



Can youth employment programmes work? A programme theory evaluation of the Work and Skills Placement programme.

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy in Programme Evaluation

Faculty of Commerce
University of Cape Town

2024

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Acknowledgements

My sincere gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. Adiilah Boodhoo for her grace, wisdom and steadfast support throughout this research endeavor.

I also want to thank my Department's management, staff and company executives interviewed, for sharing their valuable time and insights towards our common objective of improving the lives of our province's unemployed youth.

And finally, to my mother Kathy, son Jacob and the rest of my family who sacrificed with me during these years, your prayers and encouragement have, and I pray, will continue to shape me, long after this academic work-piece ends.

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List of Acronyms

DEDAT	Department of Economic Development and Tourism
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
ED	Enterprise Development
EQ	Evaluation Question
IT	Information Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NPC	National Planning Commission
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SA	South Africa
U.K.	United Kingdom
U.S.	United States
WCG	Western Cape Government
WSP	Work and Skills Placement
YEP	Youth Employment Programme

Abstract

In South Africa, more than one in three youth are unemployed and available to work. Youth employment programmes (YEPs) offer job-skills training and employment services and aim to promote youth's employment prospects. Despite their prevalence worldwide few YEPs have been successful in reducing youth unemployment. In the few cases of success, little is known about *how* and *why* YEPs work to mediate youth's entry to employment. This dissertation presents the findings of a programme theory evaluation of the Work and Skills Placement (WSP) programme, a YEP co-implemented by the Western Cape's Department of Economic Development and its company partners. Programme theory evaluation first seeks to unpack *how* and *why* programmes can (should) work before assessing whether programmes *do* work. Through this formative evaluation the theories or 'change stories' of the Department and six host companies were described and then assessed for plausibility by comparing stakeholders' views to evidence in the YEP literature. The results indicated that while the programme included several best practice features, the current WSP programme may work to improve youth's employability but is not plausible in improving youth employment. Key recommendations to enhance the programme's plausibility include adding complementary interventions to stimulate companies' growth and enhancing youth's employability by intensifying the job-skills training pathways. This evaluation contributes to improving the WSP programme's design and success pathways, as well as the current limited knowledge base of how YEPs can or should work to successfully improve youth's employment prospects.

Chapter One: Introduction

This dissertation reports on a formative evaluation conducted for the Western Cape Government's Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDAT). The evaluand is the Work and Skills Placement programme (WSP), a job-skills training initiative that is co-implemented by the DEDAT and private sector companies. The programme provides youth jobseekers with job-skills training (via internships) and aims to improve youth's employability and their prospects for securing employment. The chapter provides an overview of YEPs internationally and in South Africa (SA). Thereafter, the WSP programme is described as well as the approach to evaluating the programme and the evaluation questions (EQs).

Contextualizing youth unemployment

Rising youth unemployment is a primary concern in SA and the Western Cape (WC). In the first quarter of 2022 unemployment peaked to 34,5% and affected 7,8 million people countrywide (Statistics SA, 2022). In addition to having one of the world's highest unemployment rates the country's unemployment problem is protracted and persistent and has averaged above 20% since the 2000s (Banerjee et al., 2008). A key issue in SA's unemployment scenario is that youth, as persons aged 15 – 35 years old are disproportionately affected by virtue of their age, limited work-experience, and other socio-economic circumstances (De Lannoy & Mudiriza, 2019; Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2020). For example, the WC has a youthful population with young people comprising 46,5% of the working-age population and 42% of the labour force (WCG, 2023). Despite the so called 'youth dividend,' in which youth make up a sizeable demographic in terms of the existing and future labour force, the WC's unemployment challenge is also a problem of high *youth* unemployment. Youth comprised the majority or 62% of the province's 714 000 unemployed and the unemployment rate, at 31,2% was highest amongst the youth cohort (WCG, 2023). The employment data also suggest that youth faced disadvantages in the periods prior to and immediately after the Covid 19 pandemic. Over the five years from 2016 to 2021 youth employment declined by 19% with 168 000 youth losing employment (WCG, 2021). Epsi-Sanchis et al. (2021) noted that Covid-19 aggravated SA's already weak job-growth record in that the pandemic was a leading cause of unprecedented job losses across all population groups in SA. Youth

were more susceptible to Covid-related employment losses in that youth (more so than older persons) lost their jobs, with youth employment still not having caught up to its pre-pandemic levels (WCG, 2023).

The determinants of youth unemployment in the country are multiple and diverse, spanning the demand – and supply-sides of the labour market (Bhorat, et al., 2016). On the demand-side, economic growth is critical for employment. South Africa has however experienced lackluster economic and employment growth for the past two decades and going forward, the prospects for private sector job creation remain bleak (National Planning Commission [NPC], 2017). Promoting employment creation will require addressing several structural macro-economic issues including policies and interventions to transform to a higher value-added economy, addressing regulatory constraints or promoting business' competitiveness and growth (Banerjee et al., 2008; Fox et al., 2016; NPC, 2017; Oosthuizen, 2006).

In terms of the supply-side constraints, literature describe unemployed youth's lack of 'employability' as a key constraint they face in securing employment (Kluve et al., 2017; Robalino et al., 2013). In SA too, the country's statistics agency noted that a leading cause of high unemployment is due to SA youth's characterization as being largely uneducated, unskilled, and unemployable (Statistics SA, 2019). Employability has been defined as the individual skills, attitudes and behaviours that enable a person to obtain and maintain employment (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). Variable terms are used to describe employability including 'non-cognitive skills', 'soft skills' or 'non-economic' personal attributes, with little consensus regarding the term's exact definition or how to measure it (Heckman et al., 2006; Patel et al., 2020). Regardless of the above, authors view employability as a combination of soft – and hard (technical, occupational) skills, with a growing recognition that insufficient knowledge exists regarding how employability mediates a young person's transition to employment (Kluve et al., 2017). Writing on SA's youth employability dynamics, Storme et al., (2019) also support a view that employability includes individual factors (e.g. education, skills) and argue for an expanded definition in light of SA's socio-economic context. For these authors employability is multi-dimensional in that SA youth's employability are further constrained by their personal or household living conditions (e.g. access to electricity or the internet, geographic distance to job opportunities) or neighborhood factors (e.g. proportion of unemployed or discouraged persons in the

community). The key issues that underlie discussions on youth employability in the literature include education, skills, connectivity, and discouragement, and are elaborated on next.

International evidence has shown that a young person's educational attainment is a key indicator of their employment prospects, and several have argued that job creation is best served by reforms to countries' educational systems (Betcherman et al., 2004; O'Higgins, 2001). In SA too, the country's weak educational outcomes were noted as key barrier youth faced in securing work and in the economy's ability to create employment (Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017; Pauw et al., 2008). Unemployment data in the WC support a link between education and employment. For instance, the WCG (2023) reported unemployment was highest for youth who had some secondary education (29%), relative to those who had matriculated (19%) or held a tertiary qualification (7,8%).

Young unemployed persons may lack the skills or attributes prospective employers require. Broad support exists for a 'skills mismatch' as a key constraint in youth's entry to employment (Almeida et al., 2012; De Lannoy et al, 2020; Graham et al., 2016). Multiple skills are required in the SA economy, including technical, occupational, or non-cognitive, interpersonal 'soft skills' such as problem solving, teamwork, communication, or work ethic). Commenting on an employment trend where job-growth was skewed to skilled employees, Bhorat and Oosthuizen (2007) noted that youth who held a professional qualification secured work faster. The existing youth labour force are predominantly unskilled and low-skilled, and one consequence is that these youth's job prospects remain constrained (Bhorat et al., 2016; Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017). A lack of soft skills also constrain youth's employment prospects (World Bank, 2010). Indicative of a demand for non-cognitive skills research showed African employers rated soft skills as a priority skill needed. Evaluators too found that companies frequently cited lack of soft skills as a reason for not employing youth (Fox & Kaul, 2017; Groh et al., 2012).

Obtaining employment entails knowing where and how to look for work. In SA, youth's opportunities to find jobs are constrained by high transport costs, a lack of information about job opportunities or effective job-search methods. For instance, De Lannoy et al. (2018) noted that due to apartheid's spatial planning legacy many WC youth lived far from where jobs are spatially located and often could not afford the high

transport costs entailed in seeking employment or attending interviews. Youth's limited access to labour-market information, in part caused by insufficient jobcentres, further constrain their entry to employment (Bhorat et al., 2016; Mlatsheni & Rospabe, 2002).

The above determinants partially also explain high youth discouragement in which a growing number of WC youth have disengaged with the labour market and are not searching for employment (WCG, 2021). In light of rising youth unemployment, effective structures to support youth's entry to employment are essential.

Overview of YEPs

Rising youth unemployment have prompted governments across the world to implement policies and programmes to promote youth employment. As one form of labour market intervention, active labour market programmes (ALMPs) support the unemployed to enter the labour market. Youth employment programmes (YEPs) are ALMPs that seek to address employment barriers young jobseekers faced and are categorized into four categories:

- Training interventions address a deficiency in youth's skills and help youth acquire technical - occupational -, soft-skills or work experience.
- Subsidy-type YEPs stimulate a labour demand by incentivizing companies to hire youth. Both subsidies and training-YEPs are underpinned by assumptions that companies and youth lack information. Subsidies are presumed to change companies' hiring practices so that they are more amenable to offering youth a chance. With training-YEPs the assumption is that the knowledge acquired in training interventions helped youth to adopt positive work-behaviours.
- Employment service YEPs deliver job-search, counselling, or information services. Here the assumption is that if youth were more informed and empowered their job-search knowledge and practices improved.
- Entrepreneurship YEPs are mainly used in economies with limited capacity to create jobs. Here, a key assumption is that training youth in business skills or providing finance to entrepreneurs promoted self-employment opportunities.

While YEPs with training as the dominant intervention are the most common format implemented worldwide, YEPs combining training with other interventions (e.g. subsidies or employment services), are also increasingly common (Kluve et al., 2019). In terms of the regional coverage, evidence from YEP meta-evaluations found that

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Latin American regions were major contributors to the YEP knowledge base, with less being known of YEPs implemented in Africa (Betcherman & Khan, 2015; Kluve et al., 2017). Comprehensive YEPs typically combine multiple services or interventions. Large-scale comprehensive YEPs prominently featured in meta-evaluations included the *Jobs Corps*, *Supported Work* and *Joint Training Partnership* initiatives in the United States (US) or the United Kingdom's (UK) *New Deal* YEP. In Latin America, where most evidence of YEPs in developing countries originates from, the *Jovenes* YEPs in Colombia, Dominican Republic and Chile, Argentina's *Entra 21*, and Mexico's *Probecat* are commonly mentioned. Most of these YEPs share similar characteristics with the WSP programme in that they were co-implemented by government and companies, offered multiple interventions, and aimed to enhance youth's employability and/ or labour-market outcomes (e.g., job-attainment).

International evidence paints a bleak picture of YEPs' impact on improving youth's employment outcomes. Here, authors found that few YEPs worked to increase youth's employment probability and in the instances where YEPs were effective, small effects were found (Almeida et al., 2014; Kluve et al., 2019). Further detail on YEPs effects is provided in the Results chapter.

In SA prominent YEPs included the short-term income relief initiative (e.g., *Expanded Public Works Programme* or *Community Development Programme*), subsidies (e.g., *Employment Tax Intensive*, *Work Experience Grant*) or *Learnerships*. Key WC YEPs included the *Year Beyond*, *Youth Café's* or *Agriculture Training Institute* interventions. As found with international YEPs, local YEPs predominantly focused on delivering training initiatives. Given the scope of the SA unemployment challenge, SA YEPs tend to target all unemployed persons, and not just youth (e.g. *EPWP*, *CWP*). Comprehensive YEPs (i.e. YEPs that combine multiple interventions or include subsidies with skills-training) are costly interventions and much-needed in SA's high unemployment context. Here, several authors have stressed that more, comprehensive demand-side YEPs that involve companies as host employers are essential, given SA's need for private-sector led job creation (Graham et al., 2019; Paver et al., 2019; Ranchhod & Finn, 2016).

Knowledge on the effectiveness of SA YEPs is limited by a lack of robust YEP evaluations (De Lannoy et al., 2016). And despite this gap in knowledge, available

evidence similarly points to bleak prospects for YEPs success prospects in SA as evidenced in findings that two large-scale YEPs (*Learnership* and *Employment Tax Incentive*) had no impact on increasing employment probabilities (Ranchhod & Finn, 2016; Rankin et al, 2014).

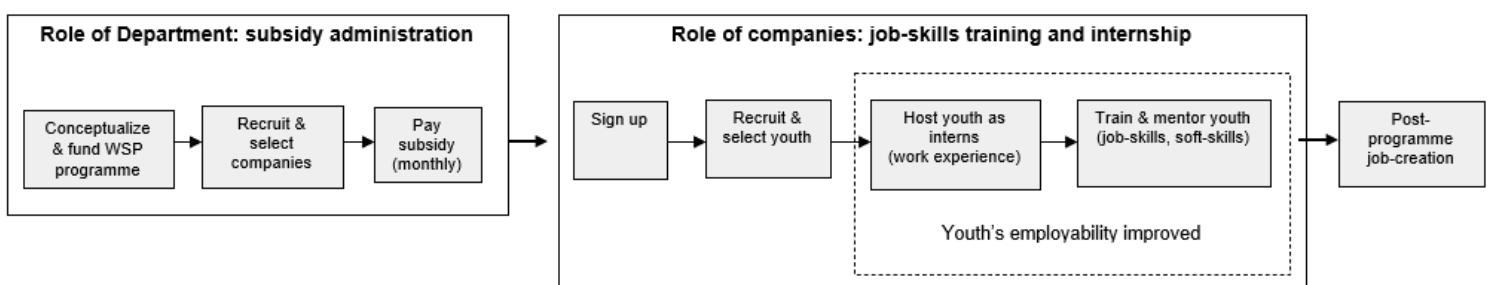
Description of the WSP programme

The Work and Skills Placement (WSP) programme has existed since 2008 and is the DEDAT’s flagship initiative to support unemployed youth. The Department does not consider its mandate to be job-creation and instead sees its role to support private sector companies to grow and, in this way, create employment (DEDAT; 2015). The WSP programme is implemented by the Skills Development unit and is one of several internal initiatives that work towards employment creation. For example, the Enterprise Development unit implements entrepreneurship initiatives, and the Red Tape unit implements regulatory reforms. Both units work to support businesses to grow and akin to the WSP programme’s intent, aim to support youth or youth-owned business to grow and create employment. At the time of this evaluation the three units largely worked in isolation of each other, despite having similar programme aims.

In seeking to respond to high youth unemployment the WSP programme aims to improve youth’s employability. A public-private partnership model is used by which the Department partners with companies which in turn implement the programme’s core services. In Figure 1 the implementation roles are depicted to distinguish the activities performed by the Department and participating host companies.

Figure 1

Implementation activities of DEDAT and participating companies



As depicted above the WSP programme comprises two key causal mechanisms viz. a wage-subsidy to qualifying companies, who in turn deliver job-skills training

interventions to eligible youth. The Department's role is to design the programme, select host companies, administer the subsidy, and monitor implementation.

The programme commences with the Department's subsidy administration service. Companies were eligible to apply if they met the following criteria:

- Economic sector: companies from high-growth or labor-intensive sectors were targeted (e.g., call centres, hospitality, retail)
- Had a demand or need for youth labour who would be trained as interns
- Willing to employ youth when the programme ended. Here, companies were required to complete a form indicating how many graduates they were likely to employ. Employment offers would however be subject to interns' performance, and it was not mandatory for host companies to employ interns once the programme ended.
- Willing to invest their own funds to provide additional types of training

The programme also used intermediary organisations as an additional type of implementation partner. These companies were frequently recruitment agencies who could also contract with the Department to implement the programme on behalf of the host companies. In some instances, host companies appointed intermediaries to recruit youth or provide soft-skill training to youth participants.

The total subsidy payable to companies ranged between R2,500 – R5,000 per intern, per month. Companies specified the number of youth required and variable internship durations were evident in that internships ranged between five weeks to 12 months. Companies used the subsidies to reduce labour (salary) costs or provide additional training to youth. The Department administered the subsidy by which companies paid the interns and then claimed the wage-costs from the Department. Depending on attrition the actual subsidies paid to companies also varied monthly.

The WSP programme's key services which included recruitment, selection and training youth incumbents are implemented by companies. It was envisaged that youth exited the programme with improved skills and behaviours (i.e. employable) and would be given jobs in the companies where they were trained, or by any other employer.

In terms of the training component, youth were recruited and placed in host companies as interns. While the Department had a minimum requirement for youth participants to be unemployed matriculants, companies added additional criteria to

ensure that youth incumbents matched companies specific hiring needs. Additional criteria included a need that applicants were computer literate or had work-experience.

The composition, duration, intensity, or quality of the job-skills training varied by host company. At a minimum, the Department required companies to provide on the job training (internships). Host companies are encouraged, but not obligated to provide additional training services to youth interns. Based on companies' own operating environments they could choose to train youth interns in any type of training, including technical or occupational skills, soft skills, or mentoring. The Department does not prescribe the quality of training provision and there is no expectation that the skills acquired are quality assured or certificated. One month before the programme's end, host companies are to submit completed 'employability forms' which reflected their self-assessment of any changes in beneficiaries' skills or attributes. The exact nature of how employability is defined and assessed by host companies is unclear.

As far as the evaluator could determine the programme was adapted twice. The first key change occurred within five years of implementation and entailed a change to how training was delivered. To reduce costs and curtail the use of external consultants, the Department stopped funding training provision by outsourced training providers. Post this change any skills-training became the host company's responsibility. A second change occurred in 2022, by which the Department piloted a change to the eligibility requirements so that host companies that were willing to offer technical or accredited training were prioritized for selection. Going forward the Department expects that this latter change will improve the quality of skills provided so that youth's employment prospects are enhanced. Appendix A provides a visual depiction of the 2 key WSP programme adaptations, over 2008 – 2022.

