who did not undergo the KCH assessment raises questions about the efficacy of existing career guidance mechanisms for this cohort.

In conclusion, the dynamic of correct information pertaining to in-demand jobs and career path choices by youth is significantly influenced by the exposure to structured career guidance programs. The self-assuredness of learners who underwent the KCH assessment in claiming knowledge about in-demand skills suggests the positive impact of such interventions. On the other hand, the lack of awareness among those who did not participate in the assessment emphasises the potential consequences of a lack of structured career guidance. As the literature suggests, comprehensive and accurate information is paramount in fostering informed decision-making among youth, ensuring that their career choices align with the evolving demands of the job market.



*Figure 7: Knowledge of in demand skills by learners NOT exposed to career guidance*

The availability and absorption of information play a crucial role in shaping learners' awareness of their preferred career paths. A notable trend emerges when examining the correlation between students' completion of the KCH assessment and their clarity regarding career choices. Those who engaged in the KCH assessment predominantly exhibited a heightened understanding of their desired careers, in contrast to their counterparts who did not partake in the assessment.

This dichotomy underscores the influential impact of ongoing career guidance and self-assessment initiatives on students' career-related insights. The students who availed themselves of the KCH assessment experienced a continuous and reflective process, fostering a burgeoning interest in their future careers. Through regular exposure to career guidance resources and the act of self-assessment, a seed of curiosity and enthusiasm is planted, contributing significantly to the student's overall decision-making abilities.

The iterative nature of career guidance programs such as the KCH assessment cultivates a proactive approach among students, enabling them to explore and understand their strengths, preferences, and potential career trajectories more comprehensively (Savickas, 2011). This

proactive engagement serves as a catalyst for informed decision-making, empowering students to navigate the complexities of choosing a career path with greater confidence.

Moreover, the connection between ongoing career guidance and self-assessment initiatives and students' ability to articulate their career preferences highlights the positive impact of these interventions on the cognitive and emotional dimensions of career development. As students become more aware of their interests and aptitudes, the process of decision-making becomes not only more informed but also more personally meaningful.

The engagement in ongoing career guidance and self-assessment, as exemplified by the KCH program and its assessment, plays a pivotal role in nurturing students' awareness of and interest in their prospective careers. This awareness, in turn, enhances their decision-making capabilities, contributing to a more proactive and informed approach to navigating their future career paths.

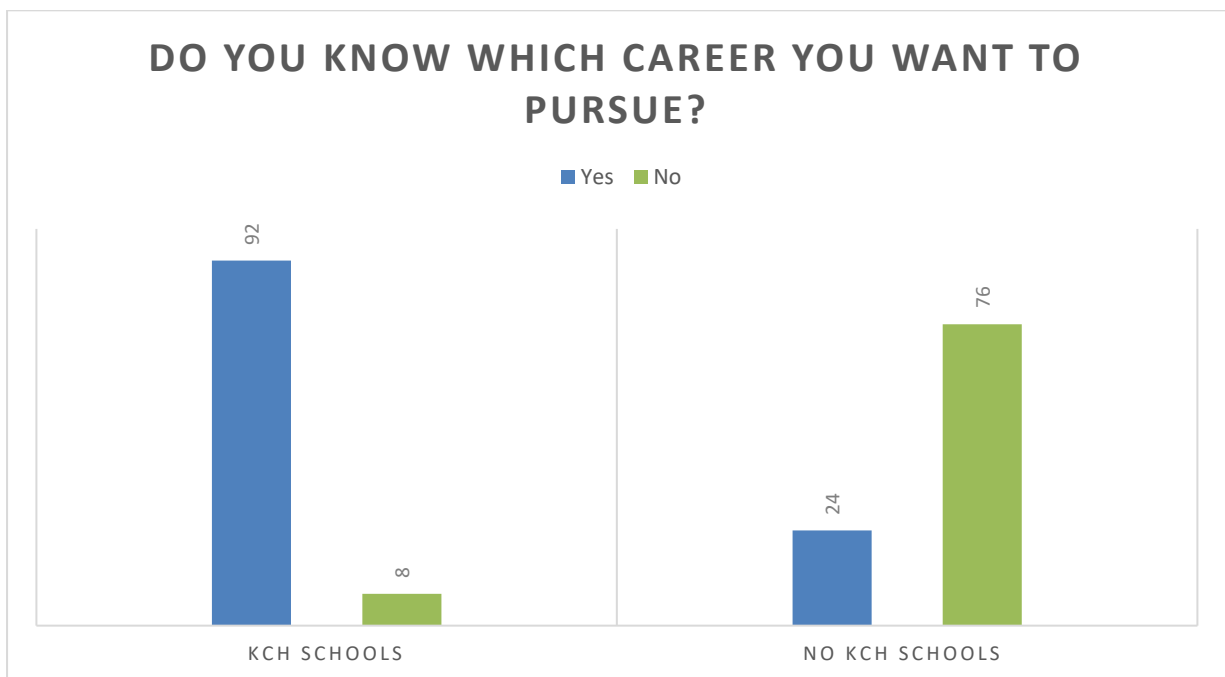


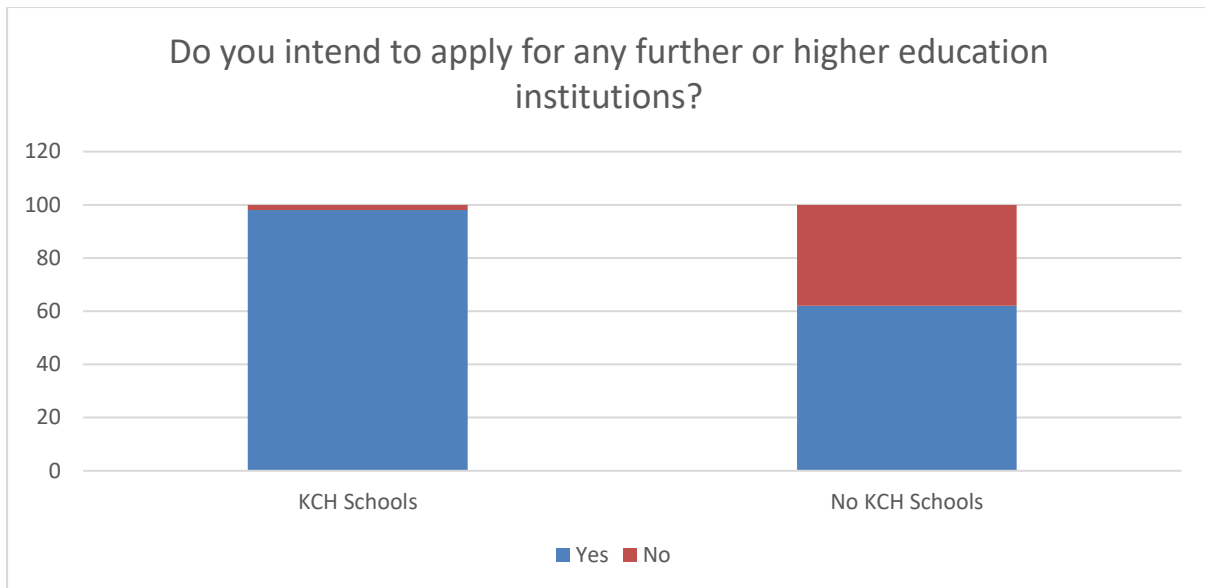
Figure 8: Knowledge of career to pursue, career guidance schools vs No career guidance schools

Even in the face of uncertainty regarding specific career choices, a shared positive sentiment prevails among both groups of students when it comes to the prospect of pursuing higher education. This collective optimism towards higher education stands as a noteworthy and encouraging discovery that underscores a shared enthusiasm for learning and academic advancement.

While the students in both groups may not have crystallised their career aspirations, the positive outlook on higher education suggests a broader commitment to intellectual growth and the pursuit of knowledge. This finding resonates with the notion that education is valued not only as a means to a specific vocational end but also as an inherent source of personal development and empowerment (Archer & Yamada-Rice, 2003). The positive attitudes toward higher education signify a collective belief in the transformative power of learning, emphasising its role beyond the confines of immediate career objectives.

