



**Experiences of post-matriculants regarding basic schooling and education
in Cape Town – South Africa: Qualitative study with post-matriculants in
Du Noon Township.**

A Master's Thesis Submitted

By

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the degree of Master of Social Sciences in Social Development**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
C2005	Curriculum 2005
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
ECD	Early Childhood Education
FET	Further Education and Training
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
NDP	National Development Plan
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NYP	National Youth Policy
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SRD	Social Relief of Distress
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WYPD	Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities
YDP	Youth Development Programme

ABSTRACT

This qualitative, explorative research study aimed to explore post-matriculant experiences about accessing jobs in South Africa. The study explored experiences about accessing jobs concerning the ease or difficulty of finding jobs for post-matriculants. In addition, the study explored those who found it easier to find such jobs based on what they went through. For those who found it hard to find jobs, the research explored reasons they found it challenging. Finally, factors attributed to finding it easier or difficult to access jobs and what can be done to make it easier for post-matriculants to find jobs were interrogated. This study used an exploratory and qualitative research design whereby 15 participants were recruited using purposive non-probability sampling. Face-to-face interviews were used in data collection.

Significant findings of the research investigation concerned the post-matriculants having various experiences accessing jobs, as some found them more accessible. In contrast, others found it very difficult to access jobs. A few post-matriculants indicated they found it easier to access jobs because they had gone through tertiary education. At the same time, many of them stated that they faced challenges in accessing jobs as they had only matriculant certificates, societal pressure to succeed, mental and emotional health concerns, and a lack of necessary skills to enter the labour market. One significant implication of the research findings is that the curriculum was not properly equipping post-matriculants with the skills to successfully enter the labour market upon completion of their matriculation, hence the high unemployment rates.

In conclusion, post-matriculants need various interventions after matriculation to access tertiary education and relevant vocational training and have a curriculum appropriately formulated to equip them with the skills to enter the labour market successfully. Since this research has shown that the more significant number of the people interviewed indicated that it was difficult to access jobs, it is recommended to conduct further research to make it easier for post-matriculants to find jobs. It is further recommended that policymakers be more mindful of post-matriculants' challenges and implement initiatives to ease their transition from school to the labour market.

Keywords: post-matriculants; access to employment; labour market; schooling; curriculum; skills development

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Chapter 1

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction and Background

This research study explored post-matriculants' experiences accessing jobs using Du Noon Township in Cape Town as a case study. Restoring education in South Africa has been one of the most notable priorities of the state in redressing the injustices of Apartheid. Post-Apartheid South Africa has been intensely focused on transforming the education, training, and innovation sectors to create powerful societal change. Significant progress has been made successfully in the development of curriculum, methods of teaching and learning, and education policy and legislation structures. These foundations are central to the nation's long-term development plan in eradicating poverty and decreasing inequality. As per the South African National Development Plan (NDP), attaining quality schooling empowers human beings to take control of their lives and assists them in taking care of healthy families and playing an operative role in the governance, authority, and policies of their societies (South African National Planning Commission, 2011).

Furthermore, an educated population is a fundamental requirement in achieving a nation's social and development goals. Modisaotshile (2012) echoes this sentiment by suggesting that a sound education system is crucial for a well-educated citizenry and human development in social and political systems. Education is so powerful that it inspires humans to undertake a technological shift in their intellectual capability to deal with present-day difficulties creatively. In South Africa, advanced schooling is the principal driver of the knowledge system, which unavoidably contributes to economic development (Modisaotsile, 2012). According to the South African NDP, universities are key players in building nations. Universities remain the institutions that produce most of the new information and critique and scrutinize existing knowledge. Moreover, given South Africa's post-Apartheid history, it is crucial for the South African economy because quality education is required to permit more excellent social mobility opportunities and strengthen social justice, equity, and democracy (South African National Planning Commission, 2011).