The WSP programme is DEDAT's largest initiative in terms of budget allocation and performance targets required. The budget, at approximately R80 million annually, comprises 20% of the total departmental budget. In terms of the performance expected, the programme's target is to 'support beneficiaries with skills programmes.' At the time of this evaluation the Department and the 42 host companies assisted 6000+ youth to access Departmental skills programmes. Beyond the programme's 5-year outcome of improving youth's employability, no further performance targets or outcomes apply. Notwithstanding the programme's large size (in terms of budget and

performance targets), a small internal team implemented the programme in the form of one project manager and the Department's Head of Skills.

The programme's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approach is basic. At the time of the evaluation, a documented and explicit blueprint or logic of how the WSP programme worked to improve employability did not exist. Performance information was collected against one output, viz, how many youth accessed a skills project. Monitoring activities were under-developed and restricted to collecting operational or financial information, e.g., claim forms, interns' timesheets. The Department does not fully define what it means by employability, nor are clearly defined measurement approaches or tools available and used. Programme monitoring or outcome data such as youth's baseline information, training implementation data or employment outcomes were not routinely measured or collected.

The WSP programme was evaluated twice and both evaluations assessed the WSP programme's outcomes (Devnomics, 2011; Urban Econ, 2013). The 2013 study covered the WSP programme's first five years of operation, (2008 - 2013) during which a cumulative 3926 unemployed youth and 359 companies were assisted. The evaluation did not include much detail on the programme's targeting criteria, workings, or characteristics (components, activities), and employability, as the programme's outcome, was not defined. Nonetheless, it was reported that of the 199 interviewed, respondents were mostly female (60%), resided in Cape Town (56%), had no work-experience before joining the programme (42%), and were largely youth. With respect to the findings, a similar proportion of youth interviewed were, at the time of the research, either unemployed (29%, n=199) or employed (31%), and just 40% of host companies surveyed (n=41) said they would employ the youth they had trained. The results reported for youth's employability were also not overly optimistic. Here, 25% of the youth interviewed indicated they had not learnt enough skills to find employment (n=199) and host companies themselves indicated that just 29% of the youth trained, were employable after the WSP programme.

Both evaluations recommended an M&E strategy be developed to describe the WSP programme's design, indicators, data collection and approach to evaluations. Neither study was guided by a programme theory and hence the aspects or features that contributed to the programme's success (or failure) were not adequately clarified.

Evaluation Approach

A programme theory evaluation was deemed an appropriate evaluation focus for the WSP programme. The selection of this evaluation approach was informed by the evaluation client's need and the WSP programme's nature and characteristics.

Evaluation Client's Need

The evaluator is the Department's M&E manager and being internal, I am privy to organisational requirements that programmes are well designed, adequately executed and grounded in robust M&E approaches. The next section discusses the implication of my role as an internal evaluator on the evaluation approach, and the ethics regarding this role are further detailed in the Methods chapter and in Appendix **K** (Reflexivity as an internal evaluator).

At the time of this evaluation the Department's budget had been cut and managers were required to clearly demonstrate how their proposed programmes would achieve the expected results. At the time, the WSP programme lacked a documented and explicit plan or design that detailed the mechanisms by which the programme worked to support companies to create jobs. In my role as M&E manager I am also partly responsible to assist staff to develop M&E plans and as such the evaluation client (Head: Skills Division) approached me for assistance.

The evaluation client was new to the Skills unit and needed to understand, what the WSP programme entailed and how it worked. Key questions raised in the initial client meeting are found below. Appendix B presents the client's questions posed.

- How does the WSP programme work, for companies and unemployed youth?
- Can the WSP programme work? How can its success (failure) be confirmed?
- What are the programme's assumptions, and are they valid?
- How can 'employability' be defined or what does employability entail?
- Are there outcomes and indicators that the programme is missing?

The client's questions underscored the need for a description to be developed to clarify how the WSP programme worked to achieve the intended impact. In addition, a documented programme description was required as part of the WSP programme's internal application process to inform decisions about the programme's funding. Conceptualizing a programme's ideas of what should be done to bring about the

intended changes and documenting these in a programme model falls within the ambit of programme theory evaluation. Accordingly, and informed by the client's information needs and DEDAT's requirements, it was agreed that a programme theory evaluation was conducted. This evaluation approach was appropriate considering the client's requirement that a descriptive model is developed, to clarify and depict how the WSP programme worked to improve youth's employment prospects.

A second consideration to inform the evaluation approach related to the WSP programme's features, context, and implementation structure. Funnel and Rogers (2011) emphasized the importance of considering a programme's nature when considering a suitable evaluation approach. An assessment of how the programme's nature and circumstances informed the approach to evaluation adopted follows next.

Complexity and the WSP programme

The WSP programme is filled with complexity. The youth employment challenge it seeks to alleviate is an intractable systems level problem. Viewed from a complexity perspective YEPs generally conform to complex interventions located in complex social systems, with different agents interacting with each other and in response to their external environments. Complexity arises because multiple and varying actors, behaviours and possibly, agendas exist (Hummelbrunner, 2011). In the same vein, companies, government entities, the trade or education sectors are nested systems, and their actions may be limited by the social and political systems in which they exist (Koleros et al., 2020; Moore et al., 2019). Interactions between different players in the system are non-linear and opportunistic and the outcomes of these interactions are emergent and uncertain. In short, multiple, and variable factors are at play in improving youth employment and predicting changes or an optimal change process for programmes operating in a complex system is often challenging (Chatterji, 2016).

The WSP programme can be viewed as a complex programme within a complex system (Douthwaite, et al., 2017). Multiple companies as partner organisations are involved, implementing multiple and variable programme services or components. In 2021, 42 companies co-implemented the programme, and each company adapted activities or components in line with their company-specific requirements. Outcomes such as post-programme employment are emergent and

depend on several external factors, some of which cannot be predicted in advance or may be beyond the WSP programme's influence (Hivos, 2015; Rogers 2011).

Complex programme configurations present challenges in terms of implementation and evaluation. Change and uncertainty are inherent in complex initiatives and in the case of the WSP programme, companies may constantly alter actions in response to external influences, needs or opportunities. Evaluating programmes that are dynamic is challenging in that it is often not possible to assess what works, since the 'what' (actions, services) are constantly changing (Rogers, 2011).

Furthermore, the WSP programme seeks change at multiple levels in the youth employment system including for individuals (youth), units (companies), or systems (economic or employment). These programme features imply an evaluation approach is selected that appropriately characterizes the WSP programme's nature, relationships, and multiple-level impacts in a manageable way. Programme theory evaluation approaches were devised to unpack complexity in programmes. Through this evaluation type, evaluators set out to fully identify a programme's causal pathway to describe and explain how, and why programmes work to lead to the changes expected for beneficiaries (Bamberger et al., 2019; Barnes et al., 2003; Koleros & Mayne, 2019).

Programme theory evaluation of the WSP programme

Programme evaluation refers to an evaluative activity by which a social programme's workings or effectiveness is ascertained (Rossi et al., 2019). For Funnel and Rogers (2011), programmes may be described with a 'program theory' or without, and evaluations can be guided by a program theory, or not. Evaluation conducted without being guided by the program theory, or black box evaluation, assesses the programme's outcomes without fully describing what the programme is, or how it works. In contrast, programme theory evaluation is distinctive in that it unpacks a programme's 'black box,' by first assessing *how and why a programme could work*, before assessing whether the programme does work (Rogers, 2000). Recognizing that an array of terms exists to refer to this evaluation approach, e.g. "theory-based – ", "theory-driven – ", "clarificatory - ", "design evaluation," Rogers' (2000) definition cited above is used throughout this evaluation (Coryn et al., 2011).

Program theory is the defining feature in programme theory evaluation. While the terms program logic and program theory are also used interchangeably, there are subtle differences. Leeuw et al. (2003) for example pointed out that program logic describes how a programme fits together through inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes. 'Programme theory' is more explanatory in that it goes a step further and seeks to explain the causal mechanisms by which the programme works. In short, program theory refers to a descriptive and explanatory model that attempts to explain how and why a programme's activities bring about the intended changes (Bickman, 1983; Coryn et al., 2011; Weiss, 1997). Programme theories depict a programme as a causal model of activities, outputs and outcomes which gradually lead to the desired change in the societal problem being addressed (Kellogg Foundation, 2004). A distinctive feature in programme theory evaluation is its descriptiveness. In developing a programme's theory, the intervention's features, assumptions, mechanisms, and causal processes are surfaced so that it is easier to understand how and why a programme's services lead to a change, or changed situations, for beneficiaries (Astbury & Leeuw, 2010; Birckmayer & Weiss, 2000).

Programme theory comprises a theory of change and an implementation theory; the latter depicting how implementation triggers the change theory. A key idea is that programmes fail either because the design is flawed, (i.e., theory failure) or because implementation deviated from the design (Rossi et al., 2019). A programme theory evaluation entails developing a programme's theory, assessing its robustness and feasibility, and using the plausible theory to guide future evaluation designs (Rogers, 2000).

One of the evaluation client's information needs was to understand if the WSP programme's success (or lack thereof) could be confirmed. This implied the need for an outcomes or impact evaluation. During the client briefing the evaluator presented a case that assessing the programme's impact would be premature given that it was not precisely clear what the WSP programme's design or intended outcomes were. It was also a case that in the YEP literature several evaluators had found that few YEP impact evaluations that were guided by programme theories existed, which contributed to an evaluation knowledge gap regarding which YEP features worked (or did not work) in successful YEPs (Crépon & van den Berg; Robalino et al., 2013). It was therefore suggested and agreed to by the client, that it would be more beneficial and

appropriate to first, understand the WSP programme's components and mechanisms by which it seeks to bring about change, before evaluating whether the WSP programme was successful in achieving its intended outcomes or impacts.

Programme theories unpack what it is about a programme that works for whom, and where (Pawson & Tilley, 1994). The usefulness of depicting contextual factors to describe a program is appropriate in this evaluation when considering findings that YEPs impacts are also influenced by the economic and labour-market contexts in which these programmes are implemented (Kluve et al., 2017).

As a cheaper form of evaluation, programme theory evaluation saves evaluation costs (Donaldson, 2007). This may be relevant in the client's organisational context of declining budgets. A programme theory evaluation may uncover deficiencies in the programme theory and the client may choose to defer full-scale impact evaluation until such time that the programme design is refined and sufficient implementation against a (more) robust design has lapsed (Rossi et al., 2019).

A programme theory evaluation also informs the design of M&E approaches. By surfacing a programme's causal model, outcomes, indicators, and assumptions are unpacked, and these are essential elements to include in M&E strategies. Considering the evaluation client's need for guidance on developing suitable M&E approaches for the WSP programme, a programme theory evaluation is deemed appropriate given its reported usefulness in developing programme M&E strategies (Hivos, 2015; Leeuw, 2010).

Evaluation questions

This study proposed a programme theory evaluation of the WSP programme. A formative evaluation approach was followed. It is envisaged that after constructing the WSP programme theory and assessing its plausibility, the recommendations could be used to improve the programme's design or inform programme implementation and M&E activities. The following questions guided the programme theory evaluation:

1. What is the theory and logic underlying the WSP programme?
 - a) What are the areas of convergence and/or difference in the views espoused by the Department and the participating companies?
2. Is the WSP programme theory plausible?

- a) Does the theory correspond with best practices espoused for plausible youth employment programme designs?
- b) Are the causal mechanisms in the WSP programme theory plausible?

Chapter Two: Method

This chapter presents the design of the WSP programme theory evaluation and the methods used to elicit and construct the programme theory. The last section outlines the procedures used to assess the programme theory's plausibility.

Evaluation Design

A descriptive evaluation design was used to unpack and describe the WSP programme theory from the perspective of the programme stakeholders.' Data was collected using primary and secondary methods. In terms of the primary data collected, qualitative interviews with DEDAT's managers and company stakeholders occurred, to elicit and construct a model of the stakeholders' programme theories. Secondary data in the form of published research and evaluations of YEPs were used to assess the plausibility of the programme theory.

Donaldson's (2007) five-step model was used to guide the programme theory development and plausibility assessment stages. The five steps entailed in this framework are (1) engage relevant programme stakeholders, (2) construct the programme theory, (3) present first draft theory for input, (4) assess the theory's plausibility and (5) finalize the theory. Steps 1-3 were followed to address Evaluation Question 1 (eliciting the theory), and steps 4-5 were followed to address Evaluation Question 2 (plausibility assessment).

EQ 1: what is the theory and logic underlying the WSP programme?

The following section describes the procedure used to develop the WSP programme theory by first engaging the relevant programme stakeholders (step 1), constructing the programme theory (step 2) and eliciting input on the draft theory (step 3).

Step 1: Engage relevant stakeholders

Participants.

The data providers included the two departmental managers and host company representatives. A description of how stakeholders were engaged to extract and visually represent their respective programme theories follows.

Sampling Procedure.

As previously mentioned, two departmental managers implemented the WSP programme at the time of this evaluation and both were engaged. The project manager had implemented the programme for eight years and provided insights on the WSP programme's history and day to day operations. The Head of Skills provided insights regarding the programme's strategy and plans.

Six host company representatives were engaged. A multi-step sampling strategy was used to obtain multiple companies' perspectives. Purposive sampling was used, and company selection was guided by the following criteria:

- Host company status: the programme partnered with host companies and intermediary organisations. Since youth were placed and trained by host companies, and I needed information about how the training services were implemented, host companies rather than intermediaries were selected.
- Sector: a range of company perspectives were desired and therefore companies from different sector or industry contexts were selected.
- Size of intern allocation per company: this criterion was used so that insights from companies with a high labour demand were gathered.
- Spatial location: host companies from urban (i.e., Metro) and non-urban labour market contexts were selected.

As the Department's M&E manager I had full access to the WSP programme's beneficiary datasets. A consolidated database of the characteristics of the 42 host companies was constructed and sampling criteria were applied. A final list of 12 potential host companies to be interviewed, was generated.

I approached the WSP project manager to assist with gaining access to the potential host company interviewees. After I prepared a formal request to interview document, the client signed it, and the project manager mailed this request to the 12 prospective interviewees. Appendix F presents the interview request sent.

Host companies that confirmed their willingness to participate in the interviews, received additional information about the evaluation’s purpose, how responses would be anonymized confidentiality procedures (See Appendix F). The evaluator’s ethics approval from the University of Cape Town (Appendix C and D) and the company consent forms were also mailed prior to data collection (Appendix G).

Table 1

Final sample of data providers

Interviewee	Role at company	Company’s sector	Company location	# of interns	Internship duration (months)	Youth training received
Government 1	Programme Manager					
Government 2	Project Manager					
Company 1	Learning and Development Manager	Retail	Metro	206	6, 8, 9	Merchandiser
Company 2	Partner	Technology	Metro	29	3, 6	ICT, HR
Company 3	Group Manager: Training	Call Centre	Metro	404	5 – 12	Customer service
Company 4	Learning and Development Manager	Call center	Metro	46	1, 2, 6	Customer service
Company 5	Group HR Manager	Hospitality	Non-metro	12	4	General
Company 6	HR Manager	Agri-processing	Non-metro	61	4	General

Eight programme theory stakeholders were interviewed comprising six host company representatives and two DEDAT managers. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the sample achieved. Host company representatives were from multiple sectors and as senior managers, could provide strategic insights to describe how their companies understood the WSP programme to work. Youth placed in the companies interviewed, were trained as general workers, call centre agents or in occupational skills needed in the retail or technology sectors.

Instrument and data collection procedures.

Three qualitative questionnaires were administered to the two governmental respondents and six host company representatives (see Appendix H, I, J). The two governmental instruments were tailored so that operational and strategic information of the WSP programme could be gathered from the project manager and Head of Skills, respectively. Research instruments for host company representatives were customized so that the host company’s programme characteristics (e.g. duration,

intern intake size) were incorporated into the interviews. This was done so that a rapport could easily be established, and so that the host company representative's time could be more efficiently used.

Questions were open-ended and designed to gather information about the WSP programme's services, activities, outcomes, and operations. Cognizant that host company representatives' knowledge of programme theories may be limited, jargon was avoided (e.g., 'what is the theory of change?'). Neutral questions with clear meanings were preferred, e.g., 'what do you think success for the WSP programme would look like?'

One on one interviews were conducted. In the Department's case the two managers were interviewed separately. Being internal to the Department I was aware of a potential power dynamic between the Head of Skills and his sub-ordinate. Since each staff member's meaning was deemed to be equally important, interviews rather than a focus group were used. This was done so that sentiments could be freely shared and equal 'voices' given to the opinions of senior or junior governmental staff.

My review of the WSP programme records showed that host companies' programme participation characteristics and operational contexts differed and hence, individual interviews with host company representatives were appropriate.

Data collection coincided with Covid-19's workplace restrictions and most interviewees worked remotely. Almost all interviews (seven) were conducted remotely using a video-conferencing application. Interviews lasted 1–1 ½ hours.

Step 2: develop the draft programme theory

Data analysis.

The eight interview transcripts which described the programme perspectives of six host company representatives and two governmental managers were transcribed. The emphasis was on obtaining rich descriptions of how each interviewee believed the programme to work. Thematic analysis was selected as the analysis method. Braun, and Clarke's (2006) six steps for conducting a thematic analysis was used. In terms of this framework a first step entailed becoming familiar with the data. Interesting features across the data were sorted into codes and themes (steps 2 and 3). The themes were then reviewed, and a final analysis was done (steps 4 to 6).

Each transcript was read twice. After the first reading an overall perspective of all the data across the eight transcripts was gathered. In the second reading verbatim statements were highlighted and manually sorted into codes which then became the building blocks of each interviewee's programme theory. The digital recordings were used to check accuracy when transcripts were unclear. The data was also analysed to extract ideas or sentiments that recurred across interviews and these codes were organized into themes that corresponded to the EQs. For example, themes that emerged in EQ 1 (elicited theory) included participants' views of the WSP programme as a job-training initiative, the centrality of employability as an intermediate outcome or the unpredictability of the outcome of job creation.

The Kellogg Foundation's (2004) logic model guide served as an initial structure to guide how the elicited programme theories were visually represented. Interviewee statements were grouped into the activities, outputs (services delivered) and outcomes (expected changes) that each stakeholder believed to be necessary for the WSP programme to achieve its ultimate outcome or impact.