This shared optimism also aligns with broader societal trends that recognise the intrinsic value of education in fostering critical thinking, expanding horizons, and contributing to personal and societal well-being (Green et al., 2019). The positive outlook towards higher education may serve as a testament to the students' recognition of education as a pathway to personal enrichment and a means of contributing to the broader social fabric.

Despite the absence of clear-cut career choices, the mutual positive outlook towards higher education among both groups of students signifies a shared appreciation for the inherent value of learning. This optimistic stance not only reflects a commitment to academic advancement but also speaks to the broader societal recognition of education as a catalyst for personal growth and societal progress.



*Figure 9: Desire for higher education in schools exposed to career guidance vs those who were not*

Providing robust career guidance and essential information is imperative to prevent students from entering higher education underprepared, a challenge that academic institutions in South Africa are actively addressing (Jaffer & Garraway, 2016). The concept of "under-preparedness" encompasses students who, upon entering higher education, face disadvantages stemming from insufficient skills, knowledge, or language proficiency, hindering their ability to navigate successfully through academic pursuits.

One critical barrier highlighted by experts in interviews is the language barrier faced by students in lower-quintile schools. Proficient communication skills, especially in the business language, English, are foundational tools for academic success. However, in some instances, English is taught in vernacular languages in lower quintile schools, posing challenges for students in adapting to the language requirements of higher education. This language disparity places certain students at a distinct disadvantage, underscoring the importance of adequate language preparation during earlier educational stages.

Furthermore, it is argued that teachers in some lower-quintile schools may lack the necessary competencies and skills needed by students (Nortje, 2017). This deficiency emphasises the critical need for comprehensive support systems involving families, mentors, and additional educational resources to address students' diverse educational requirements. While parents

may possess the requisite educational skills to assist their children, time constraints pose a significant challenge in providing necessary support for both academic work and career guidance.

The research findings suggest that parental involvement in assisting children with educational endeavours is hindered by time limitations rather than a lack of educational skills. This underscores the importance of external support mechanisms, such as mentorship programs and community resources, to bridge the gap in career guidance and educational support for students in lower quintile schools.

Addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by students entering higher education requires a holistic approach. Efforts should focus on improving language proficiency, enhancing teacher competencies, and establishing comprehensive support systems to ensure that students, particularly those in lower quintile schools, are adequately prepared for the demands of higher education.

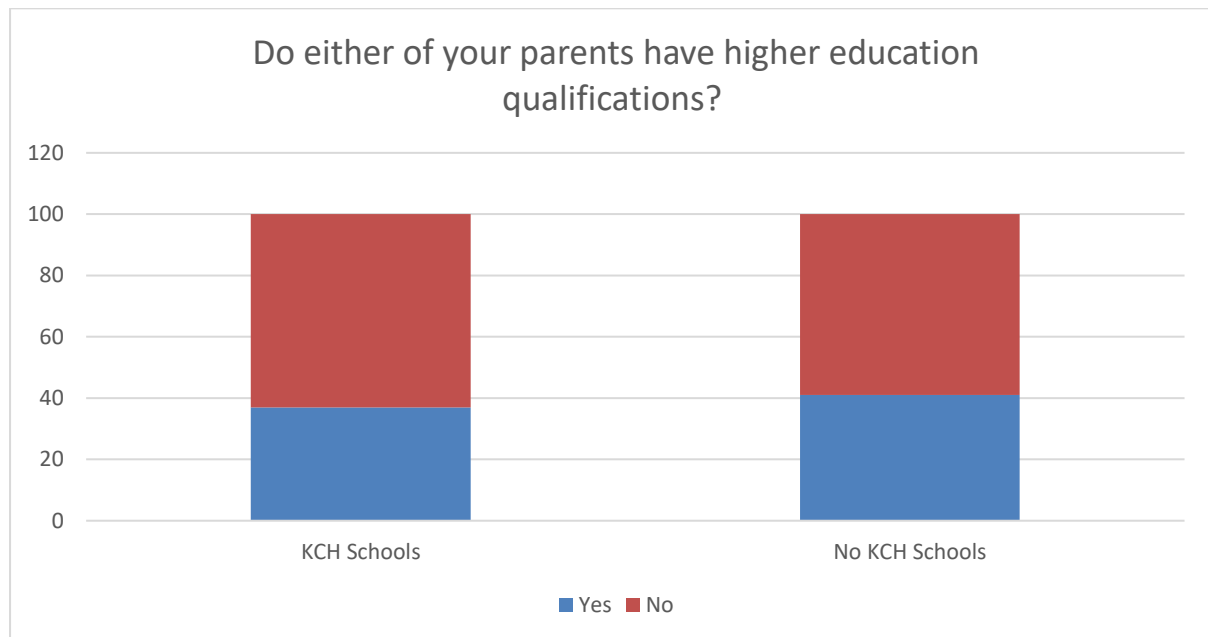


Figure 10: Parents' education level

The observed positive attitude and expressed willingness among the No KCH group to pursue higher education can be attributed to a significant influence from parents, particularly in the absence of structured career guidance. This phenomenon underscores the pivotal role that parental influence plays in shaping learners' aspirations and decisions regarding their educational paths.

Research in the field of career development has consistently highlighted the influential role of parents in shaping their children's attitudes and choices regarding education and career pursuits (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2008). In the absence of structured career guidance, learners often turn to their parents for guidance and support, relying on familial insights and experiences to inform their decisions (Savickas, 2011).

The graph's indication of a positive attitude toward higher education aligns with findings from studies emphasising the impact of parental involvement on educational decisions. Parents serve as primary influencers in their children's lives, providing guidance, and encouragement, and shaping their perceptions of the value of education (Taylor, Alcock, Houghton, & Houghton, 2016). This influence extends beyond the mere encouragement of pursuing higher education to include shaping attitudes toward learning and personal development.

However, it's essential to recognise that parental influence, while significant, may also be limited in providing comprehensive career guidance. The absence of structured career guidance may lead to gaps in understanding the evolving demands of the job market and the alignment of educational choices with future employment opportunities (Gati & Levin, 2014). Therefore, while parental influence is a valuable factor in fostering positive attitudes toward higher education, it may not encompass the nuanced insights required for informed career decision-making.

The positive inclination toward higher education within the No KCH group underscores the impactful role of parental influence in the absence of structured career guidance. This dynamic emphasises the need for comprehensive career guidance programs that not only involve parents but also provide learners with a broader understanding of evolving career landscapes and opportunities.

### **4.3 Student Attitude and Determination: Locus of control, individual drive for success**

In the pursuit of career development and securing a better future, traditional systems and guidelines play a crucial role. However, this narrative is enriched and sometimes defied by the exceptional stories and anomalies born from internal drives within individuals. The study recognizes that mentors who emerge from disadvantaged backgrounds often become success stories despite facing challenges in their schooling journeys. These mentors, who have navigated the job market successfully, serve as beacons of inspiration outside the conventional assessment tools used for gauging interests and placing learners in their desired career paths.

Beyond the mere choice of a career, the study emphasises the pivotal role of individual success factors, personal drive, and an innate hunger for a better future. While assessments provide valuable insights, the internal locus of control emerges as a significant factor influencing an individual's perception of their ability to shape their destiny. Rotter (1966) introduced the concept of internal locus of control, highlighting how individuals attribute events to their actions rather than external forces.

The study advocates for a focus on current realities and explores avenues for community members and families to actively contribute to creating more resilient individuals who are self-starters and innovative in approaching their future. The call to action is to explore how these internal qualities can be fostered with urgency, going beyond government interventions. The notion of internal locus of control aligns with contemporary research interests, as evidenced by Sixesha et al.'s (2022) study on South African university students' entrepreneurship interest as a consequence of resilience and internal economic locus of control.

Resilience, closely related to internal locus of control, is identified as a key factor influencing success. Rutter (1987) defines resilience as positive individual differences in response to pressure and adversity, while Janas (2002) emphasises its role in the ability to recover from difficulty, frustration, and disappointment. This broader perspective acknowledges that factors influencing success and skill attainment extend beyond formal education.