However, the transitions from school to tertiary institutions and work are affected by several factors that brutally limit the youth's capacity to exploit further training opportunities (Spaull,

2013). As a result, the deficiencies of the existing skills of the youth (predominantly black) are likely to persist (Spaull, 2013). During Apartheid, many people were not allowed to start or complete formal education at any academic institution in South Africa. Before the 1990s, tertiary institutions publicly declared that academic freedom in South Africa was 'dead' (Bunting, 2006). This declaration came after the apartheid government applied restrictions on student admissions, teaching materials, and course selections (Bunting, 2006). Further, tertiary institutions were only for the admission of white students. Black students were not permitted admission or employment at these tertiary institutions (Bunting, 2006). So, to amend current inequality, the South African NDP suggests that a specific curriculum be planned and executed to respond to the specific education needs of these different groups to support them in achieving their goals and realizing better prospects in life (South African National Development Plan, 2011).

The South African NDP envisions developing a robust and articulate set of institutions for delivering quality education. It aims to increase the production of highly skilled professionals and enhance the nation's innovative capacity. However, a big problem occurs whereby social and economic factors are not considered in the plan to improve the education model in South Africa. As Modisaotshile (2012) suggests, information-seeking drives the knowledge system, which predictably contributes to economic development. Since South Africa's education system was racially organized, and it denied the black population academic freedom and opportunities, equality is essential but not sufficient to eradicate this historical system and build a more robust education scheme (Badat & Sayed, 2014). Hence, a more functional vision of social justice would acknowledge that South Africa's current economic and social structures significantly constrain equity, equality, and quality education for all its citizens (Badat & Sayed, 2014).

Further, the South African NDP only acknowledges education as a skills-acquiring mechanism to create opportunities in the workplace and inevitably contribute to economic development. Furthermore, per international standards and norms, access to free and quality primary education should be improved for all, not just classrooms, desks, textbooks, and skills acquisition. Education is based on the inputs and outputs of individuals. The suggested inputs to education are described as the teacher-to-pupil ratio, the obtainability of stationery and supplies, and the holistic state of the pupil. Outputs are described in economic terms, such as

the type of knowledge and skills obtained, the pay scales associated with the level of education, and accessing employment for the educated (Modisaotsile, 2012).

The South African NDP perfectly outlines the toils faced in the education and training sector. This awareness creates an optimistic perspective on overcoming these challenges. However, education policies and growth plans can hardly be achieved if the social and economic factors that impede education development progress are not considered. These include but are not limited to substance abuse, drug use, and pregnancy among learners – young and old. These influences severely affect the education of learners and hinder the learning process (Modisaotsile, 2012). As stated in The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, section 29, everyone has the right to further education, which the government must offer and make accessible (Gov. za, 2017).

However, these socioeconomic problems are not tackled and are merely skirted as a point of discussion. It is important to note that education should be an inclusive system to obtain all the benefits, and all faculties concerned with the education system must be attended to. Education is a vehicle of change, and Nelson Mandela considered education as one of the most potent weapons that can be used to change the world (Nasongo et al., 2017). The power of education extends beyond the development of skills required for economic success – it aids the transformation of society (Nasongo et al., 2017). However, to alter this optimistic view of education, complete arms of government must work together, not in isolation as with education.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

According to Chitsamatanga and Rembe (2020), education is seen as the ultimate institution and solution for achieving freedom, democracy, human rights, social justice, and equality for South African citizens.