The constituent parts of the programme theories were arranged into maps or models to visually depict the stakeholders' views or 'stories of change. Backward mapping was also used which entailed starting at the ultimate outcome and asking, 'what change (outcome) was necessary for the previous outcome to occur' (Hivos, 2015). The evaluator sense-checked the models for coherency or gaps in the logic.

At the end of this initial process the draft programme theories were derived. The elicited programme theories lacked an explanatory value in that insufficient detail existed to describe the rationale for 'why' stakeholders believed the programme *could* work (Funnel & Rogers, 2011; Weiss, 1997). To improve the theories' descriptiveness, mechanisms of change and assumptions were added. Mechanisms refer to a beneficiary's response to the services received, and assumptions refer to stakeholders' beliefs for why or how a programme's activities will lead to the intended outcomes (Rogers, 2000; Valters, 2015). The literature that informed this stage of the theory development process drew on literature describing causal mechanisms, generic programme types, YEP evaluations and behaviour change theories (Astbury & Leeuw, 2010; Funnel & Rogers, 2011; Kluge et al., 2019; Pawson & Tilley, 1994; Schmitt, 2020; Weiss, 1997).

Interviewee transcripts were re-read to surface statements that were categorized as mechanisms or assumptions. Questions used to elicit the mechanisms included asking the 'if-then-because' question. Assumptions were derived by applying the 'what needed to be in place' for the link to hold" method. Interviewee data that corresponded to mechanisms and assumptions were mapped into the draft theories.

Funnel and Rogers' (2011) approach was used to inform how programme theories for complex programmes could be visually represented. While any future efforts to refine the programme theory may use more advanced systems-theory modelling options e.g., causal loop diagrams or systems dynamics, I incorporated aspects of complexity by mapping the WSP programme components (subsidies, training) as inter-dependent and sequential. Outcomes were mapped as unintended or emergent and a feedback loop was included (Bamberger et al., 2019; Gates, 2017; Rogers, 2011).

Valters (2015) noted that theories should communicate a programme in a simple, uncluttered, and easily comprehensible visual format. A linear model to depict each draft theory was used. This modelling choice was deemed to be an appropriate format to communicate programme theories of complex programmes in a user-friendly manner, especially in cases where the audience may be unfamiliar with programme theories or visual mapping of programme theories (Funnel & Rogers, 2011).

Nested theories.

In total, eight programme theories were derived comprising the theories of six host company representatives and two departmental staff. Each theory reflected its own programme features, services, or company delivery contexts. Reconciling the detail of eight theories into one singular, high-level theory was not deemed to be a valid or feasible depiction of the complexity inherent in the WSP programme. One approach to visually representing complexity entails using nested theories (Mayne, 2015). In this approach an over-arching theory depicts the WSP programme's 'big picture' while the detail that describes how each partner (host company) viewed or implemented the programme is depicted as embedded, sub-ordinate or nested theories (Koleros & Mayne, 2019). In being depicted as nested theories, the companies' programme theories cannot be viewed as separate to the over-arching theory. The nested (companies') theories serve as sub-theories which are embedded

in the over-arching high-level theory. The multi-faceted nature of the WSP programme, the interdependencies between partners and the variable implementation protocols followed by the host companies interviewed, informed the decision for each stakeholder's theory to be separately modelled (Hansen & Vedung, 2010).

What emerged was one over-arching or high-level programme theory which described the overall impact pathway. This was complemented by the individual host company theories (nested theories) in which the programmatic services, activities, outcomes, and causal mechanisms were depicted to describe how each host company representative believed the WSP programme to work.

The two departmental staff members' theories were amalgamated and in total, seven programme theories were constructed.

Step 3: submit draft theories to stakeholders

Draft programme theories were mailed to stakeholders for input. One company provided amendments which were incorporated. All other stakeholders were satisfied that the draft theories adequately represented their views.

EQ 1b: what are the areas of convergence and/or difference in the views espoused by the Department and the participating companies?

To respond to this question, I assessed how the company representatives' views of the programme compared to each other, and how host companies' views as a collective, compared to the Departmental stakeholders' views. A cross-case analysis of the six company representatives' insights were organized into the key programme theory constructs or themes being explored, including the programme's youth targeting criteria, components, outcomes, and causal mechanisms. A copy of the findings of the cross-case analysis is presented as Appendix M.

EQ 2: is the WSP programme theory plausible?

The plausibility assessment was guided by two sub-questions. In the first instance the WSP programme theory was compared to best practice guidelines for designing robust YEPs (EQ 2a). This was followed by reviewing the programme's causal pathways against findings from YEP evaluations (EQ 2b: are the causal pathways in the programme theory plausible). The plausibility assessment related to step four in Donaldson's (2007) model. The procedures for how to assess a plausibility

were informed by Brouselle and Champagne's (2011) logic analysis approach. As a programme theory evaluation approach, logic analysis entails constructing a programme theory (step 1), developing an analysis framework (step 2) and evaluating the theory (step 3).

Step 4 and 5: assess plausibility and finalize the programme theory

The aim was to assess if the programme theory was robust by comparing the theory's causal links and assumptions to the evaluative evidence of YEPs' impacts and research (Mayne, 2017; Rossi et al., 2019).

Procedure.

In terms of Brouselle & Champagne's (2011) direct logic analysis method, the intent is to assess whether the WSP programme's design was adequate to achieve a programme's intended outcomes. The next section presents the procedures used to develop an analysis framework to guide which data or literature would be gathered and used in comparing the WSP programme theory to evidence on YEPs.

Reviewing all the assumptions and links in seven programme theories was beyond this dissertation's scope. The literature search and analysis focused on key issues (components, causal links, mechanisms, or assumptions) as the 'key active ingredients' in the WSP programme's impact pathway (Weiss, 2000). While other components or links do exist in YEP impact pathways, e.g. business skills training, job retention outcomes or causal links between school-level education and employment, these aspects were not germane to the current WSP programme and were omitted from the literature search. The evaluation client's interests and the WSP programme description guided which key issues were selected and explored.

Literature was gathered using databases such as ProQuest, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, JSTOR or the Wiley Online Library. Search terms were narrow and included key words such as 'ALMPs,' 'YEPs' or 'employability'. The search was limited to English publications published over the last 20 years. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses of YEPs were prioritized in that these studies rigorously synthesize the scientific evidence about a topic (Grant & Booth, 2009). Manual searches were used to obtain programme-specific evaluations cited in the reference lists of meta-evaluations or other studies. Articles were reviewed if the following inclusion criteria were met:

- Related to unemployed youth
- Dealt with YEPs or initiatives aiming to integrate youth into the labour market
- Described services common in YEP designs (e.g., subsidy, job-skills) training)
- YEPs were implemented in developing countries or countries with labour market contexts similar to South Africa's instance

The literature gathered was then reviewed for relevance and appropriateness. To address the question on best practices in designing YEPs (EQ 2a), the evaluator organized the findings from the review into themes which included YEPs' impact on youth's labour-market outcomes and programme features that enhanced a YEP's success prospects. In terms of the plausibility of the WSP's programme theory (EQ 2b), the themes that emerged from the literature review related to the complexity of the economic problem that YEPs sought to address, links between employability and employment, and the credibility of WSP programme' theory's mechanisms or causal assumptions.

The last step in logic analysis entailed evaluating the programme theory. This was done by comparing the programme theory to the evidence gathered and the intent was to assess the WSP programme theory's strengths or weaknesses and identify any recommendations to refine or improve the WSP's programme theory.

A rapid review of the literature was used in which scientific evidence is gathered and appraised using carefully focused questions and conducting a review of reviews (Grant & Booth, 2009). In light of shortened timeframes of rapid reviews, it may be possible that not all literature or evidence on the YEP topic was included.

Ethical considerations

As previously noted, the evaluator is internal to the Department, and I had to follow the ethical procedures required for academic purposes and as a governmental employee. My job-role includes auditing the performance of Departmental programmes. During the client briefing session I clarified that the evaluation was to be conducted in partial fulfillment of my Master's degree and will also serve to inform refinements to the programme's design. Any 'insider' knowledge I may have had from auditing the programme's actual performance was not used in conducting this programme theory evaluation. The evaluation client's approval to conduct the

evaluation is provided as Annexure K, and the University's ethics approval are listed as Appendices C and D.

The host companies that participated in this evaluation received departmental funding and care was needed when communicating with host company representatives. From the onset I strived to communicate the evaluation's use and intent. This was done so that host company representatives were fully aware that participation was voluntary, did not influence their ongoing participation in the WSP programme, nor could any additional financial benefit be gained (i.e. more subsidies) by host company representatives agreeing to participate in the evaluation study's interviews. These ethical considerations were clarified in the client's request for companies to participate in the study (Appendix E), interview informational letter sent to host company representatives (Appendix F) and the host company consent forms (see Appendix G).

All host company representatives consented and returned signed interview consent forms prior to data collection. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Identifying information was removed from transcripts and the evaluation report versions. All records were stored in a password-protected, digital storage application.

Reflexivity as an internal evaluator

In addition to procedural ethics, 'ethics in practice' issues were applied (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Since the research was qualitative, I was aware of how my role as an internal evaluator could inform the research process. My reflections on my role as an internal evaluator engaged in a qualitative study are documented in Appendix K (Reflexivity as an internal evaluator).

Chapter Three: Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the findings of the WSP programme theory, starting with a high-level depiction of the governmental theory, followed by a representation of the six nested theories espoused by the host companies' (EQ 1). As a programme co-implemented by government and its host company partners, the companies' programme theories were compared first to each other, to assess areas of similarity or differences across the companies' views. Hereafter, the nested theories were compared to the governmental (high-level) programme theory (EQ 1b). The high-level programme theory's plausibility was then assessed by comparing the theory to best practices recommended for plausible YEP designs (EQ 2a) and comparing the causal mechanisms to findings from YEP evaluations and literature (EQ 2b).

EQ 1: what is the theory and logic underlying the WSP programme?

Chapter one described the WSP programme as a complex program. Merging seven stakeholders' theories into one programme theory was not deemed to be practical nor a fully accurate representation of the complexity in the WSP programme. It was more feasible and appropriate to depict the programme's complexity and reliance on multiple actors (host companies) as a high-level governmental theory into which host companies theories were nested or embedded (Mayne, 2015).

High-level programme theory

Figure 2 presents the high-level governmental theory. In terms of its layout the model reflects host companies' support actions as nested theories (shaded section). The impact pathway comprises two interdependent and sequential components. In the subsidy causal pathway, the Department uses subsidies to incentivize host companies to participate and recruit youth. Hereafter the skills causal pathway is initiated whereby host companies holistically trained youth interns. The outcomes of these interactions between the Department, host companies and youth are emergent and unpredictable. Variable outcomes could emerge in the pathway to increase youth employment (ultimate outcome) in that the programme could improve youth's employability (intermediate outcome) and prospects of securing permanent jobs, either immediately or over time. As companies grew, more labour was required and the potential for youth employment increased (see feedback loop). The assumptions are labelled as A1-F4

in Figure 2 and described in Table 2. The next section presents a detailed narrative of the subsidy and training causal pathways.

Figure 2

High

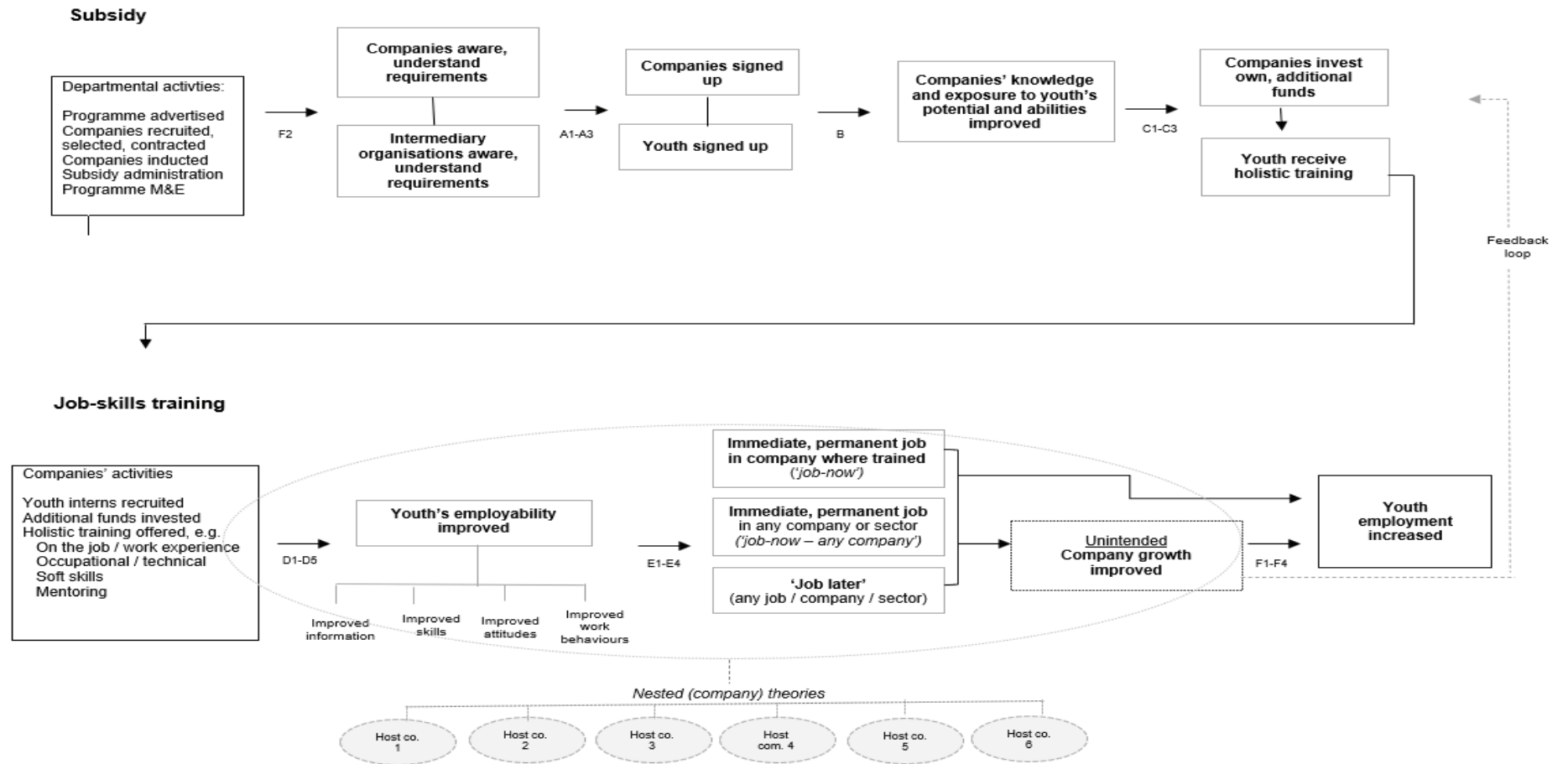


Table 2*Assumptions in the programme theories impact pathway*

	Description of assumption
A1	Programme intent, requirements are clearly communicated
A2	A demand for skilled, entry level youth labour exists
A3	Companies believe the financial incentive outweighs costs of hiring inexperienced, low-skilled youth
B	Motivated by financial savings and unencumbered by requirement to employ, companies ‘test drive’ the incumbents to gauge potential in a risk-free environment
C1	Companies willing to invest, see a value in training youth
C2	Companies can financially afford to co-invest in the programme
C3	Job vacancies exist for youth trainees
D1	Youth lack work experience or occupational skills needed by prospective employers
D2	Trained in the nature or type of skills that companies and job applicants require.
D3	On-the-job training will lead to knowledge that can be practically applied whilst working
D4	Knowledge gained is practically reinforced by the activities of company-based mentors
D5	Youth complete the full duration of the internship
E1	Existing demand for skilled youth labour
E2	Skills produced are matched to employers’ requirements
E3	Companies absorb the trainees into vacant job-roles
E4	Private-sector nature of the training sends a signal to other prospective employers of the credibility or appropriateness of the skills acquired.
F1	Well-functioning public-private partnership approach
F2	Adequate, well-executed programme design, operations, and implementation (applies to whole diagram)
F3	Companies growth and competitiveness improved
F4	Programme’s scale is reached, more companies and youth participate

According to the Departmental stakeholders, the WSP programme seeks to address high youth unemployment. The constraints to employment are multiple and affect employers (host companies) and unemployed youth alike. In line with the WCG’s mandate for Departments to support the private sector to grow and create jobs, the programme prioritized two components, viz. subsidies to address companies’ hesitancy to hire unskilled unemployed youth and developing youth’s job-skills through companies’ implementing skills training interventions (assumptions A2-A3 in Table 2).

The subsidy and skills training causal pathways are underpinned by information and behaviour change mechanisms. Host companies and unemployed youth faced an information barrier. Companies are presumed to have a demand for youth labour (assumptions A2 – A3 in Table 2) but were reluctant to hire unemployed youth whose experience, skills or productivity were unknown. Unemployed youth on the other hand, may lack job-appropriate knowledge or skills or their qualifications may not sufficiently signal the quality of skills acquired to prospective employers (assumption D1).

In the subsidy pathway the Department stimulated a labour-demand by incentivizing host companies to offer opportunities to youth they would not ordinarily recruit. Host companies joined the programme believing that the subsidy mitigated the risks they faced when hiring inexperienced youth (assumption B). As host companies' knowledge of youth's aptitudes or potential improved, their behaviour would change, and they would invest their own funds to deliver additional training interventions to youth (assumptions C1-C2). A belief that the WSP programme activated changes in companies' behaviours was expressed that,

“Maybe what is happening is that the company is changing, maybe they had a view of youth that may have crowded youth out of employment. And by giving youth a chance companies may have realised their views were unfounded.

Government manager one

Companies implemented the core interventions in the skills training pathway, which included any combination of on-the-job training, technical-, occupational-, soft skills training and / or mentoring. Companies are believed to be more knowledgeable (than government) regarding skills needed in the economy and are believed to offer youth holistic and relevant training that is matched to the economy's needs (assumptions D2, E2). The training would improve youth's job-knowledge and skills (assumptions D3-D4), and youth are assumed to adopt appropriate workplace behaviours because they were grateful for the opportunities afforded and were more optimistic of their prospects. Due to these causal mechanisms of gratitude or optimism, youth's motivation would increase, and they would apply more effort during their internships (assumption D5).