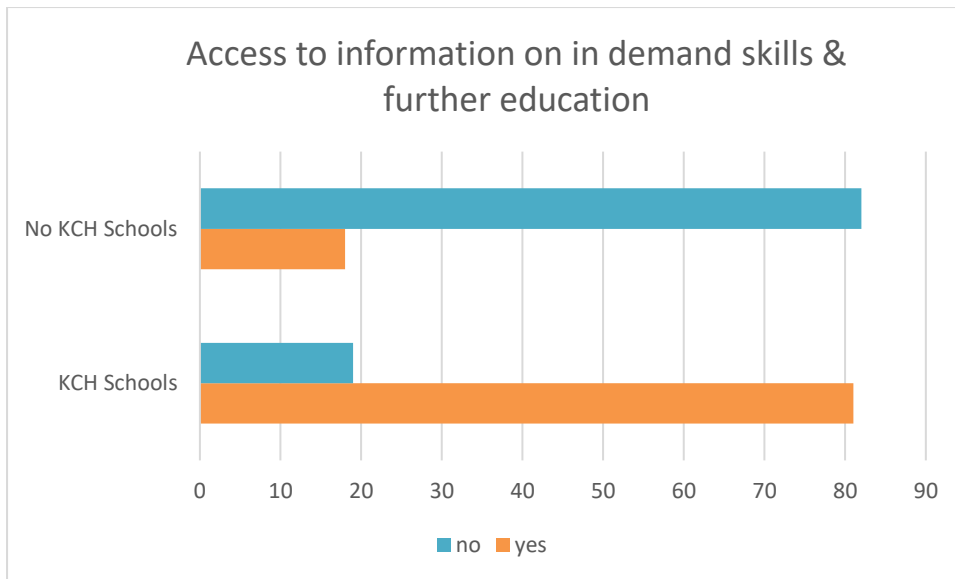


Figure 11: Knowledge of in demand skills and further education options

Despite the absence of correct and relevant information on in-demand skills in the job market and further education options, youth continue to exhibit a high level of confidence in their future prospects, with a 78.5% mean across both groups, those who have access to the above information and those who do not, expressing optimism. This positive outlook is particularly pronounced among learners who do not have access, as 68% of those respondents reacted optimistically to the question of future prospects in the same group where 82% responded negatively to the question of having access to information about in-demand skills and further education. In contrast, only 19% of those exposed to career guidance indicated a lack of access to the same information while 89% of this group showed heightened excitement at their future prospects.

The resilience and optimistic outlook displayed by these youth, even in the absence of precise information, align with the concept of resilience, a quality emphasised in the study conducted by Sixesha et al. (2022). Resilience, defined as the ability to recover from difficulty, frustration, and disappointment (Janas, 2002), plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' responses to challenges and uncertainties in the pursuit of their goals. This aligns with the findings of the current study, where learners, despite informational gaps, exhibit a resilient attitude toward their future.

Furthermore, the concept of locus of control, explored by Rotter (1966), becomes relevant in understanding the divergent responses between the two groups. Locus of control refers to the extent to which individuals believe they can control events affecting them. The positive outlook of learners without access to information might be associated with an internal locus of control, where they believe in their ability to shape their future irrespective of external circumstances. On the other hand, those exposed to career guidance might attribute their positive outlook to the external guidance received.

The research urges upcoming scholars in this domain to delve into proactive strategies that community members and families can employ to cultivate resilience and an internal locus of control in individuals. Such measures aim to instil a mindset of innovation and self-initiated endeavours, nurturing a foundation for a more promising future. In conjunction with providing access to information, these endeavours seek to promote a culture of self-determination among the youth, empowering them to take charge of their own destinies and contributing to the cultivation of a proactive and forward-thinking mindset. Further exploration into these initiatives is essential for shaping comprehensive approaches that address the multifaceted challenges faced by the younger generation.

#### **4.4 Focal Research Insight**

The comprehensive examination of the complex interrelations between career guidance, educational decisions, and their profound consequences for future employment has revealed invaluable research insights. This investigation underscores the indispensable role of career guidance as a pivotal factor in guiding students, especially those in lower quintile schools, toward informed and purposeful decisions regarding their academic and professional trajectories. The absence of structured career guidance is identified as a critical void that hampers students' readiness for higher education and navigating the intricate job market landscape.

In the context of Social Inclusion theory, the study emphasises the role of career guidance in mitigating disparities and fostering equitable access to educational and employment opportunities. Scholars argue that career guidance contributes to social inclusion by providing individuals, especially those in disadvantaged settings, with the necessary tools to make

informed choices, thus promoting a more balanced and diverse workforce (Verick, 2019; OECD, 2016).

Drawing from the Social Inclusion framework, the study aligns with the notion that career guidance serves as a means to bridge gaps and empower individuals from diverse backgrounds. The absence of structured career guidance, as revealed in the study, can be viewed through the lens of social exclusion, limiting access to critical information and opportunities. As such, fostering comprehensive career guidance initiatives becomes imperative for promoting inclusive practices and addressing educational and employment inequalities.

This research aligns with the perspectives of scholars such as Verick (2019) and the OECD (2016), who emphasise the pivotal role of inclusive policies, like effective career guidance, in creating a more equitable job market. The study thus contributes to the broader discourse on the social implications of career guidance, emphasising its potential to foster inclusivity and address social disparities in educational and employment outcomes leading to economic participation.

Central to these findings is the assertion that ongoing career guidance initiatives, exemplified by programs like the KCH program, play a transformative role. They not only illuminate potential career pathways but also instil a heightened sense of responsibility and accountability in students, fostering a proactive approach to their educational journey (Jaffer & Garraway, 2016). The literature underscores the significance of such proactive engagement in mitigating the challenges of under-preparedness that students often face when entering higher education (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2008).

Moreover, the research highlights the correlation between structured career guidance and the cultivation of skills aligned with the evolving demands of the job market. Savickas (2015) posits that effective career guidance serves as a catalyst for skills development, acting as a bridge between academic pursuits and the pragmatic requirements of the professional sphere.

Building upon these insights, it becomes evident that structured career guidance programs contribute not only to informed decision-making but also to a proactive and engaged student

population. The proactive nature, as emphasised by Jaffer and Garraway (2016), is instrumental in addressing the challenges associated with under-preparedness, ensuring that students are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate higher education successfully.

Additionally, the transformative impact of career guidance extends beyond mere academic preparedness. It plays a pivotal role in aligning students with the dynamic needs of the job market, as suggested by Savickas (2015). By acting as a catalyst for skills development, career guidance becomes an integral component in the holistic preparation of students for their future careers.

In conclusion, the synthesis of literature by Jaffer and Garraway (2016), Hartung et al. (2008), and Savickas (2015) provides a robust foundation for understanding the multifaceted impact of structured career guidance programs. These insights underscore the transformative role of career guidance in steering students toward informed and purposeful decisions, fostering proactive engagement, and aligning them with the evolving demands of the job market.

#### **4.5 A career perspective from working Millennials: Emergent Theme**

To enhance the comparative analysis and gain valuable insights into the schooling system's impact on individuals in adulthood, especially those who are established in their careers, this study delved into their educational experiences. The exploration was structured around three key dimensions: (1) the presence or absence of career guidance during their school years, (2) the alignment of their current career paths with the qualifications they chose to pursue during their academic journey, and (3) a retrospective assessment of the schooling system, probing where participants perceive it may have fallen short or provided an advantage.

This investigation is particularly interested in understanding the narratives of Millennials, individuals born between 1979 and 1999 (Easton & Steyn, 2022). The choice of the Millennial generation is deliberate, not only due to their substantial representation in the current workforce but also because the researcher, being a part of this generation, has facilitated convenient access to respondents.