When a learner matriculates, there is an expectation from many parents or caregivers to study further at a tertiary institution. Most learners who complete the National Senior Certificate usually have academic accomplishments well below the entry requirements of tertiary institutions (Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019). Furthermore, financial constraints also prevent many matriculated students from accessing tertiary education institutions (Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019). Underperforming schools are challenged by socioeconomic factors that affect the learners' academic outcomes (Bayat et al., 2014). Conversely, Mlachila and Moeletsi (2019)

argue that even though the readiness of resources is an essential determinant of education outcomes, the critical challenge is that South Africa's education system fails to manage funding efficiently regardless of the amount of funds assigned. Many learners are burdened with socio-economic challenges such as poverty, pregnancy, illiteracy, and homelessness, to name a few. All these factors contribute to the difficulty of obtaining a worthy education in South Africa (Bayat et al., 2014). This is a despondent realization for the youth who are now confronted with many future uncertainties and an unhealthy mental state of mind. In addition, companies are reluctant to employ youth without a National Senior Certificate, if at all. The National Senior Certificate is suggested to be the minimum requirement and preparation for any member of society to participate in society economically.

The problem proposed here is that post-matriculants in South Africa face significant hurdles in accessing tertiary education and employment. Despite meeting the National Senior Certificate requirements, many individuals are not guaranteed acceptance into preferred universities or colleges, leaving them without placement options (Bhorat, n.d.). Additionally, those who do not meet the entry criteria are forced to seek employment, even when the South African education system fails to adequately prepare them for the labour market, resulting in a lack of relevant education and training (Bhorat, n.d.). This situation creates uncertainties and challenges for the youth, affecting their ability to participate economically in society and contributing to a cycle of socio-economic disadvantage.

The relevance of this study lies in its examination of the significant challenges faced by post-matriculants in the informal settlement of Du Noon, particularly in the context of the broader South African socio-economic landscape. It seeks to identify and analyse the significant barriers post-matriculants face when accessing further education and employment. Focusing specifically on Du Noon sheds light on the unique socio-economic challenges affecting youth in marginalized communities. Furthermore, this study is relevant for policymakers and community leaders, aiming to improve the education and employment conditions of disadvantaged youth in South Africa. The researcher aims to explore these experiences, using Du Noon Township in Cape Town as a case study.

1.3. Problem Context

The context setting for this research study occurred in the informal settlement of Du Noon, which was established in 1995 under the Less Formal Township Establishment Act (McGaffin et al., 2015). It is a small, densely populated township in the Northern Suburbs of the Western Cape. The township is overcrowded with informal shack settlements. Sanitation, water, and electricity facilities are poorly maintained, although many residents can access their water and sanitation facilities (McGaffin et al., 2015). The residents in the community are poor. Due to the increased levels of poverty and inequality in South Africa, Du Noon has become a refuge for the chronically poor population in South Africa, which creates a higher density of people at one given time.

The youth of Du Noon are challenged with many socioeconomic factors that make education very difficult to achieve. It is therefore essential to establish whether South Africa's standard of education, regardless of any circumstances, yields the same advantage to learners in low-income areas. This helped the researcher determine how effectively the South African school curriculum endeavours to achieve equality, justice, and equity in academia for every citizen in the country. So, indeed, this challenges the credibility of the South African schooling curriculum as well as the skills and abilities of post-matriculants. Furthermore, their subject choices determine their career choice, and, in most cases, it is not in line with their interests, strengths, learned skills, and capabilities. Thus, considering the state of education in South Africa, this research study endeavours to determine the challenges post-matriculants face in accessing employment (entry into the labour market). Furthermore, with the current staggering youth unemployment rate of 43.4% in the third quarter of 2023, it is concerning why post-matriculants cannot find suitable employment (Statistics SA, 2023).

1.4. Rationale of the Study

According to Statistics SA (2023), South Africa's unemployment rate in the third quarter of 2023 was recorded at 43,4 %, while Du Noon has a rate of 21.5%. The greatest challenge for the government is to create jobs for the youth aged between 15 and 24, as they are most vulnerable in the economic arena, with an unemployment rate of 43.4% in the third quarter of 2023 (Statistics SA, 2023).