Youth are assumed to exit the WSP programme being more employable, i.e., possessing improved job-related information, skills, behaviours, or attitudes). Youth graduates could be employed as permanent workers either immediately on exiting the programme (assumption E3), or secure work in in any other company as job vacancies became available (assumption E4).

Each of the six host company representatives' s programme theories are presented next.

Companies' programme theories

Retail company.

The host company representative was a retail company that trained 206 youth as trainee merchandisers for six to nine months. Youth were primarily trained in occupational skills and a buddy-training system was used whereby youth participants received on-the-job training and mentoring by their peers.

Employment was the intended outcome. The subsidy was a key motive to join the programme with the interviewee noting that

“without a subsidy there wouldn't be a need for us to get involved in a partnership with government.”

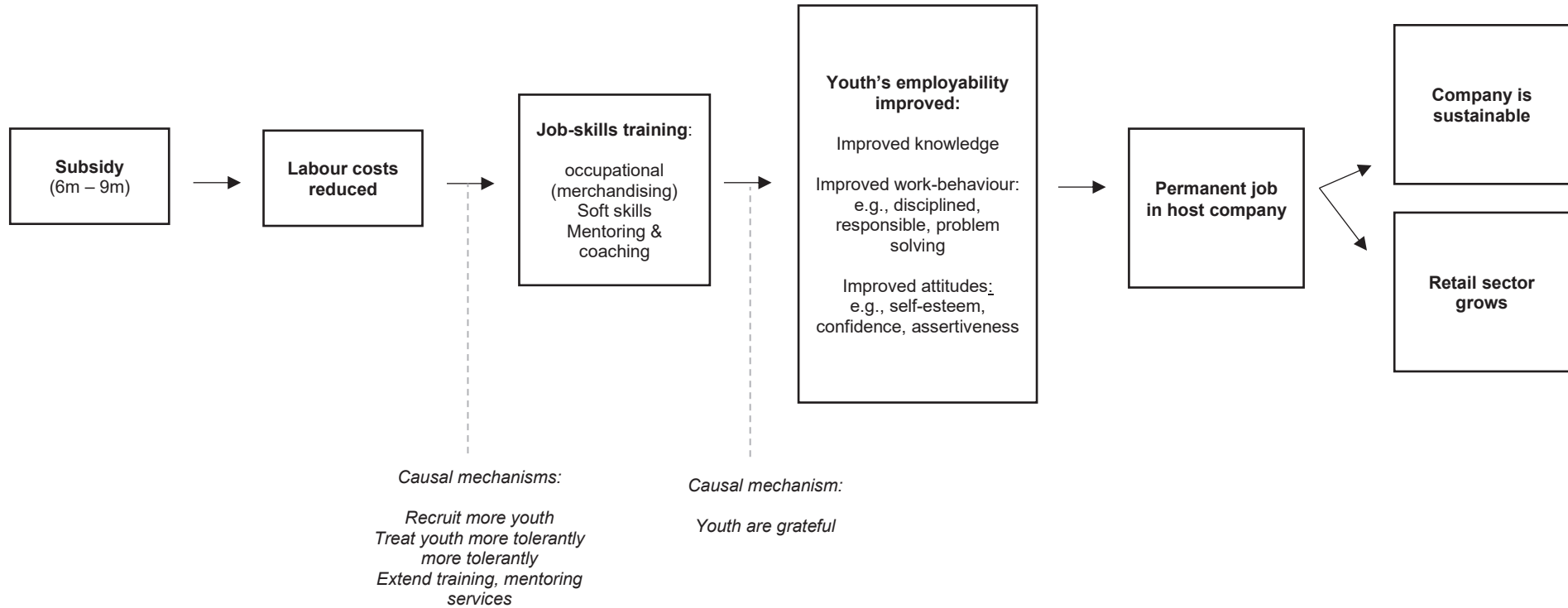
Retail company representative

The retail company representative's programme theory is depicted in Figure 3.

.

Figure 3

Retail company programme theory



Regardless of a WSP programme criterion to recruit youth, this host company representative recruited youth as a standard business practice. The subsidy was used to reduce labour-costs so that more youth than usual were recruited. Indicative of a behaviour change mechanism being activated in recruiting low-skilled inexperienced youth, the subsidy allowed the host company to change its behaviour in two ways. Firstly, youth recruited via the WSP programme were treated more tolerantly. Secondly, training durations were extended. Several additional training interventions were implemented including soft-skills development and mentoring services.

The training pathway is underpinned by a gratitude mechanism in that youth, believed to be grateful for the training received and the prospect of a job offer, would be more motivated and accordingly adopt positive work-behaviours. Employable youth would be offered permanent jobs and as the company grew and became more sustainable; the retail sector at large would also grow.

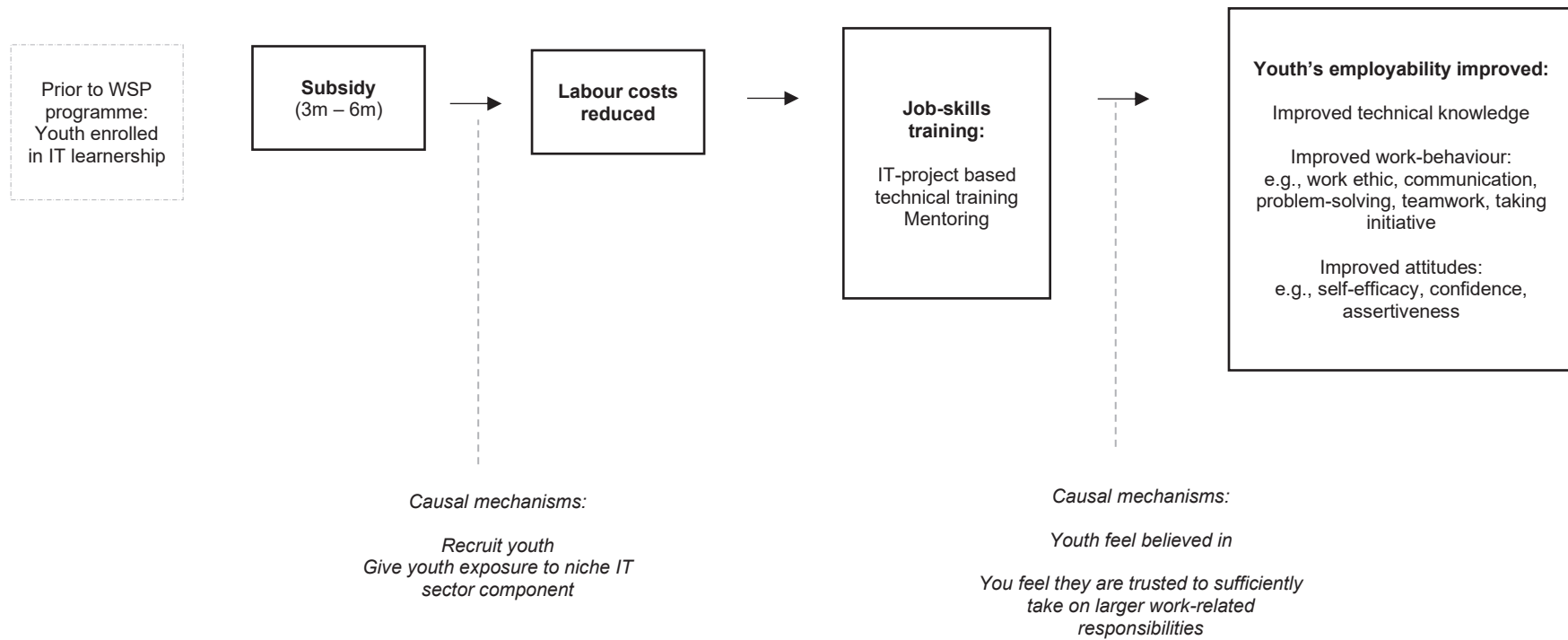
Information Technology (IT) company

As depicted in Figure 4 the IT company representative followed a different implementation model. Some of the 29 youth recruited were trained in a technical skills qualification (learnership) prior to enrolling in the WSP programme for 11 months. Learnerships are skills programmes that include a theoretical and work-experience component and provide youth with certifiable training in critical skills such as computer programming or IT systems analysis (Wildschut et al. 2012). Youth were informally mentored, and no specific soft-skills or other training interventions were mentioned as additional training services given to youth recruits.

In contrast to the retail company representative the IT company representative did not believe employment was a feasible outcome. As a small IT company, the interviewee did not believe the programme would work to create permanent jobs at their company. In addition to wage-costs being subsidized the subsidy freed up the owner-manager's time so that more effort could be dedicated to growing the business. The subsidy also enabled the host company to onboard more youth who were then allowed to perform some project-related tasks that the owner would ordinarily do.

Figure 4

IT company programme theory



As IT learners, youth required practical IT experience and the company representative believed improving youth's employability required youth to be exposed to practical IT experience, short-format technical training and on the job mentoring. In terms of the behaviour change mechanism, youth's work-related behaviours were believed to improve because youth felt 'believed in' and 'trusted' (by management).

During the interview, this host company representative mentioned experiencing administrative challenges with the WSP programme's subsidy administration processes (i.e. consistent late payment by the Department). As a small business, the cash-flow was purported to be negatively affected, and one consequence was that this host company representative decided against participating in future WSP programme rollouts.

Call centre company one

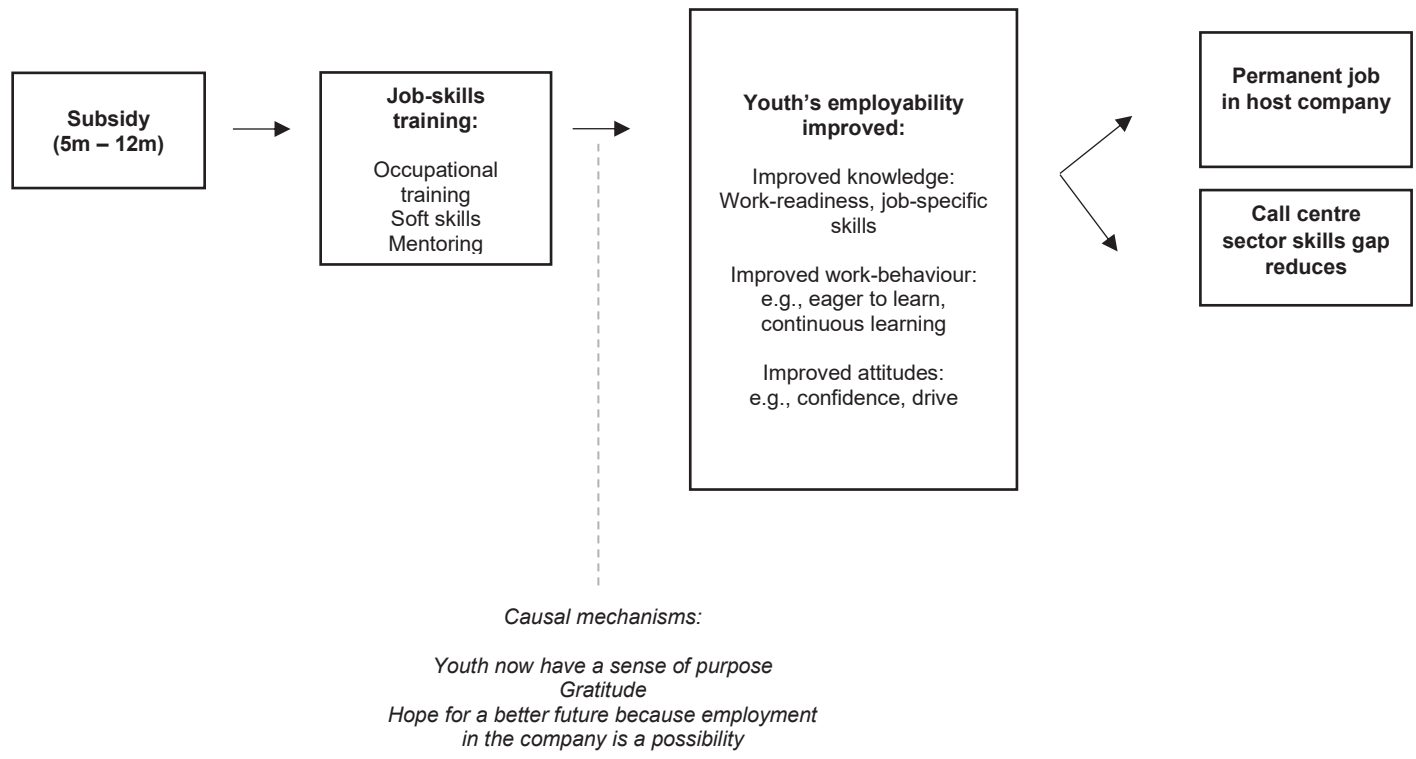
Two of the six host companies interviewed were call centre companies. Collectively these call centre companies trained 450 youth as call centre agents. A key difference between the two host companies' theories related to the intended outcome. While call centre company one believed the programme worked to create permanent employment, call centre company two hired applicants as permanent workers from the programme's onset. Figure 5 depicts call centre company one's programme theory.

Call centre company one trained youth for four to six weeks in job-specific training as part of the five to nine month internship durations. Similar to the retail host company's case, youth recruitment was an existing company practice and co-incidental to the WSP programme's requirement.

This host company representative believed the programme worked to create permanent jobs. A 'gratitude' mechanism was also surfaced in that the representative believed that since youth incumbents were aware of the prospects of a permanent job offer, they would apply the skills learnt to exert more effort during the internship. Youth's job-behaviours and performance would improve, and job offers would ensue.

Figure 5

Call centre company one programme theory



Call centre company two

At this host company the WSP programme lasted one to six months. Eight days of job-skills training were offered and included call-centre training and soft-skills aspects.

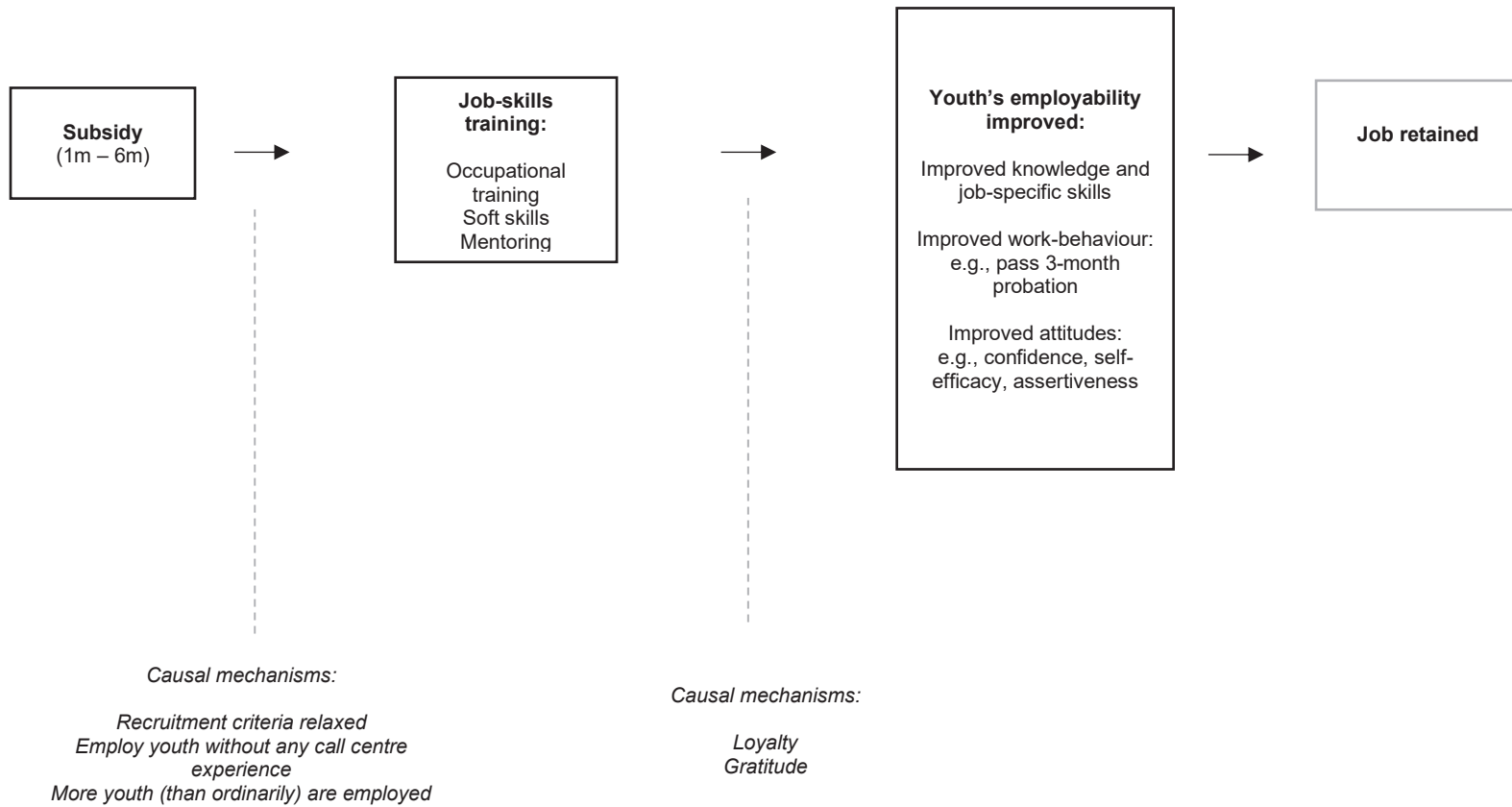
Unlike in the case of call centre company one, call centre company two's desired outcome was job retention (and not job creation). On joining the WSP programme youth were offered permanent employment contracts as call centre agents and not interns. In this host company's case, the subsidy changed several existing recruitment practices in that the company relaxed its six-month call centre work-experience requirement criterion so that youth without call centre experience were recruited. Secondly the subsidy enabled more youth to be hired than would ordinarily be the case (i.e., without a subsidy). Confirming the activation of a behaviour change mechanism, this interviewee felt that,

“It (the subsidy) helped us as a company, we were able to take more risk in terms of the type, number and caliber of the skills we recruit into the company.”