The inquiry extends further to those adults who attended higher quintile schools. A specific line of questioning explores whether these individuals believe that their background, originating from higher quintile schools, conferred an advantage in their professional trajectories. This tailored approach adds nuance to the examination, considering potential variations in experiences based on the economic context of their educational institutions. I sent out an online questionnaire to the Millennials which comprised 4 questions for the adults who are previously from lower quintile schools and then 5 questions for the adults in higher quintile schools. I will make reference to some of the answers from the open-ended questions and include an appendix for the closed-ended questions which be represented in graphical form.

The distinction between individuals in terms of their educational backgrounds proved to be more nuanced than a simple separation based on lower or higher quintiles. Instead, a key differentiator emerged at the attitudinal level, particularly concerning the perceived importance of a tertiary qualification. This subset of individuals holds a firm belief that a higher education degree is the unequivocal key to unlocking myriad opportunities in the job market. This mindset is reflective of the broader societal influence known as the "get educated" era, which has significantly shaped the perspectives of this group.

The "get educated" era encapsulates a period where there was a prevailing emphasis on the importance of higher education as a gateway to success and prosperity. This societal narrative may have influenced individuals' attitudes, fostering a strong conviction in the intrinsic value of a tertiary qualification. However, this unwavering belief in the supremacy of formal education might have implications for their approach to career planning and exploration.

It's noteworthy to explore how this mindset, influenced by the prevailing societal narrative, impacts these individuals' ability to conduct effective research aligning their interests with job market opportunities. Understanding the dynamics of their decision-making processes and the potential challenges they face in navigating their career paths within the framework of this mindset is essential for a comprehensive analysis.

One of the respondents, remarked that:

*“Neither me or my mother ever questioned but what will you do with a Political Science and Social Anthropology major? I honestly picked courses that seemed to appeal to me and then I was going to look for a job when I was done. Honestly, it was tough in the beginning but eventually I was able to use my Social Anthropology to get into market research, now I have a 14 year career in Marketing”.*

Another respondent spoke about how they loved the show “Finding Amy” growing up that they decided to choose a degree in Law, in the absence of any career guidance they defaulted to pure interest choice- a career decision made, purely informed by a fictitious television show. Fortunately, it also worked for this response. However, it is not clear whether a genuine interest was formed with the degree of choice in the process, or whether some element of luck had a hand in it for her becoming a successful practising lawyer today. This does however allude to an alignment in interest, which it can be argued was sparked by the television show.

#### 4.5.1 Findings from Millennial Career Perspective Survey

The research found that 53.6% of the respondents in this group had access to career guidance in school with 83.9% of them attending former model C schools. Under Model C the school would become state-aided (or semi-private), with its management council responsible for the running of the school, the appointment of staff, determination of fees and maintenance of facilities. Former “Model C” schools are more popular, more expensive and better resourced. These schools fall under the higher quintile category of schools as opposed to the lower quintile schools surveyed in the study.

#### “Did you have career guidance in your high school?”

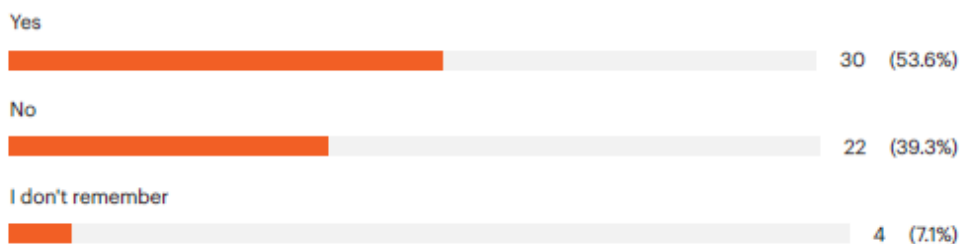


Figure 12: Surveyed Working Millennials’ access to career guidance in school

### “Did you attend a public or a private school?”



Figure 13: Surveyed Working Millennials schools

35.7% of the respondents thought they were lucky to land in the careers they now find themselves in with 55.4% feeling that they had prepared, studied the right courses and gained experience to land in the careers they’re in.

### “Would you consider yourself lucky or prepared and skilled to have gotten employment?”

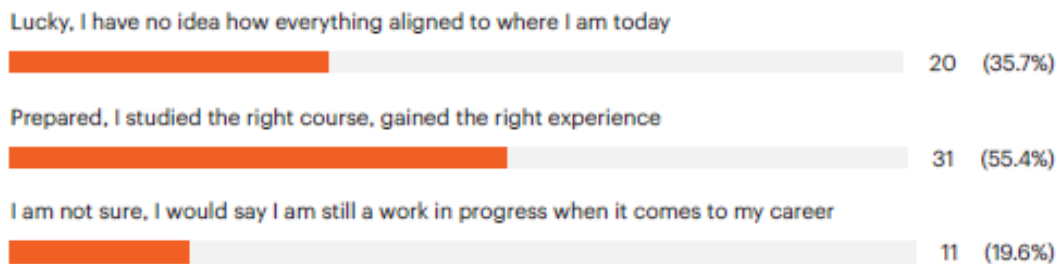


Figure 14: Surveyed Working Millennials career luck vs preparedness

“According to the category of qualification, choose the one your qualification is classified under?”

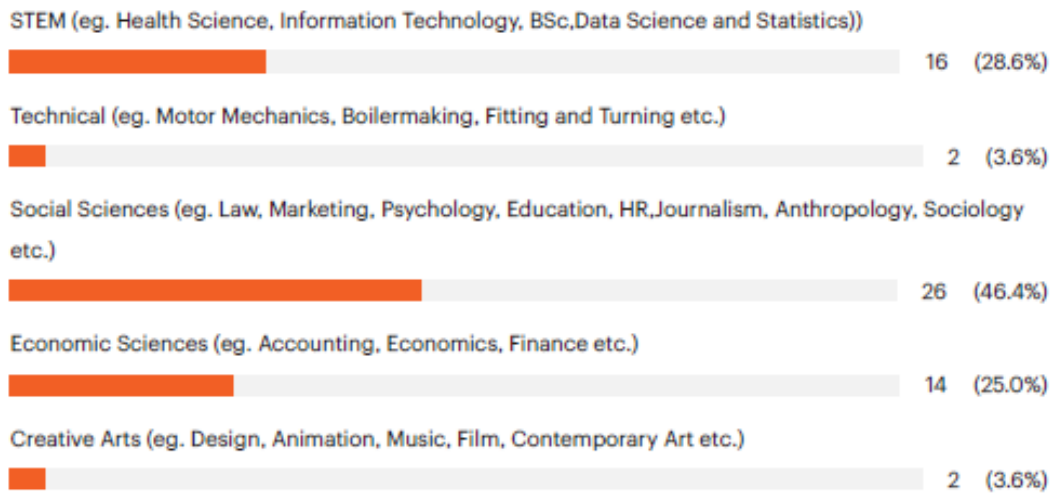


Figure 15: Surveyed Working Millennials choice of qualifications

The research outcomes revealed intriguing patterns in the career choices of Millennials, shedding light on the impact of career guidance on their educational pursuits. Among the Millennials surveyed, 46.4% opted for social sciences as their preferred field of study, marking it as the predominant choice. Following closely, 28.6% chose STEM disciplines, while 25% leaned towards economic sciences. Notably, there was a substantial increase in the selection of technical studies, particularly evident among respondents from schools without access to career guidance, where 36% expressed an inclination towards technical qualifications.

Conversely, Millennials with higher exposure to career guidance, akin to the school group that participated in career guidance programs, exhibited only 3.6% seeking technical qualifications. The persistent popularity of STEM and economic sciences as choices for both the Millennial and career-guided school groups highlights the enduring appeal of these fields. These findings underscore a significant correlation between career guidance and the shaping of career choices, even across divergent quintile backgrounds of respondents.

This evidence strongly suggests that access to career guidance acts as a unifying factor, bridging the gap between learners from schools with low and high quintiles. It emerges as a facilitator of equity in career decision-making for all youth in school, showcasing its potential to mitigate disparities and empower students with informed choices that align with their aspirations and the demands of the job market.