Call centre company representative two

Figure 6

Call centre company two programme theory



A loyalty mechanism was surfaced in this host company's skills-training pathway. Attrition was mentioned as a key industry challenge in that call centre agents tend to resign as early as six months from starting at a call centre. By employing youth upfront and investing in intensive training, this host company representative believed that incumbents were more loyal and remained with the company for more than the average six months. As expressed by the interviewee,

"If you invest in people more, especially people that have no skills, they become more loyal to the company because they kind of feel a need to reciprocate or give back for whatever the company has provided."

Call centre company representative two

Hospitality company

This host company was based outside of the Cape Metropole and trained 12 youth for four months as general workers. The Covid-19 pandemic negatively affected international tourism to SA which in turn impacted the hospitality host company's operations and sustainability. The programme was believed to improve youth's employability but not their employment prospects. For this host company representative, the programme did not work to create permanent jobs at their company, due to the prevailing uncertainty for hospitality businesses in the economy.

This is the only host company interviewed in which youth were trained in a compulsory five-day job-search training intervention before joining the WSP programme. Here the belief was that improving youth's job-search skills were critical to improving their employability. Work-readiness or job-search training motivated youth and helped to reduce the WSP programme's attrition in that,

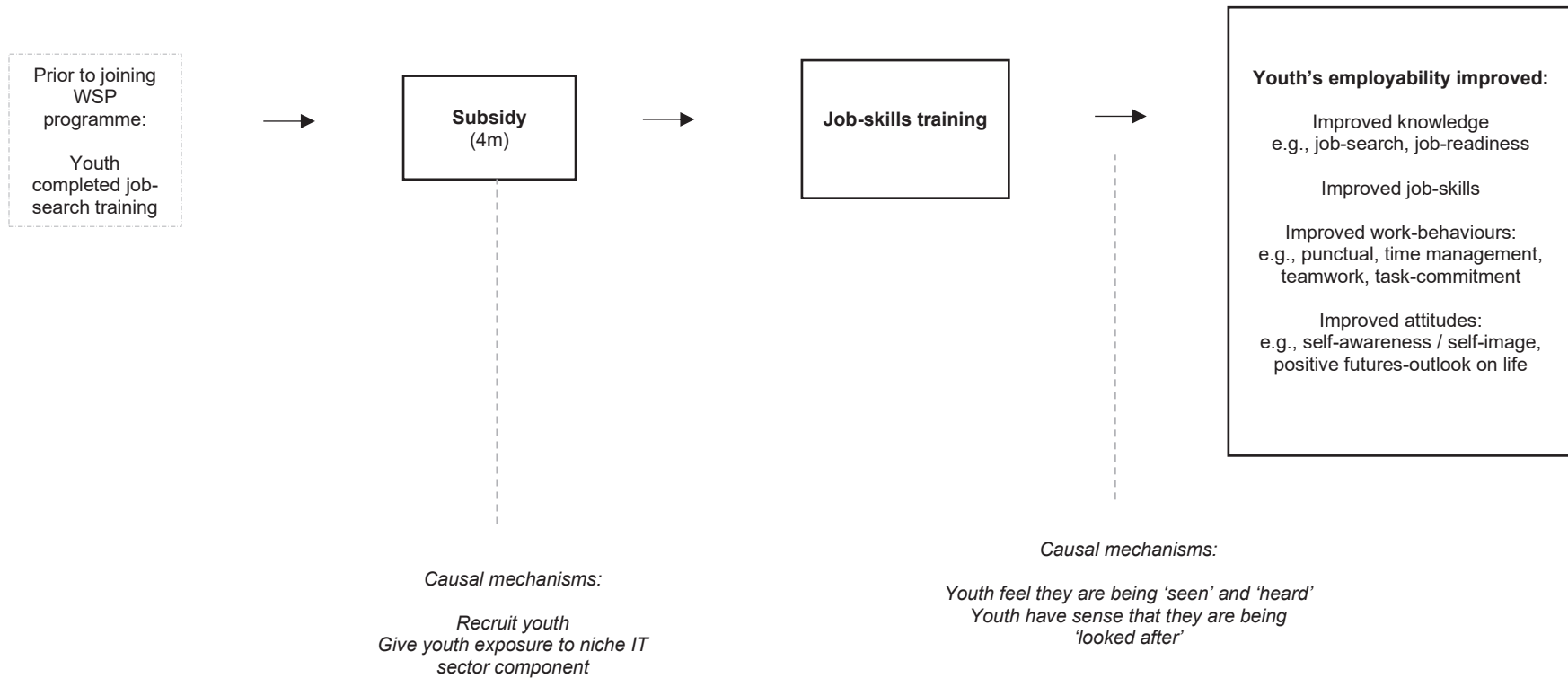
"without work-readiness training I think the drop-off rate would be much higher."

Hospitality company representative

Youth's knowledge, skills and job-search abilities improved due to a 'sense of belonging' mechanism. The host company's investment in skills helped youth to feel 'seen' or 'heard' and because youth were believed to be nurtured in the workplace, they would adopt positive work-behaviours and exit the programme as more employable.

Figure 7

Hospitality company programme theory



Agri-processing company

The agri-processing host company recruited 61 participants as general worker interns for four months. Mainly job-specific training was offered.

The host company is one of two major employers in the rural town. Limited growth potential was believed to exist in this region and the WSP programme was viewed to lead to permanent employment for the assisted youth, as well as contributing to rural economic development.

In addition to stimulating a demand for labour, the subsidy extended the time taken to screen youth applicants more appropriately. The subsidy also strengthened the host company representative's perception of government as an active partner in uplifting youth and the community. Support for a public-private partnership to rural economic development is noted in the view shared that,

“ ... getting a little bit of help from government just makes employment a little bit easier, knowing that we are partnering with government and are not on our own.”

Agri-processing company representative

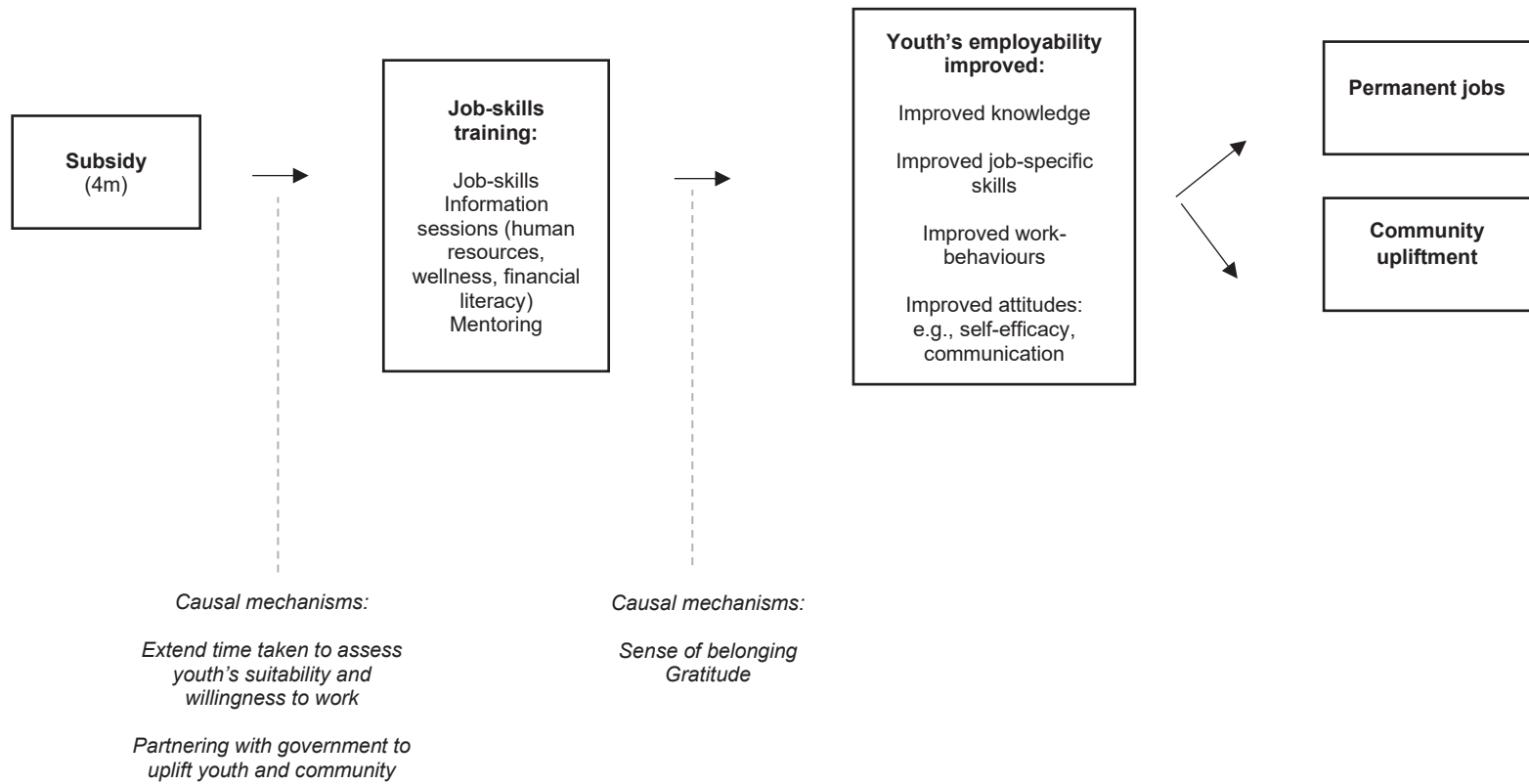
As is described in Figure 8, youth primarily received on-the-job training and work-experience. Limited soft-skills training were offered. Similar to some other host company representatives' theories, youth's knowledge and behaviour improved due to youth feeling grateful for the internship opportunities and having a sense that they 'belonged.'

One recommendation offered by this interviewee was for the Department to reinstate work-readiness training as a mandatory, additional training intervention offered to youth before they entered the WSP programme.

In the next section the host company representatives' views or programme theories are compared for areas of similarity and differences in the theories espoused.

Figure 8

Agri-processing company programme theory



The WSP programme is primarily implemented by host companies, and these influential partners' views of how the programme should work, are key to the WSP programme's success prospects. Table 3 summarizes variations in the programme theories of the six host company representatives interviewed. It presents the key similarities and differences in the nested theories' youth targeting criteria, components, outcomes, and interviewees' beliefs for how the programme works to mediate expected changes (causal mechanisms).

Table 3

Variations in companies' programme theories

	<i>Eligibility criteria</i>	<i>Target youth prior to joining?</i>	<i>Pre-WSP programme component</i>	<i>WSP programme component</i>	<i>WSP programme component</i>	<i>Outcome (intermediate)</i>	<i>Outcome</i>	<i>Causal mechanism beliefs for why youth became employable?</i>
Co. 1 (retail)	Unemployed. Youth.	Yes.		Subsidy	Job-skills training	Employable-similar sector	Job at host company Company growth	Gratitude.
Co. 2 (I.T.)	Unemployed. Youth. IT student.	Yes.	Technical training, prior to joining WSP	Subsidy	Job-skills training	Employable – any sector	Company growth	Youth feel believed in & trusted.
Co. 3 (call centre 1)	Unemployed Youth.	Yes.		Subsidy	Job-skills training	Employable – any sector	Job at host company Sector skills gap reduced	Gratitude. Hopeful for better future.
Co. 4 (call centre 2)	Youth. Call centre work-experience optional.	Yes.		Subsidy	Job-skills training	Employable – any sector	Job at host company, retained	Gratitude. Loyalty.
Co. 5 (hospitality)	Unemployed. Youth. Work-readiness.	Yes	Job-search training, prior to joining WSP	Subsidy	Job-skills training	Employable – any sector		Youth feel seen or heard.
Co. 6 (agri-processing)	Unemployed. Youth. Interpersonal skills	Yes		Subsidy	Job-skills training	Employable – any sector	Job at host company Community upliftment	Gratitude. Sense of belonging.

Host companies were from different economic sectors and implementation at each host company site varied in terms of the programme's duration, criteria used to target youth, components offered, or skills training formats provided to youth participants.

Notwithstanding these differences, the nested theories were largely similar. All host companies interviewed viewed the WSP programme as a job-training initiative and believed subsidies and training were essential components to promote youths' employment prospects. Youth employability was a central, intermediate outcome needed. However, while all host company representatives believed employability improved employment prospects, just three of six interviewees believed the programme led to job offers for youth trained at their host companies (see retail, call centre one and agri-processing entries in Table 3). This finding is also consistent with the previous WSP programme evaluation finding by which just 40% of host companies surveyed (n=41) said they would employ the youth they had trained (Urban Econ, 2013) The finding of host companies' inability (or unwillingness) to offer post-programme employment, as reported in the current and the 2013 evaluations, may point to the existence of other factors, external to the WSP programme, that need to be considered when designing programmes that aim to improve or change complex youth employment systems.

EQ 1b: what are the areas of convergence and/or difference in the views espoused by government and companies?

The theories espoused by host company representatives (as a collective) were compared to the Departmental stakeholders' view articulated in the high-level theory. Similar to the similarities in views espoused across host companies interviewed, the nested (companies) theories were also similar to the Department's theory.

In both stakeholder group's theories, unemployed youth's lack of appropriate skills were believed to be a key barrier to employment. Partners (i.e., company representatives and the Department) also agreed that subsidies and training were key components to improve unemployed youth's employability and / or employment prospects.

A minor difference in perspectives on the long-term outcome was evident in that increasing the provincial youth employment rate was more overt in the high-level governmental theory. Improved youth employment is an aspirational, systems-level outcome and more appropriately aligns to a governmental mandate to improve citizens' lives and livelihoods (Valters, 2015). Private sector host companies with a profit-

maximizing motive may not fully share the Departmental representatives' public sector mandate to improve the economic or employment system. It is therefore not surprising that the long-term outcome in some of the host company representatives' theories differed to the outcome espoused in the high-level governmental programme theory.

As described in the Methods chapter, eliciting a long-term outcome was initially challenging for the Departmental interviewees. The evaluator had to extensively probe to elicit their views of the ultimate societal level change they believed the WSP programme sought to improve. A hesitancy to articulate goals is common and may be consistent also with Patton's (2008) observation that governmental staff often resisted setting 'audacious' goals for fear of being held accountable for systems-level change (i.e., improved employment).

Shared stakeholder views on the importance or centrality of employability were evident. Here, several theories expressed support for the need for soft skills to be improved as part of a need to improve youth's employability, overall.

"Yes, soft skills are very important."

Government manager two

"Those kinds of things around how to work with people in the workplace, self-esteem... what we call soft-skills or life-skills, are really important."

Retail company representative

"Soft skills which is part of the training will stand them in good stead whether they move on to another call centre or into any other environment."

Call centre company one representative

As denoted by the variable training interventions implemented, some host company representatives interviewed believed intensive training services were required for the WSP programme to work. While the high-level government theory did not prescribe the type or intensity of training services to be provided by host companies (believing companies were more familiar on the skills needed in the economy), some host company interviewees (IT and hospitality representatives) believed improving youth's technical skills and job-search knowledge further enhanced youth's employability. Additionally, one

host company representatives' theory believed that the governmental (high-level) programme theory should reinstate soft skills as a compulsory programme component,

"I think the things in the programme I miss the most is the soft-skills training."

Agri-processing company representative

All theories believed the subsidy and training causal pathways activated similar behaviour change mechanisms. According to the views held by host company representatives, it was believed that host companies would participate in the WSP programme to recruit and train (more) youth than they would ordinarily hire. Holistic training interventions were believed to improve youth's knowledge, skills, and job-behaviours due to mechanisms of gratitude, optimism or motivation in youth being surfaced. The following quotes indicate support by some host company representatives', of the high-level governmental theory's view that a financial incentive (subsidy) motivated host companies to join the programme,

"If the Department did not offer the subsidy, we would not have gone ahead with the internship programme."

IT company representative

"I really don't think that companies become involved without a financial incentive."

Retail company representative

"The programme helped us to get more people off the street. And the subsidy also helped us financially as a company, I mean, let us be honest."

Agri-processing company representative

The high-level governmental theory's view that, due to the WSP programme host companies would specifically target youth was inconsistent with host companies' views or practices. In terms of the governmental programme theory, other than specifying that participants had to be youth (i.e. 18 – 35 years old), matriculants, and unemployed, no further criteria for targeting youth were specified (e.g. highest standard passed, household income). While it was beyond this evaluation's scope to unpack the specific youth targeting criteria used by companies, the findings suggest that companies would have targeted unemployed youth anyway, regardless of the existence of the WSP

programme. For instance, Table 3 showed that all nested theories recruited youth, and in the interviews, two of the six company representatives explicitly clarified that recruiting youth was an existing company practice regardless of the company's participation in the programme (retail and call centre two). One implication here is, youth currently targeted in the programme theory may have been recruited anyway.

The presence and actions of multiple partners in a programme theory is often characteristic of complex interventions such as the WSP programme. Similarity in the perspectives of the programme's actors is a positive finding, since common views of how the WSP programme works may enhance the collaborative efforts needed for change in complex systems (Hummelbrunner, 2011). While similarity is clear, differences also exist and may further indicate complexity in the WSP programme (Mason & Barnes, 2007; Hansen & Vedung, 2010). Rather than ignoring the complexity in the WSP programme theory future programme evaluations should engage with complexity, by exploring the use of complexity-responsive M&E designs (Dahler-Larsen, 2018; Douthwaite et al., 2017; Moore et al., 2019; Rogers, 2011; Walton, 2014).

EQ 2: is the WSP programme theory plausible?

In this section, findings of the WSP programme theory's plausibility is presented. This plausibility assessment seeks to respond to the question of 'can YEPs work?' In EQ 2a, the high level theory's key elements are compared to YEP literature and assesses whether best practice YEP design principles were incorporated in the theory. In EQ 2b, the theory's causal detail (assumptions, causal mechanisms) are compared to evaluative evidence and presents findings on the plausibility of whether the WSP programme, can work to improve unemployed youth's employability and employment prospects.

EQ 2a: does the governmental theory correspond with best practices espoused for plausible YEP designs?