### “Is your current career linked to what you studied for?”

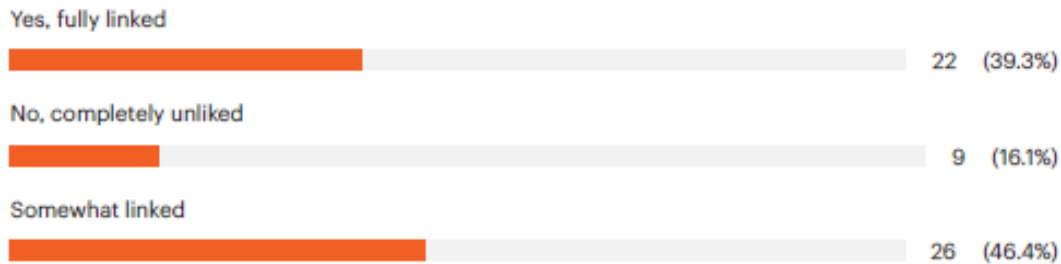


Figure 16: Surveyed Working Millennials career link to qualification

A substantial portion of Millennial respondents, constituting 46.4%, indicated that their current careers are "somewhat" linked to their academic qualifications rather than being "fully" aligned. This observation suggests a nuanced approach to career development, where Millennials demonstrate adaptability and an ongoing journey of professional growth as they are exposed to more information and experiences. The flexibility to pivot in their career trajectories is evident in this finding.

The decision-making process appears to be influenced by a pragmatic consideration of job opportunities rather than a meticulous alignment of personal interests with career paths. In the absence of robust self-assessment mechanisms to discern and harmonize their interests with potential careers, many Millennials pursued qualifications that they believed could lead to employment opportunities. This pragmatic approach is reflected in the survey responses, which yielded an average confidence rating of 7 out of 10 concerning their belief in securing employment based on their qualifications while they were still in the academic phase. However, this confidence rating slightly dropped to 6.6 once they transitioned into the phase of seeking employment post-qualification.

“When you were in university, how confident were you that you were going to get a job in your field of study?”

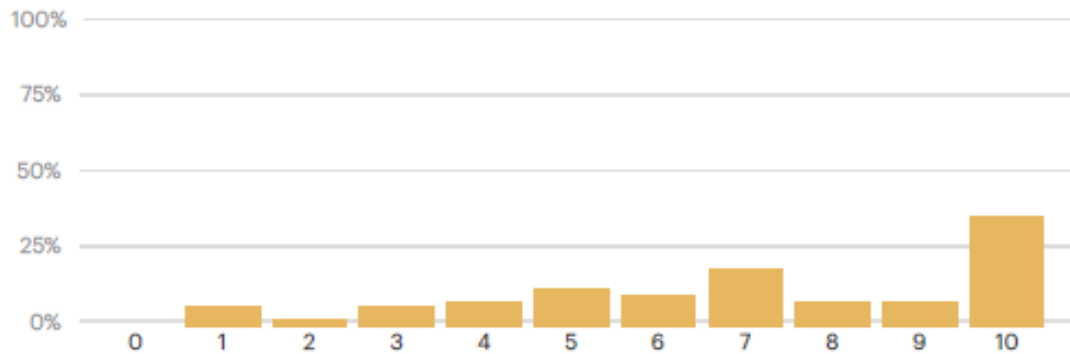


Figure 17: Surveyed Working Millennials confidence to secure work while at university

This trend suggests a critical need for enhanced career guidance interventions that not only guide academic choices but also instil effective assessment practices, facilitating a more holistic alignment between individual interests, academic pursuits, and long-term career goals.

## CHAPTER 5: FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

As the research delves into the multifaceted realm of career guidance and its intricate intersections with skills development, employability, and societal progress, it becomes apparent that our understanding is a dynamic landscape with unexplored territories. In this chapter, I embark on the journey of charting the course for future research recommendations, aiming to illuminate the shadows cast by unanswered questions and potential avenues for deeper inquiry.

The existing body of literature provides a solid foundation, yet the complexity of the subject matter necessitates ongoing exploration. As the research navigates the evolving landscape of education, employment, and career trajectories, there are several unexplored facets that merit scholarly attention. By identifying and addressing these gaps, the research aim to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role of career guidance in shaping individuals' journeys and fostering societal progress.

Future research endeavours could encompass a range of themes, including but not limited to the impact of technological advancements on career guidance, the role of mentorship in skills development, the influence of cultural factors on career decision-making, and the long-term effects of comprehensive guidance programs on individuals and communities. Additionally, exploring the dynamics of career guidance in the context of emerging industries, global economic shifts, and changing labour market demands will be crucial for preparing the workforce of tomorrow.

By aligning future research with the evolving landscape of education and employment, the research aspires to contribute to the development of evidence-based practices that empower individuals in making informed career choices. The exploration of these uncharted territories promises to enrich our comprehension of the intricate interplay between career guidance and societal development.

## 5.2 Longitudinal Studies on Career Trajectories

Embarking on comprehensive longitudinal studies is paramount to gaining a profound understanding of the enduring effects of sustained career guidance programs on the career paths, skills development, and employability of students. Longitudinal studies involve tracking individuals over an extended period, allowing researchers to observe changes, developments, and outcomes over time (Golafshani, 2003). In the context of career guidance, such studies would meticulously follow the trajectories of students who have actively participated in extended and structured career guidance initiatives.

A longitudinal approach enables researchers to delve into the complexities of how career choices evolve, the specific skills that develop over time, and the subsequent influence on employability outcomes. Scholars emphasise the significance of longitudinal research in explaining the causal relationships and uncovering nuances that may not be apparent in shorter-term studies (Menard, 2002). It offers a dynamic perspective on the impact of career guidance, providing valuable insights into the temporal aspects of skills acquisition, application, and the sustained relevance of guidance interventions.

For instance, studies by Whiston et al. (2017) showcase the efficacy of longitudinal research in career development, emphasising its ability to capture the multifaceted nature of career trajectories. A well-structured longitudinal study could assess the evolving skill sets of individuals over various stages of their careers, exploring how early exposure to career guidance contributes to skill acquisition, refinement, and adaptation to changing employment landscapes.

Moreover, longitudinal studies can incorporate diverse indicators of success, such as job satisfaction, career advancement, and the ability to navigate career transitions (Savickas, 2015). By employing rigorous methodologies and incorporating multiple data points, researchers can illuminate the intricate connections between sustained career guidance, skill development, and long-term employability outcomes.

Leveraging longitudinal studies is imperative for unravelling the intricate dynamics between career guidance, skills development, and sustained employability. Such research endeavours offer a nuanced understanding of the enduring impact of career guidance programs,

contributing valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and practitioners invested in shaping the future of the workforce.

### 5.3 Exploration of Industry-Specific Guidance

Exploring the effectiveness of industry-specific career guidance models is imperative for understanding how tailored interventions can significantly enhance skills development and better align students with the dynamic demands of various sectors. Customising guidance programs based on industry-specific needs has the potential to serve as a catalyst for optimizing the skills-to-job match, ensuring that students are equipped with competencies directly relevant to high-demand professions (Bybee, 2010).

Numerous scholars advocate for the implementation of targeted career guidance strategies that address the specific requirements of different industries. Bybee's (2010) work underscores the importance of aligning education with workforce needs, emphasising the role of industry-specific guidance models in achieving this alignment. A study by Hirschi and Läge (2008) also highlights the positive impact of tailored career interventions in enhancing skill development, stressing the need for a sector-focused approach to ensure students acquire the precise skills sought by employers.

Furthermore, industry-specific career guidance models can bridge the information gap between educational institutions and the rapidly evolving demands of the job market (Hooley et al., 2017). The integration of real-world industry insights into guidance programs can enhance students' understanding of specific skill sets required for success in diverse professional fields. By tailoring guidance models to align with industry trends and advancements, students can make more informed decisions regarding their skill development pathways (Hirschi & Läge, 2008).

Delving into the efficacy of industry-specific career guidance models is a pivotal area of research that holds promise in optimising skills development for students. By tailoring guidance interventions to match the distinctive needs of various sectors, educational institutions can contribute to a workforce that is not only skilled but also well-prepared for the intricacies of different professional domains.