In the literature several best practice recommendations exist to guide the design of plausible YEPs. Owing to the size and complexity of the youth employment challenge globally and in SA, programme designs should incorporate multiple, non-linear pathways to youth employment (Robalino et al., 2013). This is so because the constraints to employment are both demand- and supply-side in nature and are experienced by prospective employers (companies) and unemployed youth, alike. Accordingly, when selecting YEP components, activities or outcomes, programme designers should rigorously the economic context or job-creation potential in YEPs' labour-market contexts, given that job requires a complex interplay of factors to stimulate economic growth and a demand for skilled labour (Datta et al., 2018; Fox & Kaul, 2017). The scale of unemployment implies that no actor can address youth joblessness alone. Multi-sectoral partnerships, spanning government, education, not for profit, and private sectors, are key in plausible YEP designs (Glick et al., 2015; Patel et al., 2020; Goldin et al., 2015). A table that summarizes YEPs success factors from the literature is included as Appendix N.

When compared to the design features above, the high-level theory incorporated several best-practice recommendations. The dual constraints faced by companies and unemployed youth alike, in the form of addressing the companies' needs for skilled labor and youth's needs for workplace skills, are acknowledged in the programme's design.

This is a positive finding and corresponds to Datta et al. (2018) recommendation that YEPs include both demand- and supply-side services.

Considering the Department's mandate or sphere of influence, a skills pathway to employment was prioritized with the programme's impact pathway incorporating multiple components (subsidies with variable training interventions including work-experience and soft skills). The feature of combining more than one programme component may enhance the WSP programme's chances of working in that it corresponds with Kluge et al. (2019) finding that combining multiple services increased a YEP's probability of success by 19%.

The theory's causal pathways incorporate components (training, subsidies) and outcomes (employability, employment) widely used in YEP designs. For instance, Fares and Puerto (2013) found training was the most common component internationally, while Betcherman et al. (2007) also reported employment to be the most prevalent outcome evaluated. Employability is a non-economic outcome and its inclusion in the WSP's high-level theory is promising. Despite a knowledge gap exists by which insufficient knowledge exists of how employability worked to improve employment, authors have argued that employability is an important marker of success in youth's transitions to employment and should be included in plausible YEP designs (Crépon & van Berg, 2016; Ibarra et al., 2014; Kluge et al., 2019; Patel et al., 2020).

There is broad research support for the theory's link to involving the private sector companies to co-implement the programme (Fares & Puerto et al, 2013; Kluge et al., 2017). For one, Kluge et al (2017) reported that YEPs co-implemented by the government and companies were 6% more likely to improve employment outcomes compared to YEPs that were implemented by a sole agent. Fares and Puerto (2013) also found that companies should be involved as co-designers in YEPs. For Ibarra et al. (2008), the practice of involving companies to co-design the training content in Mexico's *Probecat* was a key factor in that YEP's success. And in both the current and the previous WSP programme outcomes evaluation, company interviewees required greater engagement in the training offered and articulated needs for the WSP programme theory to include well-rounded I.T, telephony, and ethics skills (Urban Econ, 2013), or, that soft skills training is reinstated as a compulsory component (agri-processing interviewee). Here, the WSP

programme theory's plausibility is lacking in that it is not clear that host companies are meaningfully engaged and involved in co-designing the WSP programme.

Notwithstanding the theory's limited involvement of companies as co-designers, the WSP programme feature of linking to companies is encouraging in SA's YEP context. As one of few demand-side YEPs in the country, the WSP programme's existence as a public-private partnership programme is encouraging especially since SA YEPs were overly focused on addressing supply-side employment constraints (Paver et al., 2019). In SA, authors have cautioned that YEPs that did not sufficiently involve demand-side companies, or YEP designs that insufficiently incorporated demand-side elements to stimulate companies' growth, would be insufficient to address the country's need for large-scale job creation (Graham et al., 2016).

In the literature, the 'how' (i.e. how YEPs work) is more important than the 'what', and YEPs intervening in complex matters such as improving youth employment (as in the WSP programme's case), should be carefully and plausibly designed (Betcherman et al., 2007; Kluge et al., 2017; Robalino et al., 2013).

EQ 2b: are the causal mechanisms in the programme theory plausible?

It is usually not feasible to assess all causal elements in one evaluation and the following section focuses on the theory's 'key active ingredients' (Weiss, 2000). While EQ 2a assessed whether the theory incorporated best practice features. The next section seeks to more elaborately respond to the 'can YEPs work?' question by presenting findings on the plausibility of the causal mechanisms in the theory's subsidy and training impact pathways (EQ 2b). In terms of the structure, findings of YEPs' effects on employment are presented which is followed by the plausibility assessment findings of causal mechanisms and assumptions as earlier presented in Table 2, and the visual programme theory models of the Department and company participants.

Plausibility that YEPs increase overall youth employment

The high-level theory's causal link that the WSP programme works to increase youth employment is not plausible in that several have found that YEPs have not worked

to increase aggregate youth employment (Card et al., 2018; McKenzie, 2017). Evidence in meta-evaluations and single-study evaluations consistently reported on YEPs' limited effects on raising youth's probability of securing post-programme employment.

In their YEP meta-evaluations both Betcherman et al. (2007) and Kluve et al. (2019) found that on aggregate, just one-third of YEPs increased youth's employment probabilities (n=134 and n=113 respectively). Single study YEP impact evaluations reported similar findings. For example, evaluators of the U.S *Job Corps*, *Joint Training Partnership Act* and *National Supported Work* YEPs found that these comprehensive and nationally implemented programmes had no effect on employment (Bloom et al., 1997; Schochet et al., 2008). Similar weak prospects were reported in YEPs implemented in developing economy contexts. Here, authors also found that comprehensive, multi-component YEPs such as Argentina's *Entra 21*, Colombia's *Jovenes* and Dominica's *Juventud* YEPs had no effect on raising youth's employment probabilities (Alzua et al., 2016; Attanasio et al., 2017; Ibarraran et al., 2019). The SA evidence suggests similarly discouraging results. Wildschut et al. (2012) for example found that just 52% of the *Learnership's* companies employed learners they had trained (n=1041). And in a previous WSP programme evaluation it was found that a substantial 40% of companies surveyed (n=41) indicated that they did not employ interns they had trained (Urban Econ, 2013).

Bickman (2000) cautioned that job-training programmes could fail even if well implemented. Few of the available YEP impact evaluations were guided by programme theory approaches, and this has gaps in the empirical evidence needed to clarify why YEPs worked in some cases and not in others (Kluve et al., 2017). Conjectures for YEPs' limited impacts included Ibarraran et al. (2008) observation that YEPs were small, short investments and could not by themselves be expected to address the root causes of unemployment. Others offered that YEPs should incorporate demand-side design components, since weak growth, high wages, or restrictive labour laws may explain YEPs' weak impacts on job creation (Almeida et al., 2014; Graham et al., 2019; Levinsohn & Pugatch, 2014). Weak design or implementation issues including low subsidy values, onerous reporting requirements or trainees not being sufficiently skilled to be productive assets in workplaces, were further conjectured (Betcherman, 2010; Groh et al., 2016).

Findings on YEPs limited impact have implications for the WSP programme theory. For one, a causal assumption that the WSP programme, as one small, short YEP, is sufficient for complex systems change to improve employment, is not realistic or plausible. More contributory causes, that stimulate the demand-side constraints to employment need to be considered to bolster the programme theory's prospects to improve youth employment.

As previously presented, YEPs can and have worked (Kluve et al., 2019). The next section elaborates on the plausibility findings of other causal details in the theory.

Plausibility of WSP programme's design features

Motives for joining YEPs and participant targeting criteria.

The departmental and company representatives' assumption that YEPs to address youth's employment constraint was needed, is plausible. The SA labour context is characterized by a 'skills mismatch' in which companies needed skilled labour but were hesitant to hire inexperienced, unskilled youth (Bhorat et al., 2016; De Lannoy & Muduriza, 2019; Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017; Pauw et al., 2008).

The assumption that companies joined the WSP programme to save costs and 'test drive' youth in a risk-free environment is also plausible and supported in the literature. However, while some found that subsidies have worked to incentivize companies' participation in some YEPs (Groh et al., 2012; Oosthuizen, 2006), others found subsidies had no effect on companies' decisions to employ youth. For instance, in the evaluations of SA's *Youth Employment Incentive* and Argentina's *Entra 21* YEPs, companies hired youth without cashing in on the subsidy (Alzua et al., 2016; Levinsohn et al., 2013). Here it was conjectured that governmental subsidy administration were burdensome and may have disincentivized companies from continuing to participate (Almeida et al., 2014; Blundell et al., 2014). A perception of DEDAT's weak subsidy administration processes was mentioned in this evaluation and was explained to be a chief reason behind the I.T company's decision to withdraw from the WSP programme. Given the theory's high reliance on company partners, company recruitment criteria may need enhanced so that companies with a greater need, or willingness to use subsidies participated.

The theory's assumption that through the WSP programme, the 'right' youth are targeted and recruited may not always be accurate. On a positive note, the programme's targeting of disadvantaged youth is plausible and corresponds with a finding that low-educated youth were 6% more likely to be employed (Kluve et al., 2017). Others however pointed out that matric as an eligibility criterion for some entry-level jobs (e.g., in call centre companies similar to the ones in in the WSP programme) is not plausible and should be relaxed (Graham et al., 2019; Rankin et al., 2014). In SA's context, youth unemployment is highest in youth without matric. One implication here is that the programme theory's plausibility could be enhanced through the targeting of 'more' disadvantaged youth (i.e. without matric), so that the theory's prospects for employment is maximized through targeting the thousands of under-educated jobless youth. Less optimistically for the programme theory's prospects, however, are the theory's potential for deadweight. Deadweight effects describe a situation where a YEP targets youth who would have been recruited anyway (Card et al., 2018). Two company representatives interviewed (retail, call centre two) mentioned that recruiting youth was an existing company practice regardless of whether the programme specifically required youth. The potential for deadweight effects in the WSP programme may distort the programme's 'real' effects and investigating the potential for deadweight effects should form part of any prospective impact evaluation designs.

Skills training assumptions.

With respect to the causal details in the theory's training pathway, several causal features were supported in the literature whilst other aspects need revision. The next section presents the plausibility findings of some training-related assumptions.

The WSP programme's involvement of companies as training providers is plausible and corresponds to Graham et al. (2019) finding that SA YEPs involving companies to host and train interns were 20% more likely to succeed. The training causal pathway's assumption of paying interns is also plausible and accords with the International Labour Organization's report that paid - as opposed to unpaid internships, facilitated more successful employment outcomes. (Stewart et al., 2021).

However, company participants in the WSP programme theory may not co-invest funds to provide additional training services, beyond the minimum governmental requirement of on-the-job training via work experience to youth. Hence DEDAT should revise an assumption that companies will train youth. This is in light of the Glick et al. (2015) report that companies underinvested in youth's skills training or may be reluctant to join training initiatives as was the case in the *Learnership* YEP where just 19% of SA companies chose to join the national technical training YEP (Ranchhod & Finn, 2016).

The theory's assumptions relating to the duration and accreditation of training are not plausible and require revision. In the nested (company) theories, variable training types were offered, were often short in duration (one to eight days) and unaccredited. The WSP programme's theory's assumption that any length of training was sufficient is inconsistent with Ehlert et al. (2012) finding that training-YEPs offered over six to 12 months increased employment probabilities by 40%, and Almeida et al. (2014) report that YEPs offering a 12-month duration was sufficient for a new skill to be acquired.

In the labour market, youth's entry to a job is constrained by a signaling constraint. Here, youth cannot sufficiently signpost the value of their skills, or employers may doubt the credibility of youth's qualifications (Mlatsheni & Ranchhod; 2017). Accredited training may address this signaling constraint by validating the quality of skills youth obtained. The WSP programme theory is vague on its requirement of accredited training and could be made more plausible by adding a condition for companies to train youth in certifiable skills (Almeida et al., 2012; Robalino et al., 2013).

One host company representative interviewed (hospitality) believed that job-search, as an additional training component, was plausible in advancing youth's employment prospects. This assumption was confirmed in the literature as denoted in Betcherman et al. (2007) finding that job-search (writing resumes, interview preparation) increased employment probabilities. Blundell et al. (2014) also found that the job-search training format in the *New Deal* contributed a sizeable 20% to the YEP's effect of increasing employment probabilities by 5%. And in SA, Abel et al. (2020) found including a reference letter to job applications increased youth's chances of being interviewed by 62%. Given the size of the unemployment problem and the uncertainty that host

companies will employ youth they trained, one implication to strengthen the theory's plausibility, may relate to how job-search training is used to bolster the theory's prospects of creating employment, in the host companies or in the broader economy.

Comprehensive' YEPs combined subsidies with multiple training interventions (technical, occupational, soft skills or job-search skills), over long periods (one to 19 weeks) and across multiple training formats (classroom-based, work experience). Despite the intensity, these YEPs raised job probabilities by just 5% (McKenzie, 2017). It was previously reported (in EQ 2a) that the WSP programme theory plausibly incorporated multiple training interventions in its design. An important caveat is that companies could elect the nature, amount, type, or duration of training it offered. The only conditionality imposed by the DEDAT was that youth obtained on-the-job work experience. The flexibility given to companies may be implausible and inconsistent with Fares and Puerto's (2013) finding that comprehensive YEPs that mandatorily combined internships with classroom - and other training (e.g. soft skills or job-search), were 44% more likely to have positive labour impacts. It is therefore debatable if the WSP programme theory, which in its current format is less intensive than comprehensive YEPs characterized above, can plausibly achieve similar employment effects (of 5%) as those reported in evaluations of more comprehensive YEPs (Almeida et al., 2014)

Outcomes and timing of effects.

In assessing the plausibility of the programme theory's outcomes, employability is supported as a key outcome (Alzua et al., 2016, Crépon & van den Berg). Moreover, positive findings exist for the WSP programme's causal assumption that training improved soft-skills and employability. Heckman et al. (2006) for instance found that soft skills such as persistence, motivation, or self-esteem increased productivity. In their impact evaluation Ibarra et al. (2014) found the *Juventud* YEP increased Dominican youth's self-esteem by 11%, and persistency (by 7%) while Groh et al. (2012), also found that Jordan's *New Opportunities for Women* increased optimism by 5%.

Less empirical support existed for the causal link that employability improved employment; in that several authors found no effects by employability on raising job probabilities (Groh et al., 2012; Ibarra et al., 2014; Kluve et al., 2017). One implication

for the WSP programme theory is that employability may be more easily attainable and in the programme's sphere of influence than job creation, given a reality that job creation is uncertain and subject to several external influences including economic, political and / or social conditions.

An assumption that the WSP programme could work to unintentionally improve companies' growth is not plausible. Rather than improving business performance or leading to additional new staff hires (Cho & Honorati, 2014), YEPs training individuals in business skills were found to improve a self-employment outcome, as newly trained entrepreneurs elected to start a company and become self-employed owners (Grimm & Paffhausen, 2015). Job-creation requires a competitive, growing business sector. In addition to the WSP programme, other Departmental sections exist, e.g., the Enterprise Development unit which implements business skills programmes to support companies to start-up and generate employment. Given an organisational reality where both the Skills and ED units co-implement employment creation interventions, the Department could explore how the WSP programme theory's plausibility can be enhanced by incorporating ED's demand-side components to augment the WSP programme impact's pathway. This is worth pursuing in light of reports that youth's employment pathways are variable, and complex YEPs often need multiple contributory causes to be incorporated when intervening complex systems challenges (Datta et al., 2018.; Mayne et al., 2017).

And finally, YEPs effects were sensitive to time and the assumption of immediate employment effects was not supported when given findings that YEPs effects on employment could increase (e.g., *Job Corps*, *Juventud*, *Jovenes*) or decrease over time (Alzua et al., 2016; Attanasio et al., 2017; Card et al., 2018; Ibarra et al., 2019; Schochet et al., 2008).

Summing up the programme theory's plausibility

For a programme's success prospects to be enhanced it should be based on a sound design with implementation aligned to that design (Rossi et al., 2019). In its current form the WSP programme theory is plausible and can work to improve youth's employability, but not their employment prospects.

The theory was structurally sound in that the impact pathway included multiple, sequential outcomes, employment pathways were non-linear, and employment could emerge immediately or over time (Funnel & Rogers, 2011; Mayne, 2017).

The presence and actions of multiple partners in a programme is often indicative of complex interventions such as the WSP programme. Similarity in the perspectives of the programme's multiple actors is a positive finding, since common interests and views of how the WSP programme works may enhance the collaborative efforts needed for change in complex systems (Hummelbrunner, 2011). Rather than ignoring the complexity in the WSP programme theory prospective programme evaluations should engage with it by exploring the use of complexity-responsive M&E designs (Dahler-Larsen, 2018; Douthwaite et al., 2017; Moore et al., 2019; Rogers, 2011; Walton, 2014).

The WSP programme theory's plausibility is enhanced through its inclusion of several best practice recommendations, including incorporating widely used supply - and demand-side components (training, subsidies) to improve commonly used outcomes in programmes seeking to support unemployed youth (e.g. employability, employment).

Despite an initial reservation to include outcomes perceived not to be in the government's control, stakeholders endorsed employability and employment as the WSP programme theory's desired outcomes. labour-market and non-cognitive outcomes. While the theory's causal assumption that training-YEPs improved youth's employability was plausible, less empirical support exists to support the causal assumption that YEPs can work to improve youth's employment probabilities. In two YEP meta-evaluations conducted over a 12-year period, Betcherman et al. (2007) and Kluge et al. (2019) reported that less than one-third of YEPs worked to improve youth's probability of finding employment. These findings suggest that YEPs, (including the WSP programme), as one small, short YEP, are not sufficient to lead to complex systems changes required to improve employment, Rather the programme could also be conceptualized as one, necessary causal factor that should be part of a comprehensive causal package needed to increase youth employment overall (Ibarraran et al., 2008; Mayne, 2015).

However, YEPs can and have worked (Kluge et al., 2019). Key assumptions that need revision to improve the programme theory's plausibility include incorporating more

demand-side aspects to stimulate companies' propensity to create jobs, intensifying the training pathway by adding components and outcomes (e.g. job-search, self-employment), offering longer-format and accredited training or improving mechanisms to target the right participants and keeping them engaged in the WSP programme.

The last chapter presents recommendations for improving the WSP programme's design and success prospects.

Chapter Four: Recommendations

The purpose of this evaluation is to improve the WSP programme's design. Recommendations to strengthen the causal pathways in the programme's theory and design are informed by the findings of this evaluation and are presented below.

- Incorporate more demand-side factors. The prospect of job creation is maximized by a growing competitive business sector. While the WSP programme's existence as one of few demand-side YEPs in SA is positive, incorporating additional causes to stimulate demand-side job growth is recommended. The Skills and ED units, as two Departmental sub-systems that work on similar job-creation mandates should collaborate regarding how ED's business growth interventions, could be added as contributory causes in the WSP programme theory. There may also be merit in including ED's 'growth-oriented companies, as WSP programme host companies.
- Recruit the 'right' companies. To ensure the 'right' companies are selected and remain engaged in the programme, company selection criteria should be enhanced. Refined criteria could include the selection of growth-oriented host companies, and companies with actual job-vacancies and a demonstrable commitment or willingness to use the subsidies to train and hire youth, are selected onto the programme. Subsidy-YEPs are prone to low up-take and ensuring that appropriate companies are selected may enhance the WSP programme's success prospects.
- Recruit the 'right' youth. Expand the targeting criteria so that 'more disadvantaged' youth participate. Evidence found that YEPs targeting lower-educated youth performed better. The current criteria could be extended so that lower-educated, non-matriculated youth, as the demographic where unemployment is highest, are also targeted. The Department should enhance targeting methods to reduce the risks of deadweight effects. Appropriate recruitment strategies could be (re) designed and youth targeting activities could include major advertising campaigns, individual interviews, targeted questionnaires or using life-skills training to promote self-selection of more motivated candidates into the programme.
- Intensify the skills training causal pathway. The dosage and duration of the WSP programme's training interventions should be intensified. Comprehensive-training

YEPs were found to improve youth's employability and were associated with positive labour-market outcomes. To improve how training is delivered, the programme theory should incorporate multiple training formats by offering classroom-based training with on the job training. Training duration should be extended to 12 months to allow for sufficient time for (new) skills to be acquired. Training content could be made more demand-driven and aligned to the economy's need for technical, higher-skilled occupations. Subject to further research on companies y hiring practices and skills needs, companies should be more involved to design training curricula so that the programme's training content is more aligned to companies' skills needs and occupational roles needed. Given training's positive effect on improving employability, employment, soft-skills and / or job search training interventions could be added as extra contributory causes in the training's causal chain. And, given the scale of SA's youth unemployment problem and the limited job-search centres available, the programme theory should add job-search interventions. Improving youth's skills to conduct effective job search strategies may bolster their job-search efficacy and resilience so that they continue searching for employment. Cognizant that the private sector under-invests in training the Department should pay for soft-skills and job-search training interventions as part of the WSP programme design. Here a private training provider could be contracted to design and implement a standardized curricula that included soft-skills and job-search training to ensure that all youth participants access these training formats before, or during their internships at the host companies. Youth should exit the programme with certifiable skills. At the time of the evaluation host companies were not required to offer accredited training. To ensure that prospective employers are assured of the quality of skills acquired, the Department should ensure that accredited, certifiable training is a compulsory design feature.

- Incorporate a self-employment outcome. Youth's employment pathways are variable. Given evidence that YEPs have improved **self-employment, it could be added as an additional outcome, especially since the DEDAT's ED unit already does work in the area of promoting self-employment via new companies starting up.**
- Design a programme M&E strategy. A documented M&E strategy to monitor and evaluate the WSP programme's outcomes is non-existent. It is recommended that a

comprehensive, new WSP programme M&E strategy is developed, subject to refining the design elements recommended in this evaluation. Such a strategy could elaborate on M&E considerations such as how employability, in the WSP programme context, is defined and measured. Baseline data on companies' and youth participation characteristics could be specified and monitoring procedures to guide the implementation and improvements to the subsidy and training interventions could be described. Programme information such as participants' baseline characteristics, subsidy uptake, or factors influencing participants' engagement could form part of a comprehensive monitoring system to be developed. Improving employment takes time. Prospective evaluations should be deferred, until sufficient time has lapsed for the WSP programme to be implemented alongside a refined programme design. Future evaluations should use a theory-based evaluation approach so that the refined theory is first unpacked, and then used to guide the evaluation design and EQs used. Evaluations should also be responsive to complexity and may use complexity-responsive ME& approaches such as answering evaluation questions iteratively, using a series of mini-evaluations or incorporating systems thinking in implementing the programme's M&E system (Donaldson & Gooler, 2003; Walton, 2016).

Limitations to the evaluation

Assessing the plausibility of the theories' assumptions or causal linkages was constrained by a general lack of YEP impact evaluations. Youth employment programmes and the evaluation thereof are more common in developed economies, with South Africa and developing economies generating less than 10% of the current YEP evidence base (Kluve et al., 2017). This evidence gap may have led to a higher reliance on evidence from YEPs implemented in higher-income contexts which may have quite different labour-market contexts and employment prospects than the WSP programme. Additionally, YEP impact evaluations frequently do not unpack programme theories or assess intermediate outcomes. This contributes to a lack of knowledge to inform recommendations of features needed for enhancing a YEP's prospects for success. The WSP programme theory did include mechanisms commonly found in YEPs and the plausibility assessment could be conducted by assessing the WSP programme theory's outcomes, components or causal linkages by comparing it to the evaluation literature of comprehensive job-training YEPs.

The evaluation's timing coincided with the Department's fiscal year-end and Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. A constraint here was that stakeholders' time (and ability) to physically engage in participatory theory-building processes was limited. In light of these factors the evaluator was requested to take the lead role in developing the theories. Participatory approaches to programme theory development are preferred in future attempts to revise the programme theory. The benefits of participatory theory-building are multiple and can lead to (more) enriched programme theories being constructed and internal capacity on programme theory development being built (Funnel & Rogers, 2011; Hivos, 2015).

Contributions to knowledge

A programme's theory or design is a key feature in programme theory evaluation and several authors have advocated the benefits of programme theory evaluation approaches when assessing programmes in general and complex programmes in particular. Few published examples exist of how programme theory evaluations have been, applied in the context of YEPs. This evaluation seeks to contribute to the knowledge base of programme theory evaluation applications in the field of YEPs.

While Graham et al. (2019) and De Lannoy et al. (2018) have proposed a model for how SA YEPs should work these initiatives were high-level assessments of YEPs. To my knowledge the current programme theory evaluation is a first attempt to surface the mechanisms, assumptions and impact pathway of a single YEP and it is hoped that the results of the plausibility assessment informs the design or evaluation approaches of other YEPs implemented in developing contexts similar to South Africa's.

Finally, this evaluation may also contribute to the evaluation client's need for a descriptive model of how the WSP programme's design could be improved. Since this evaluation is conducted by the Department's M&E manager it is also expected that staff's knowledge and use of logic models to guide implementation, monitoring and future evaluations can continue to be applied post this evaluation, to improve the design and M&E of other departmental initiatives as well.

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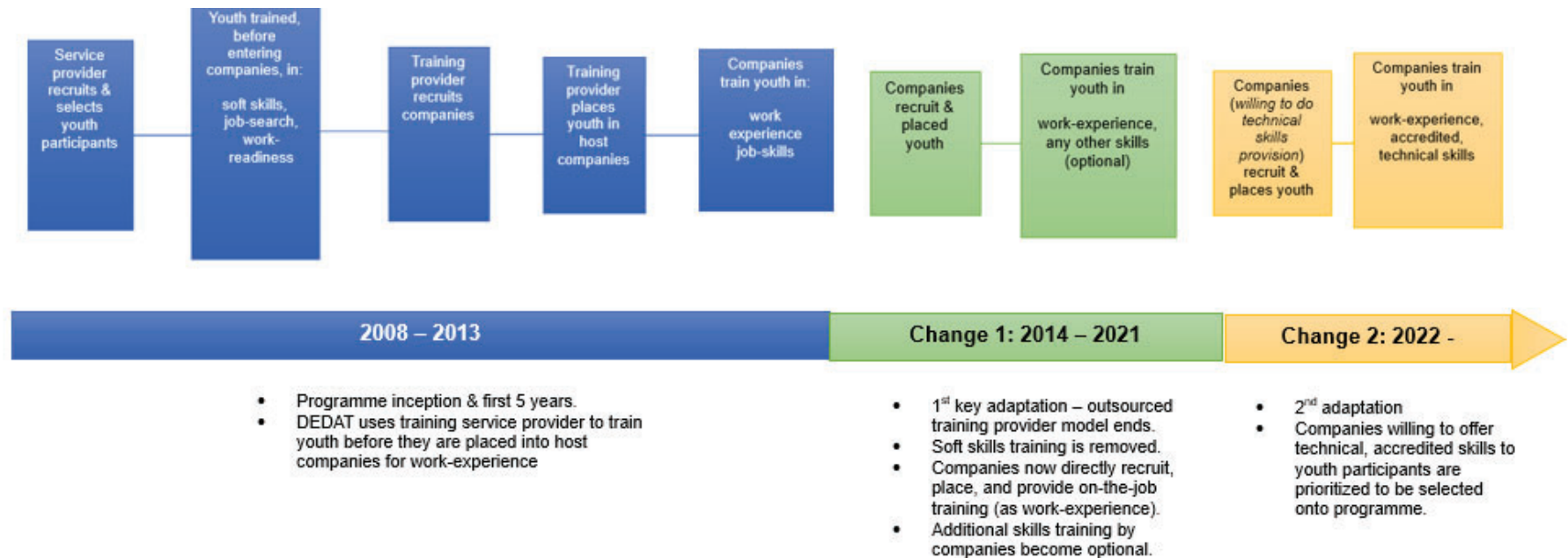
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Appendices

Appendix A: Changes in WSP programme, 2008 – 2022



Appendix B: Client Information Needs

According to the client engagements, the Head of Skills (who was not the program's designer but is responsible for the delivery and outcomes of the current program), expressed the following information needs:

1. *This program reports in excess of 4000 permanent jobs secured for beneficiaries over the years. Why has there been such a high success rate?*
2. *Can the number of permanent jobs reported to the National Treasury funder be confirmed? Are these beneficiaries still in employment (the subject of a planned project to track and trace beneficiaries scheduled to end by August 2021)*
3. *Can we confirm the success (or failure) of this program?*
4. *What is it about the WSP program that is so successful? Is it the fact that the Department provides just a few months of experiential learning opportunity to unemployed, inexperienced, unskilled youth (that lands them jobs)?*
5. *Linked to the above, was there really a skills transfer? Or was the success that the Department gave the learner the 'opportunity to shine' and this work-experience was sufficient for them (to be employable and obtain jobs)?*
6. *Or was the learner always 'good enough,' and the change is in the company? Many things could have contributed to this program's (employment rate) success.*
7. *Test the assumptions of this program.*
8. *What are the satisfaction levels (from the learners) with this program?*
9. *Is there a skills transfer occurring?*
10. *Is mentoring occurring?*
11. *Is there an instrument to measure the 'soft' and 'hard' skills acquisition?*
12. *Are there indicators we should be looking at that we are not?*
13. *Are there 'social' or 'interaction' improvements in the learners? (taken to mean are the interpersonal/ life skills or behavioral attributes necessary to obtain and maintain a job, as a measure of employability, improved)*
14. *I am not sure what the changes are, really.*
15. *Should I cancel this program next year?*

Appendix C: Ethics Approval



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
FACULTY OF COMMERCE
 Igniting Knowledge and Opportunity



Ethics Approval Request for the Study entitled: **A Theory Evaluation and M&E Framework of the Work and Skills Placement Programme**

Signed by:

	Full name and signature	Date
Principal Researcher/Student:	Gail Smith <div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px;">Signed by candidate</div>	

This application is approved by:

Supervisor	<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px;">Signed by candidate</div> Dr Adilah Boodhoo	21/12/20
Co- Supervisor		

Appendix D: Commerce Faculty Ethics Approval



Faculty of Commerce

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UCT Commerce Faculty Office

23 12 2022

Gail Smith

School of Management Studies

University of Cape Town

REF: REC 2021/01/007

A Theory Evaluation and M&E Framework of the Work & Skills Placement Programme

We are pleased to inform you that your ethics approval has been **extended**. Unless otherwise specified this ethical clearance is valid until 31-Dec-2023 .

Your clearance may be renewed upon application.

Please be aware that you need to notify the Ethics Committee immediately should any aspect of your study regarding the engagement with participants as approved in this application, change. This may include aspects such as changes to the research design, questionnaires, or choice of participants.

The ongoing ethical conduct throughout the duration of the study remains the responsibility of the principal investigator.

We wish you well for your research.

2022.12.23
16:35:44 +02'00'

Signed by candidate

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Commerce Research Ethics Chair
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Appendix E: Department request to companies to participate

Dear Skills Development Stakeholder

RE: YOUR INSIGHTS TO IMPROVE DESIGN OF DEDAT SKILLS PROGRAMS

Firstly, a sincere **thank you for partnering** with the Western Cape Government in 2020. Your contributions have helped us **support 3,579 youth** with invaluable work-experience and on-the-job training, both of which are vital for young persons on their pathways to employment.

I write to you now to request your thoughts for how I can improve our Skills programs, specifically, the design, assumptions and change we envision for our youth learners.

To this end, I require your assistance on a design-research process I have approved.

It will entail a **30-minute discussion** with a staff member, most suited to talk about your company's experiences with the **Experiential Learning program (Work & Skills Placement)**. To get maximum value, we are targeting to speak to the company member most actively involved with the learners, on a day to day basis, preferably their supervisors or mentors.

We are looking to probe your company's insights on the following:

- What **does or should 'success'** for your company, for the learner's you host, look like?
- For learners you host, how could being on the **program lead to that success / change?**
- Is there merit in the **assumptions of the way we designed** the program?

My colleague, **Gail Smith**, will make contact should you be willing to share your insights. The research will benefit both DEDAT (improve the design of our skills programs) and has academic merits in that Ms. Smith is also completing her Masters in Program Evaluation with the UCT. Strict controls are in place, subject to UCT's Ethics in research rules, to protect the **confidentiality** of your information you share and **your company's anonymity**.

I look forward to learning and using your insights gathered through this work and thank you in advance for your sentiments shared.

Regards



Appendix G: Participant Informed Consent

Research into the design of the Work and Skills Placement Programme

I acknowledge that I am ***participating in this study of my own free will***.

I understand that I ***may refuse*** or ***stop participating*** at any time without penalty.

I understand that my contributions will be treated as ***confidential*** and ***anonymous***.

I herewith give my permission that this interviewee ***can be recorded (audio)*** and used solely for the purposes of developing a student's research report (dissertation).

I understand that I will not ***receive remuneration, nor*** will I or my company be entitled to ***any other financial gain*** as a result of participating.

I have been made aware of whom I can contact if I wish to raise concerns.

I understand that ***only the researcher will have access to the information*** I provide and that it will be kept in a password-protected secure file storage location which only the researcher has access to.

I have read and understood the Information Sheet and the contents of this Consent Form, and I am ***willing to proceed*** with the interview.

Name of Participant:

Signature:

Designation:

Please direct all enquiries on the research process or return *signed forms* to:

Miss Gail Smith

MPhil: Programme Evaluation (candidate)

smtgai002@uct.ac.za / Mobile: 0725110300



Appendix H: Research Instrument – Government Stakeholder (Project Manager)

Tell me about your involvement with the Work and Skills Placement programme. What is your job role, length of involvement, specific duties?

1. What do you understand the need or problem to be that the WSP programme currently seeks to address?

- For youth?
- For companies?
- For Government or Society?

2. Imagine a new employee joins the WSP programme implementation team and you need to describe which companies are eligible to benefit from the programme. What would you tell such a new employee?

3. What will success look like for each of the beneficiary types as a result of participating in the WSP programme and how will you know when you get there?

4. What do you consider to be the key services that the WSP programme needs to deliver to improve the chances of success for participants?

5. When you think about the programme's intended services on the one hand and the results that were desired for each beneficiary type on the other end, how did you think these services would work with each other to lead to those results that were envisioned?

- Which services are deemed more critical to achieving your goals?
- Which services could be removed if a need exists?

6. Any final reflections?



Appendix I: Research Instrument – Senior Governmental Stakeholder

From the documents I see that the WSP aims to deal with the problems of youth unemployment and for companies, a skills mismatch. Now, I want to move away from the general & speak about the specific facets/features of youth unemployment & skills mismatches as it relates to why the WPS was conceptualized or implemented.

1. What does this problem of youth unemployment look like to you in reality / working in the field? (manifest / present itself?)

- What would jobless youth need to enable them to overcome this problem?
- For businesses? What does this problem of skills mismatch, look like? Need?
- Communities / Society / Economy

Many countries (US, Europe), less so in SA have rolled out similar programs. I am interested in understanding how you see the WSP (wage subsidy, comprehensive ALMP, mainly getting opportunity to get work-experience).

2. What does it entail? Key role players, who does what? (implementation protocol)

- Dept do/offer? (advertise – onboard co.'s – administer – site visit)
- Companies do/offer? (recruit, train, mentor, post-placement hire)

Now I want to talk about the change you envision as a result of running the WSP. Imagine a news headline in 10 years' time that reflects the Main Change you would like to see? (be proud of)? Change should be at *community/ society* level

With what there is at your disposal (inputs = budget, willing firms, staff, mentors, training, youth getting experience), now I want you to work backwards. We still speaking about that vision shared (80% sustainable jobs, social betterment). Now, if think backwards, in order to get to that vision what needs to change, Who? How? (Change statements)

- 3. What do those changes that get us to jobs betterment) look like?**
 - Youth
 - Companies
 - Internally in the department (processes) or staff competencies?