#### 5.4 Integration of Technology in Career Guidance

Delving into the exploration of technology integration within career guidance platforms is essential for understanding how advancements in digital tools can amplify accessibility and effectiveness in the guidance process. A thorough investigation into how digital tools and online resources can be harnessed to deliver real-time information on skills requirements and current employment trends is critical for modernizing career guidance practices (Warschauer, 2004).

Technological integration in career guidance holds the potential to revolutionise the accessibility of information for individuals seeking guidance. As technology continues to evolve, career guidance platforms can leverage digital tools to provide personalised insights and recommendations based on real-time data (Heckman et al., 2013). Additionally, exploring how technology can bridge gaps in information dissemination and serve as an equaliser in terms of accessibility is crucial for ensuring that individuals, regardless of their background, can benefit from up-to-date and relevant career information (Brown, 2019). Research by Warschauer (2004) emphasises the transformative impact of technology on education and workforce development. By examining the integration of technology in career guidance, we can build on this foundation and explore how digital platforms can be optimized to not only disseminate information but also engage users in interactive and dynamic ways (Brown & Lauder, 2006).

Moreover, understanding the potential drawbacks and challenges associated with the integration of technology in career guidance is vital. Research by Sampson et al. (2018) offers insights into the ethical considerations, potential biases, and limitations that may arise with the use of technology in guidance services. This multifaceted exploration will contribute to the development of guidelines and best practices for ensuring that technology enhances, rather than hinders, the career guidance experience.

In conclusion, investigating the integration of technology in career guidance platforms is a multifaceted endeavour with potential implications for accessibility, effectiveness, and ethical considerations. By leveraging digital tools effectively, career guidance can evolve to better meet the needs of individuals navigating complex and dynamic employment landscapes.

### 5.5 Impact on Mental Well-being

Exploring the potential impact of career guidance on students' mental well-being and resilience is a critical exploration that goes beyond mere employment outcomes. Research has shown that informed career choices can significantly contribute to a sense of purpose and fulfilment, ultimately influencing mental well-being and resilience positively (Savickas, 2011).

Savickas (2011) emphasises the importance of life design interventions in fostering a holistic approach to career development. By examining how career guidance programs contribute to students' overall well-being, we can gain insights into the broader psychological and emotional benefits of making informed career decisions. This exploration aligns with the notion that individuals who perceive their work as meaningful and aligned with their values experience greater satisfaction and psychological well-being (Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Bott, 2013).

The potential impact of career guidance on mental well-being is particularly crucial in the context of today's dynamic and often unpredictable job market. As students navigate career choices, they face numerous challenges and uncertainties. Research by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) suggests that career guidance interventions when tailored to address psychological barriers and enhance self-efficacy, can positively influence students' mental health outcomes.

Moreover, resilience, defined as the ability to bounce back from adversity, is a key component of mental well-being (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Exploring the relationship between career guidance and the development of resilience skills is paramount. Students equipped with the skills to adapt to changing career landscapes and overcome setbacks are more likely to maintain positive mental health and well-being (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

By investigating the potential impact of career guidance on students' mental well-being and resilience, we contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the broader benefits of guidance programs. This knowledge can inform the design and implementation of career guidance interventions that not only enhance employability but also contribute to the overall flourishing of individuals in both their professional and personal lives.

### **5.6 Comparative Analysis Across Socioeconomic Strata**

Conducting comprehensive comparative analyses of career guidance outcomes across various socioeconomic strata is imperative for gaining nuanced insights into the potential variations in the impact of guidance programs on skills development and employability among diverse demographic groups. Such analyses contribute to our understanding of how social and economic factors may influence the effectiveness of career guidance interventions and help tailor programs to address specific needs within different strata.

Research by Brown and Ryan Krane (2000) underscores the importance of considering socioeconomic factors in career counselling. Socioeconomic status can significantly influence individuals' access to resources, educational opportunities, and exposure to different career pathways. A study conducted by Lapan, Gysbers, and Petroski (2001) delves into the disparities in career guidance outcomes based on socioeconomic factors, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address the unique challenges faced by individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Moreover, examining the intersectionality of socioeconomic status with other demographic variables, such as race and gender, is crucial. Studies by Archer and Yamada-Rice (2003) emphasise that individuals from marginalized groups often face additional barriers in accessing quality career guidance. A comparative analysis would shed light on potential disparities in skills development and employability outcomes among various demographic groups, contributing to more inclusive and equitable career guidance practices.

Understanding the role of socioeconomic factors in shaping career guidance outcomes aligns with the broader goals of social justice in education and employment. Hooley, Sultana, and Thomsen (2017) argue for a more inclusive and socially just approach to career guidance that considers the diverse needs of individuals across different socioeconomic strata.

In summary, conducting comparative analyses of career guidance outcomes across socioeconomic strata is essential for developing targeted and equitable interventions. The studies by Brown and Ryan Krane (2000), Lapan, Gysbers, and Petroski (2001), Archer and Yamada-Rice (2003), and Hooley, Sultana, and Thomsen (2017) provide a foundation for understanding the nuanced relationship between socioeconomic factors and the effectiveness of career guidance programs.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

It is imperative to acknowledge that the Millennial respondents in this study represent a distinct segment of the school population, primarily comprising students from higher quintile schools, former model C schools, and private institutions. Academic literature underscores the significance of contextual factors such as socioeconomic status and educational environment in shaping individuals' perceptions and behaviours (Sirin, 2005). In their school environments, characterised by higher socioeconomic status and greater access to resources, including information and career guidance, Millennial students often exhibit a stronger internal locus of control (Beggs, Bantham, & Taylor, 2008). Their experiences are typically marked by a greater sense of inclusion and opportunities for personal development (Sirin, 2005).

However, it is essential to recognise that this group is not directly comparable to respondents from lower quintile schools. Students in lower quintile schools often contend with systemic challenges such as limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and socioeconomic disadvantages, which can significantly impact their educational experiences and aspirations (Sirin, 2005). While the Millennial respondents may emphasise self-determination and motivation as key drivers of success, attributing differences in outcomes solely to individual effort overlooks the structural barriers and inequalities inherent in the educational system (Beggs et al., 2008).

Instead, the findings of this study underscore the contrasting realities between the Millennial respondents and their counterparts in lower quintile schools. The emphasis on inclusion versus exclusion highlights the pervasive disparities in educational opportunities and support systems, reflecting broader societal inequities (Sirin, 2005). By acknowledging these distinctions, policymakers and educators can better address the unique needs and challenges faced by students across different socioeconomic contexts, ultimately striving towards more equitable educational outcomes (Beggs et al., 2008).

The call for a paradigm shift in educational institutions and policy frameworks aligns with the foundational principles enshrined in the South African Constitution, which serves as the supreme law of the land. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, not only establishes the legal framework for the nation but also articulates the rights and

responsibilities of individuals and the state. Specific quotes from the Constitution support the conclusion that effective career guidance is essential for realising the constitutional mandate of a just and equitable society.

### **Equality and Non-Discrimination:**

- "Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law." (Section 9(1))
- "The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth." (Section 9(3))

This emphasis on equality underscores the importance of providing equal opportunities through informed career choices, ensuring that no individual or group is unfairly disadvantaged.

### **Education and Dignity:**

- "Everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education." (Section 29(1)(a))
- "Everyone has the right to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible." (Section 29(1)(b))

These provisions emphasise the right to education, and career guidance plays a pivotal role in ensuring that education is not only accessible but also aligns with the dignity and aspirations of individuals.

### **Socio-Economic Rights:**

- "Everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing." (Section 26(1))
- "Everyone has the right to have access to healthcare services, including reproductive healthcare." (Section 27(1)(a))

While not directly related to education, these rights highlight the broader socio-economic context, and effective career guidance contributes to socio-economic development by enhancing employability and reducing disparities.

**Children's Rights:**

- "A child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child." (Section 28(2))

Career guidance that takes into account the best interests of the child aligns with this principle, ensuring that educational choices and skills development contribute to the holistic well-being of the individual.

In this thesis, I have collected evidence from three distinct sources: key informants, students in schools, and working Millennials. Each of these sources provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities surrounding access to information, career guidance, and social inclusion among young people.

From our discussions with key informants, including high-ranking officials in governmental departments and experts in the field, the researcher has gained a comprehensive understanding of the systemic factors shaping career guidance policies and practices. These individuals have highlighted the importance of policy interventions and resource allocation in addressing the needs of youth, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Our interactions with students in schools have shed light on the lived experiences of young people navigating educational pathways and transitioning into the workforce. Through surveys and interviews, the researcher has identified barriers to accessing information and career guidance, as well as the role of social inclusion in shaping aspirations and opportunities.

Furthermore, our engagement with working Millennials has provided firsthand accounts of the challenges and successes experienced in the transition from education to employment. These individuals have shared their perspectives on the significance of mentorship, networking, and access to opportunities in overcoming barriers to career advancement.

This research study underscores the importance of access to information, career guidance, and social inclusion in empowering young people to navigate the complexities of the modern labour market. While these factors alone may not solve youth unemployment, they serve as critical enablers for individuals who grow up in contexts where supportive networks and

resources are limited. By prioritising initiatives that promote access and inclusion, policymakers, educators, and employers can create pathways to success for all young people, regardless of their background or circumstances. Ultimately, investing in the empowerment of youth is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic imperative for building inclusive and resilient societies.

The South African Constitution provides a constitutional mandate for an inclusive and equitable society. Effective and sustained career guidance aligns with these constitutional imperatives by promoting equality, education, dignity, socio-economic rights, and the best interests of the child. The call for a paradigm shift resonates with the constitutional vision of a just and prosperous society, emphasising the collaborative responsibility of stakeholders to invest in innovative approaches that empower students for a successful transition to meaningful and sustainable employment.

As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of education and employment, the symbiotic relationship between career guidance and skills development emerges as a cornerstone for individual empowerment and national workforce readiness. The findings implore educational institutions, policymakers, and industry to collaboratively invest in guidance strategies that not only guide students but also equip them with the skills imperative for sustained employability in a dynamic global job market.

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## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Key Informant Profiles**

**Appendix B: Expert Interview Verbatim Insights**

**Appendix C: Online Millennial Survey**

**Appendix D: Online Millennial Survey Career Stories**

**Appendix E: Online Millennial Survey Advice**

**Appendix F: Online Millennial Survey School Advantage**

**Appendix G: Research Documents (DHET Research Approval Letter)**

**Appendix H: Praxis Model- Comprehensive Career Guidance Program**

## Appendix A: Key Informant Profiles

### **Mr Letshego Mokeki, Director: Career Development Services, DHET**

Mr Mokeki has extensive experience in education, career guidance and management of research and capacity development projects. He is trained in Career Psychology and has for many years worked as a Career Counsellor and recently as a manager of Careers Interventions at the South African Qualifications Authority. During his tenure at JET Education Services as a Project Manager and later as a Division Manager he developed experience in managing skill development interventions and research projects. As a country manager of a 3-year Transparency International project aimed at improving governance at schools in South Africa his research and education sector knowledge were taken to yet another level. He has currently serving as the Director for Career Development Services within DHET and has been leading the CDS for 9 years.

### **Ms Trudi Van Wyk, Chief Director: Social Inclusion, Equity, Access and Quality DHET**

Chief Director of Career Development, Open Learning, Social Inclusion and Equity and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) with a demonstrated history of working as Project Manager, Government Administrator, Lecturer/Teacher, Materials Developer and eLearning Specialist in South Africa and abroad. Skilled in Mobile Learning, e-Learning, Social Learning, and Learning Management. Strong human resources professional with a MED in Educational Management, BEd in Mathematics, Science and Remedial Education and a BSc in Mathematics and Chemistry. Further qualifications in Civil Technology and Management.

24 years of experience in the design and implementation of innovative and cost-effective learning and development solutions to improve access, throughput, productivity and employability. Particular interest in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), blended and work-integrated learning models and open learning.

Extensive experience in navigating through complex education, training and development challenges to find customised solutions and implement effective change management strategies to ensure optimal outcomes.

**Ms Nolwazi Gasas, Deputy Director General: Planning, Policy and Strategy, DHET**

Experienced professional with a demonstrated history of public service expertise, coupled with rounded expertise of working in development finance institutions, state-owned institutions, research and non-governmental organisations; in both management and executive capacity. Skilled in Planning, Policy and Strategy; especially Roadmaps, Plans and Reviews; Outcomes Monitoring and Evaluation; recently in Health, Education and Skills Development arena (including Hydrogen).

Highlights include leading sector experts that translated the Development Plan into a set of Outcomes with indicators, targets that were monitored and evaluated to establish the impact of government work. She was also the Project Lead for the Twenty Year Review, assessing South Africa's transition into democracy. Further highlights include the hosting of Roundtables on Hydrogen as part of reconceptualising the Human Resource Strategy for South Africa and the development of the Master Skills Plan.

She is skilled in building and strengthening International Relations, especially in BRICS, European Union, Africa, America and Asia. She co-led bilateral BRICS 2023 Education Bilaterals.



**Mr Likho Bottoman, Director: Social Cohesion and Equity, DBE**

Likho Bottoman, is an Occupational Therapist, graduated from the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in the Republic of South Africa (RSA). Born in 1985, Likho practised in the rural hospitals of Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces soon after graduating. He was responsible for Paediatric Occupational Therapy Services and school-based rehabilitation programmes, including therapeutic services for learners with special education needs. Likho obtained the degree, Master of Education in Inclusive Education (Cum Laude) at the University of Johannesburg (UJ).

He is currently a PhD candidate at UJ. Likho joined the National Department of Education in 2008 as an Assistant Director: Health Promotion, responsible for School Health Services. His current work involves promoting human rights, nation-building, peace-building, equity and equality issues, gender equality, issues around decolonisation of basic education, and promoting active citizenry among young people as part of the whole agenda of child and youth agency. He has been working on the National Schools Program for almost 12 years now, which was implemented with the South African Human Rights Commission and the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development.

### Appendix B: Expert Interview Verbatim Insights

*“Higher quintile schools get better exposure to career days than lower quintile schools due to the logistic difficulty in reaching the lower quintile schools.”*

*“The early recognition of youth to be filtered into areas of needed skills is important.”*

*“CAPS calls for career guidance to be delivered through Life Orientation, however L.O is loaded and not sufficient for career guidance implementation.”*

*“The base is not equal.”*

*“Career guidance plays a role in preparing youth skills for jobs.”*

*“Career guidance has a role to play in young people accessing labour market opportunities”.*

*“Young people must be able to source, identify or create job opportunities. Information and access to information is key in achieving this.”*

*“Assessments are important for aligning interest and aptitude to specific career paths and study choices.”*

*“Knowing and NOT knowing what skills are needed makes a difference in determining one’s field of study and ultimately career path and journey into the job market.”*

*“Home background or home environment has an influence on career development. Parental influence is significant.”*

### Appendix C: Online Millennial Survey

Did you have career guidance in your high school? \*

- Yes
- No
- I don't remember

Is your current career linked to what you studied for?

- Yes, fully linked
- No, completely unlinked
- Somewhat linked

What degree or qualification have you obtained? If you have more than one, please list them all.

According to the category of qualification, choose the one your qualification is classified under?

- STEM (eg. Health Science, Information Technology, BSc, Data Science and Statistics))
- Technical (eg. Motor Mechanics, Boilermaking, Fitting and Turning etc.)
- Social Sciences (eg. Law, Marketing, Psychology, Education, HR, Journalism, Anthropology, Sociology etc.)
- Economic Sciences (eg. Accounting, Economics, Finance etc.)
- Creative Arts (eg. Design, Animation, Music, Film, Contemporary Art etc.)

When you were in university, how confident were you that you were going to get a job in your field of study?

After graduation, how easy was it to find employment?

Tell us a story of how you ended up in your current career, be as detailed as possible.