- 4. If we could start designing this WSP program from scratch, what would be desired KPIs or metrics you would like to see by which this programme is tracked?**

- 5. In your experience thus far, heading up the Skills Division and being accountable for the running of the WSP, would you consider this programme to be Complex? Or surrounded by complexity?**

- 6. Let us talk about Operations – what it takes in the Dept and perhaps companies to run or implement the WSP. Do you experience these (operational arrangements) as being adequate?**
 - Operational Planning
 - Personnel (amount)
 - Personnel (qualifications / competencies)
 - Budget
 - Automation / digitization

- 7. Are there any key concerns or challenges you would like to share that I should consider when recommending any improvements to the design of the WSP?**

- 8. Any final reflections?**



Appendix J: Research Instrument - Host Company

- 1. I have seen some documents (list sources reviewed). Can you tell me about your company's model in implementing this WSP programme at (company name)?**
 - Company apply?
 - Company see this project (grant / stipend only | youth dev| | Job training?
 - Who does what / implementation protocol: DEDAT? Company? Intermediary?
 - Recruitment done by intermediary can you explain what criteria the intermediary used? (probe: work-experience, age, skill level, attributes?)

- 2. I have spoken to those that designed the program in government and they've shared their desired results for youth and companies. Now, for your company:**
 - What is the ideal end-state you desire / what could success look like?
 - And for the intern?
 - And for the company?
 - Are there any KPIs that you use to track this programme at your company?

- 3. We have seen with some work-experience projects, youth placed in these types of programmes can access certain added services (e.g., training), additional to the internship.**
 - Are there services, other than subsidy that you provide?
 - Can you take me through some of services offered to interns at your company?

- 4. Research talks about pathways to employability / jobs. Here the idea is that IF a company does X, then Y, then Y then Y. Now I would like to talk about any services your company provides interns, e.g., mentoring, coaching, any other (training?) Can you explain to me in a bit more detail, how each of these services work? i.e.**

How will life / soft skills training	lead to	desired end-result you mentioned
How will hard skills training	lead to	
work experience	lead to	
mentorship	lead to	
stipend	lead to	
this project	lead to	end results for Clients for your company?

5. Are there any of those services you think are more critical to achieving end state?

- And which services, if any, do you think could be removed / made less of priority?

6. If we re-design / improve aspects, would you say this project you have been involved in, is Complex? Aspects out of co.'s control?

7. When you think of planning, operations or what it takes to execute this project in your company, do you think its adequate?

- staffing you need to run or oversee it,
- time spent on implementing it,
- stipend enough,
- support from govt enough?

8. What are some of the things that needs to be in place to make it work better for youth & for your company's experience?

9. Do you think your co (clients) will participate again? Any final reflections?

Appendix K: Client permission to conduct the study



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Telephone +27 21 650-5218
Sarah.Chapman@uct.ac.za

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Thank you very much for your willingness to enable one of our students to work on the evaluation of a programme from your organisation as part of their 50% Master of Philosophy specializing in Programme Evaluation dissertation. We appreciate your contribution to the education of our students. At the end of the dissertation examination process, you will receive a copy of the dissertation in the form of a useful evaluation report which will enable you to make informed decisions about your programme. We also undertake to assure you that the student will display professional behaviour at all times while working in your organisation or on your programme.

The student will need programme information from you and we request that you or a designated person meet with the regularity to provide access to this information. Your cooperation in this regard will ensure that the student provides you with a high quality evaluation, and will help to ensure the student meets deadlines. In order for us to keep track of the quality of the student's work we request that you copy the student's supervisor(s) in all correspondence, and that you reach out to the student's supervisor(s) directly should you have any concerns regarding the student's work.

Please note that our students are required to work within the ethical framework of the Faculty of Commerce when collecting information from programme documents, programme stakeholders and programme beneficiaries. This framework deals with the anonymity of data sources, sensitivity when requesting information from people and responsibilities when reporting results. Please also be aware that the student's work will fall within the intellectual property specifications of the University of Cape Town. You can familiarize yourself with the terms of UCT's IP Policy here https://www.uct.ac.za/downloads/uct.ac.za/about/policies/intellect_property.pdf. This policy explains that copyright to any publications stemming directly from the student's research dissertation is automatically assigned by UCT to the author (in this case, the student). A student also owns the copyright in their thesis or dissertation.



In order to comply with the rules of the Faculty of Commerce, we request you sign below to indicate that you are aware of the research / evaluation been undertaken by one of our students in your organisation, and that you will support the student to access programme data, records and recipients if applicable.

Yours sincerely,

Signed by candidate

Associate Professor Sarah Chapman

COURSE CONVENOR: MPhil Programme Evaluation and PhD in Programme Evaluation

AGREEMENT FOR STUDENT TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH AND/OR AN EVALUATION IN YOUR ORGANISATION:

Dept. of Economic Development & Tourism

.....
 Signature of Authorised Person Organisation Date

Whitrand Röttsle experiential learning program - assessing design & drafting an M&E plan to analyse measuring outcomes

.....

Name of the programme student will evaluate (if applicable)

Appendix L

Reflexivity as an Internal Evaluator

Reflexivity was an important consideration given the qualitative nature of the research and my status as an internal evaluator. By using a research diary to jot down reflexivity practices I could reflect on how my role as an internal evaluator impacted the research process. By using aspects of Love's (1991) internal evaluator consultancy model, alongside examples from Attia and Edge (2017) and Costley et al. (2013), I reflected on how I negotiated the pressures of being an internal evaluator and how I used trust and corroboration were used to enhance the trustworthiness of the data.

The study was a qualitative evaluation and entailed telling the WSP programme's story by capturing and communicating participants' stories, i.e., Department and participating companies' views. Patton (2015) noted that in qualitative evaluation the evaluator *is* the research instrument, and his/her perceptions, observations or interpretations can introduce biases or influence the results. By virtue of being a part of the organisation and programme studied I was an 'insider' engaged in a work-based research study (Costley et al, 2013). Internal evaluators face distinct ethical dilemmas and a potential for bias in that they are faced with the tension of being loyal to the organisation while striving to meet professional or academic research standards (Costley et al., 2013; Love, 1991). Noting Love's (1991) observation that true objectivity by internal (or external) evaluators is elusive, insider researchers need to acknowledge the influence they have on the research and use reflexivity in their qualitative research approaches (Johnson et al., 1999).

Reflexivity is about thinking or reflecting on the way research is conducted while it is being conducted (Costley et al., 2013). It requires reflection on the subjective research process while being self-aware of the bias or perceptions that internal evaluators bring to the research or work-settings. The importance and benefits of reflexivity are multiple. Reflexivity is a hallmark in good qualitative research approaches (Costley et al., 2013) and is an essential competency required of Canadian evaluation professionals or practitioners (Maicher & Frank, 2015). For Attia and Edge (2017) becoming reflexive is central to a researcher's development and reflexivity is a key strategy to use when

navigating the tensions, dilemmas or complexities faced by internal evaluators (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Johnson et al., 1999). I chose to document my reflective practices by using a research diary (Johnson et al., 1999; Nadin & Cassel, 2006). In this way I could jot down and record my impact on the research which was then fed back into a discussion of reflexivity. To frame the reflexivity discussion, I drew on aspects of Love's (1991) internal evaluator consultancy model, Costley et al., (2013) stages of reflexivity or the reflexivity practice examples used by Attia and Edge (2017) and Nadin and Cassel (2006).

My professional history and experience as the Departmental M&E manager influenced my choice of research topic and evaluation approach. Ensuring that programmes' performance are measured and reported are key to my M&E role. I was however dually aware that while the WSP programme did not have a program logic or M&E strategy senior management desired information about the programme's impact. Similar to one information need articulated by the evaluation client in the briefing session, I may also have had a professional bias to rush in and prematurely assess the WSP programme's assumed successes. Practicing reflexivity meant that I had to step back to reflect on my pre-conceptions and step up to take action to ensure that the WSP programme evaluation approach was tailored to the programme's nature, maturity or stage of development (Attia & Edge, 2017). In negotiating a potential conflict with organisational managers, I needed to assess the Department and the WSP programme's context and use my knowledge of evaluation approaches to 'sell' and clarify why a programme theory evaluation (relative to impact evaluation) was more appropriate, beneficial or useful, guided also by my knowledge of the organization's need to improve the programme's success prospects (Love et al., 1991; Rossi et al., 2019).

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) proposed that reflexivity is a key resource to achieve ethical research practice and includes procedural and day and day ethical issues. Additional to fulfilling the academic requirements for procedural ethics (e.g., ethical clearance, informed consent to research participants), 'ethics in practice' issues were considered. To ensure that the research participants were able to give frank and valid stakeholder views, I took my role of clarifying the working relationship with my internal client and participating companies very seriously (Love, 1991). Cognizant that my status as an employee of the organisation funding the companies could influence data gathering,

I went to some length in clarifying my working relationship with the WSP programme staff and company interviews. In the ethical consent forms, it was made clear that the evaluation's purpose was academic, related to programme improvement and study participation would not lead to financial gain (more subsidies to companies) or companies being at risk of being excluded from future programme rollout. I re-emphasized the study's purpose at the start and end of each company interview to give additional assurance.

Reflexive researchers use experiential knowledge and observations of their organisational surroundings to enhance objectivity (Costley et al., 2013). In this regard I used my observations of the power dynamic between the Departmental research participants (WSP project manager and executive manager) to interview each internal stakeholder separately. While jointly interviewing the internal managers in a focus group may have been a more efficient use of managers' time, I was aware that one of the interviewees tended to dominate discussions and I wanted to ensure that both participants could share their views equally, unencumbered by potential power dynamics.

Without trust collecting sound data can become difficult. One benefit of being internal to the group being studied is a level of trust and openness in research participants that may have been present had I been an external evaluator (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). I experienced minimal challenges with gaining trust from the Departmental staff or access to the company participants. One strategy for improving the trustworthiness of qualitative data is by developing an early familiarity with the organisation being studied (Shenton, 2004). Perhaps my 10+ years of professional experience working with the WSP programme staff could be seen as "prolonged engagement" and this may have led to the Departmental interviewees sharing candid accounts, which were also in some cases, critical of several aspects of the Department's strategy relating to the WSP programme.

Attia and Edge (2017) noted how corroborating respondents' data contributed to the generation of accurate credible data. In the course of this evaluation there were several opportunities to corroborate programme stakeholders' accounts. For example, Patton's (1999) triangulation method of comparing qualitative to quantitative data I had gathered helped to accuracy check company respondents' qualitative accounts of their financial support of additional training interventions.

At times I was also doubtful or 'systematically skeptical' of my own interpretations of the data and needed to reflect on my emergent ideas (Johnson et al., 1999). In these instances, I engaged in reflective conversations with professional peers in the Department who were uninvolved in the programme and the benefits of these team discussions often led to readjusting my perspectives (Costley et al., 2013;). Data was also collected from intermediary companies and youth beneficiaries and while this data was not directly relevant to the research themes under investigation, it could be used as a further triangulation method to validate data provided by the key study informants.

By using a research diary and discussing my reflexivity practices I have attempted to contribute to trustworthy and useful research, while supporting my growth as a reflexive qualitative researcher, M&E manager and internal evaluator. Being reflective as an internal evaluator allowed me to assess the organisational context, clarify my working relationship and the evaluation's benefits or use trust and corroboration as complementary strategies to enhance the accuracy of the evaluation data. It is also hoped that through these reflective practices the study also contributes to a key purposes of doing an evaluation which is to improve the WSP programme' success prospects.

Appendix M

Cross case analysis findings – company interviewees

	Eligibility criteria	Target youth prior to joining?	Pre-WSP programme component	WSP programme component	WSP programme component	Outcome (intermediate)	Outcome	Causal mechanism beliefs for why youth became employable?
Co. 1 (retail)	Unemployed. Youth.	Yes.		Subsidy	Job-skills training	Employable-similar sector	Job at host company Company growth	Gratitude.
Co. 2 (I.T.)	Unemployed. Youth. IT student.	Yes.	Technical training, prior to joining WSP	Subsidy	Job-skills training	Employable – any sector	Company growth	Youth feel believed in & trusted.
Co. 3 (call centre 1)	Unemployed Youth.	Yes.		Subsidy	Job-skills training	Employable – any sector	Job at host company Sector skills gap reduced	Gratitude. Hopeful for better future.
Co. 4 (call centre 2)	Youth. Call centre work-experience optional.	Yes.		Subsidy	Job-skills training	Employable – any sector	Job at host company, retained	Gratitude. Loyalty.
Co. 5 (hospitality)	Unemployed. Youth. Work-readiness.	Yes	Job-search training, prior to joining WSP	Subsidy	Job-skills training	Employable – any sector		Youth feel seen or heard.
Co. 6 (agri-processing)	Unemployed. Youth. Interpersonal skills	Yes		Subsidy	Job-skills training	Employable – any sector	Job at host company Community upliftment	Gratitude. Sense of belonging.

Appendix N –

Summary of YEPs' success factors from the literature

Programme	Country	YEP components	Probability of employment	Probability of formal job ¹	Probability of higher wages	YEP design recommendations	Nature of study	Evaluator / Author
1. YEPs	Worldwide	Subsidy Classroom training Soft-skills training Internship	5%	n/a	4%	Incorporate multiple, non-linear pathways Multiple components Incorporate intermediate outcome (e.g. employability) Co-implemented by government & private sector	Meta-analysis (n = 113 YEPs)	Kluge et al., 2019; 2017
2. YEPs	Latin America		Nil impact	25%	Nil impact	Select interventions & outcomes based on labour-market contexts	Meta-analysis (n=51 YEPs)	Escudero et al., 2017
3. YEPs	Latin America		0% - 5%	n/a	n/a	Must be an actual demand for skills provided	Review 7 YEPs	Ibarraran et al., 2008
4. ALMPs	Variable		3%	n/a	n/a	Designs should acknowledge constraints to employment are multiple	Review, n=12	McKenzie, 2017
5. Job Corps	United States	Job-skills training (774h) Social skills training Work-placement help	n/a	n/a	12% (by Y4, drops by Y9)		Experimental impact evaluation	Schochet et al., 2008
6. Joint Training Partnership Act II	United States	Classroom training Internship (OTJ training) Job search help		Nil impacts for youth				Bloom, et al., 1997
7. National Supported Work	United States	Work experience (12m)		Nil impacts for youth				Bloom, et al., 1997
8. New Deal	United Kingdom	Wage subsidy Job search (13w) Full time education & training (12m) Internship (6m)	5%	n/a	n/a	Incorporate job-search skills component	Non-experimental impact evaluation	Blundell et al., 2004
9. New Opportunities for Women	Jordan	Wage subsidy (6m) Employability skills training (45h) Job-search training	40% (effect disappeared when subsidy ended, i.e., month 6)	No significant impact	No significant effect	Incorporate soft skills component Incorporate employability outcome	Experimental impact evaluation	Groh et al. 2012
10. Employer subsidies	Turkey							Betcherman
11. Entra 21	Argentina	Subsidy Classroom - technical training (100h) Soft-skills training (64h) Internship/ OTJ training (4m)	Nil impact for youth	8% (over 18m or short term, declines by 36m)	50%		Experimental impact evaluation	Alzua et al., 2014
12. Chile Joven	Chile	Classroom training - technical (200h) Internship (OTJ training) (3m - 6m)	18% - 22%	15% - 23%	22% - 25%	Comprehensive, multiple component YEP	Nonexperimental impact evaluation	Adeo & Pizarro, 2004 as cited in Ibarraran et al., 2008
			35%	n/a	23%	Comprehensive, multiple component YEP	Meta analysis	Kluge et al., 2017
13. Jovenes en Accion	Colombia	Wage subsidy Classroom technical training Internship OTJ training) (3m)	Nil impact	4% for men, increased to 8% for men and women by year 6)	12% increased to 13,6% by year 6		Experimental impact evaluation	Attanasio et al., 2017

¹ Formal employment or 'quality of job' outcomes can include measures such as hours worked, formal / informal employer, employer provide health insurance, formal contract

14.	Juventud y Empelo	Dominican Republic	Subsidy Classroom - technical training (150h) Soft/life skills training (75h) Internship (OTJ training) (3m)	Nil impact	26% (men)	Nil impact	Incorporate soft skills component Incorporate employability outcome	Experimental impact evaluation (6 years after youth finished programme)	Ibarraran et al., 2015
				Nil impact	17% (men)	7%		Experimental impact evaluation (2 years after youth finished programme)	Ibarraran et al., 2014
15.	Probecat	Mexico	Wage subsidy Internship (on-the-job training) (3m)	12% - 30%	10% - 20%	n/a	Companies to provide training. Conditionality that companies hire the youth trainees if government subsidized the programme	Nonexperimental impact evaluation	Adeo and Pizarro, 2004 as cited in Ibarraran et al., 2008
16.	Projoven	Peru	Classroom training (3m) Internship (OTJ training) (3m)	13%	11%	12% - 30%	Close link between content of training and demands of employers.	Nonexperimental impact evaluation	Diaz & Jaramillo, 2006 as cited in Ibarraran et al., 2008
17.	Learnerships	South Africa	Classroom training Internship (OTJ training)	78% (n= 2511) self-reported as employed	90% reported being in permanent job	n/a		Gross outcomes, no comparable control group	Wildschut et al., 2012. Kruss et al., 2012
18.	Work Experience Grant (WEG)	South Africa	Internship (OTJ training)	18,8% (n= 29,255)	n/a	n/a		Gross outcomes	Oosthuizen, 2012
19.	Empowerment Livelihood for Adolescents	Uganda	Job-skills training Soft-skills training	50% (self-employment)	n/a	n/a	Incorporate soft skills component		Bandiera et al., 2020
20.	Employment Tax incentive	South Africa	Tax incentive to firms	Nil effect	n/a	n/a		n/a	Ranchhod & Finn (2016)
21.	SA wage subsidy	South Africa	Wage subsidy via a voucher to youth	High treatment effect for youth	n/a	n/a		Experimental impact evaluation	Levinsohn et al., 2013
22.	Wage subsidy	South Africa	None –study modelling efficacy of a subsidy to Cape Town youth	7% & 12% less likely to be unemployed	n/a	n/a		Econometric study	Levinsohn & Pugatch, 2014
23.	Temporary work agency	Germany	Mentoring Classroom training Work-experience	40%	n/a	n/a	Training duration of 6-12m.	Experimental impact evaluation	Ehlert et al., 2012
24.		Multiple	Subsidy	5%	n/a	n/a	Effective administration of subsidies. Training duration of 12m. Accredited training.		Almeida et al., 2012