Would you consider yourself lucky or prepared and skilled to have gotten employment?

- Lucky, I have no idea how everything aligned to where I am today
- Prepared, I studied the right course, gained the right experience
- I am not sure, I would say I am still a work in progress when it comes to my career

Did you attend a public or a private school? \*

- Private
- Public school

What advice would you give to high school students in disadvantaged schools that would help secure a job aligned to their interests?

If you attended private school, do you believe that it gave you any form of advantage towards your career?

Submit



## Appendix D: Online Millennial Survey Career Stories

“Tell us a story of how you ended up in your current career, be as detailed as possible.”

Unknown contact said:

"Internship in the final year of studies, put me at an advantage to getting permanent placement at a Media Marketing company, which soon led to an opportunity to work at a top financial insurance firm. During this time I was scouted for the position in brand management for pharmaceutical "

Unknown contact said:

"I was struggling to find permanent employment for a while.. it took me almost a year to find a job and even then, I was referred by a friend who was already in the company."

Unknown contact said:

"Since I did Social Sciences majoring in Media and Geography. I went of the Municipality to ask to volunteer in GIS, GIS it's a Map computer programme which can be used in any department for informations about all the stands, development restrictions and all. After my 1 year my contract came to the end. At that one year I was working with Landuse Management which is Town Planning. A post was advertised and I have been in Town Planning for the last 15years"

Unknown contact said:

"I started studying a BSc in Biology & Psychology (as they were my 2 favourite subjects at school). I had no clue what I wanted to do with that. Ended up with a BSc in Neuroscience - after 4 years still no clue what to do. Came home to SA and started working for a neuropsychologist (the wife of a friend of a friend of my parent), worked there for a few years, had to redo Honours in psychology before I could apply for Masters in psychology. Managed to get into Masters & complete my training, now been working in state & private for >10 years. I love what I do, but had no idea at school, even during my first degree what I wanted to do career-wise "

Unknown contact said:

"By accident I knew someone who assisted me"

## Appendix E: Online Millennial Survey Advice

**“What advice would you give to high school students in disadvantaged schools that would help secure a job aligned to their interests?”**

Unknown contact said:

"Progress takes time. Be kind to yourself and allow the journey. Networking through multidisciplinary approaches allows for access to other skill sets - obtain as much practical exposure and experience of these knowledgeable fields. "

Unknown contact said:

"To do some research regarding available employment and the demand for that employment. If they have a natural skill, try to harness it as much as possible. "

Unknown contact said:

"Make good research"

Unknown contact said:

"Don't give up on your goal. Work hard. Start earning your own money - this teaches you accountability, the value of work, the value of money. Network - connections are better than CVs"

Unknown contact said:

"Spend time with people in the career you are interested in "



## Appendix F: Online Millennial Survey School Advantage

**“If you attended private school, do you believe that it gave you any form of advantage towards your career?”**

Unknown contact said:

"None in my case"

Unknown contact said:

"I think so"

Unknown contact said:

"Definitely - I feel very privileged & grateful for my background & upbringing. I know not many people have that. Although I feel I "stumbled" into my career choice (and even though I always worked hard at school, got good grades etc), that going to a private school didn't help in terms of figuring out my goals/career path - that was a personal journey I needed to go through "

Unknown contact said:

"Not applicable "

Unknown contact said:

"Not at all, I feel I didn't get any advantage because straight after High School, I went to what was regarded as a disadvantaged institution. That is honestly where my journey started. If I went to another institution, I believe I wouldn't be where I am today (considering finances, APS, etc.) "



**Appendix G: Research Documents (DHET Research Approval Letter)**



higher education  
& training

Department  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X174, PRETORIA, 0001, 123 Francis Baard Street PRETORIA, 0002, South Africa  
Tel: (012) 312 5911, Fax: (012) 321 6770  
Private Bag X9192, CAPE TOWN, 8000, 103 Plain Street, CAPE TOWN, 8001, South Africa  
Tel: (021) 469 5175, Fax: (021) 461 4761

Enquiries: TJ Rachidi; Tel: (012) 312-6667; e-mail: Rachidi.J@dhet.gov.za

Mr MG Ntholeng  
16 Andrew Murray Road  
BRYANSTON  
2091

By e-mail: mpho@communityfoundation.org

Dear Mr Ntholeng

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECT CAREER GUIDANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOL HAS ON SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO BRIDGING THE SKILLS GAP IN THE LABOUR MARKET**

I acknowledge receipt of your request for permission to conduct research in the Department of Higher Education and Training (the Department) on the topic: "An investigation of the effect career guidance in secondary school has on skills development and its contribution to bridging the skills gap in the labour market".

The Department has evaluated your request and it is my pleasure to inform you that your request for permission to conduct the above research has been granted.

As part of your research, it is noted that you will collect data through interviews with the following participants:

1. Ms Nolwazi Gasa, DDG: Planning, Policy and Strategy;
2. Ms Trudi Van Wyk, Chief Director: Social Inclusion and Quality; and
3. Mr Letshego Mokeki, Director: Career Development Services.

You are advised to obtain further permission from the participants before commencing with your study. You are also requested to attach the following documents when communicating with the participants:

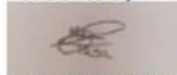
1. Copy of this letter from the Department;
2. Copy of the "completed application form" to conduct research; and
3. Ethics Clearance Certificate from the University Cape Town.

Higher Education and Training • Hlobo Ondleloyo no Opheliso • Inxalenze Laphakama Yokuqeqeshisa • Ixalenze Ekhokho Yokuqeqeshisa  
Ikhokho Ekhokho Yokuqeqeshisa • Ikhokho ePhakamisa noOphelo • Dyoniso ya le Hlobo no Valiso • Phiso ya Nkomo no Vuyaliso  
Thuto ya Oondlelo no Opheliso • Thuto e Phakamisa no Ophelo • Thuto e Kholiso no Kholiso

The topic of your research is of great interest to the Department. It will therefore be appreciated if you could share the findings of your research with the Department upon completion of your research.










I wish you all of the best in your research study.

Yours sincerely



**MS NOLWAZI BRIGHT KHANYISILE GASA**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL  
DATE: 30 NOVEMBER 2022

**Appendix H: Praxis Model- Comprehensive Career Guidance Program**

<p><b>Key Partners</b> </p> <p>DHET DBE SETAS NSF NSFAS Corporate</p>	<p><b>Key Activities</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field operations</li> <li>• School integration</li> <li>• Training of youth career guides, in community contacts</li> <li>• Career guidance</li> <li>• Application support for further education, bursaries etc.</li> <li>• Life skills support</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Resources</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government partnerships</li> <li>• Access to KCH IP</li> <li>• Field operator training</li> <li>• Schools</li> </ul>	<p><b>Value Propositions</b> </p> <p>In community career centres that serve as permanent career expos and information centres Training unemployed youth to work with schools and communities, immediate direct job creation Career advisors in community and accessible to their communities Inform and guide youth and parents Technology integration in the provision of career guidance Introducing youth to job market opportunities and linking those with qualifications to opportunities in partnership with SETAs PPP driving career guidance, access and skills development for long term employment</p>	<p><b>Customer Relationships</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long term career development journey</li> <li>• Mapping paths to employment</li> <li>• Linking to job market opportunities post program intervention</li> </ul> <p><b>Channels</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• Community Centres</li> <li>• Career Expos</li> <li>• Online</li> <li>• KCH Book print</li> </ul>	<p><b>Customer Segments</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities</li> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• Unemployed Youth</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Youth in school</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cost Structure</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment IP Fees (Annual)</li> <li>• KCH Book Print (Annual per region)</li> <li>• OPEX (Staff, Training, Advertising, Marketing, IT, Utilities etc)</li> <li>• CAPEX (Tech Infrastructure, Kommunity Career Centres Setup)</li> </ul>		<p><b>Revenue Streams</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment fees</li> <li>• Government Grants</li> <li>• Skills Development Budgets (Corporate B-BBEE Spend)</li> <li>• CSI/SED</li> <li>• Public Sponsored assessments</li> </ul>		