Concerningly, in the absence of an unemployment grant, there is a growing uptake of social assistance, such as the South Africa Social Security Agency (SASSA) implementing a Social Relief Distress (SRD) grant of R350 each month (SASSA, 2023). This particular grant was put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic as a social relief policy to temporarily provide financial assistance to individuals who are affected by unemployment. This special COVID-19 SRD grant will continue being paid to individuals who are currently unemployed and receive no other social assistance for the next six months (Felix, 2023). Instead of South Africa's social assistance policies, approximately 19 million people receive social grants that cost taxpayers over R200 billion each year (Felix, 2023). It is suggested that an increase in employment rates will decrease the level of social assistance required.

Furthermore, this study was motivated by the fact that post-matriculating forecasts for youth employment are not better, and the education system fails to adequately provide youth with even basic skills that employers require, such as literacy and numeracy (National Research Foundation, 2021). According to Miyajima (2023), the lack of experience constitutes one of the main reasons for youth unemployment, particularly for their initial professional employment, because schools offer very little career guidance, leading to a lack of information about the skills needed to participate in the economy successfully.

Understandably, employers are reluctant to hire post-matriculants who require upskilling due to the costs involved (Surender et al., 2010). Other reasons for the high rates of youth unemployment include the youth being discouraged from seeking employment, too many labour constraints, or fewer job opportunities (Miyajima, 2023). Inevitably, unemployed youth are more motivated to seek social welfare assistance for financial reprieve due to poverty (Miyajima, 2023). Sen (1981) states that "applying multidimensional measurements is important in developing countries compared to monetary measurements when looking into poverty." For example, this may refer to policy coherence, monitoring, and evaluation of social welfare. Policies and evaluations can determine the extent to which social welfare is helpful and the multiple deprivations of the poor household (Sen, 1981).

This research's findings have significant implications for social development, particularly in a marginalized community like Du Noon. Strategies prioritizing education, job creation, and career guidance can help promote a more equitable and prosperous society, particularly for disadvantaged youth in South Africa. There is a great need for skills development that would

contribute to the capabilities and employability of the youth. A greater awareness of career guidance services is essential in supporting the youth with their future career goals, as this could bridge the gap between education and employment. Ultimately, improved employment rates will reduce social welfare reliance, advance financial spending on educational improvement and job creation incentives, and reduce inequality, all of which will enhance social cohesion.

The South African schooling curriculum is pivotal in preparing students with the necessary knowledge and skills to access the job market. The high youth unemployment rate motivated the researcher to explore possible shortcomings of the current educational curriculum and whether the government must execute further interventions to supplement the transition from school to the job market. This study aims to comprehensively understand the link between education and employment readiness for South African youth to foster positive change in educational and employment outcomes.

It can be concluded that the rationale for the study is for the finding of the research to contribute to addressing gaps, such as creating jobs for the youth aged between 15 – 24 years of age, improving the educational system to adequately provide youth with essential skills that employers require such as literacy and numeracy. Furthermore, the study's findings are anticipated to broaden scientific knowledge and generate additional discourses informing policy and practice. Legislatures, educational and training institutions, research hubs, and activists will likely benefit from the study.

1.5. Research Topic

Experiences of post-matriculants regarding primary schooling and education in Cape Town – South Africa: Qualitative study with post-matriculants in Du Noon Township.

1.6. Research Objectives

- 1.6.1. To explore experiences about accessing jobs after basic schooling and education in Cape Town.
- 1.6.2. To explore how post-matriculants' lives and choices were impacted regarding education, employment, and emotional health.
- 1.6.3. To explore factors that can be attributed to either finding it easier or finding it more challenging to access jobs.

1.7. Research Questions

- 1.7.1. What were the experiences about accessing jobs after primary schooling and education in Cape Town?
- 1.7.2. In what ways were post-matriculants' lives impacted concerning education, employment, and emotional health?
- 1.7.3. What factors can be attributed to either finding it more accessible or finding it difficult to access jobs?

1.8. Main Assumptions

This research study assumes that post-matriculants have limited opportunities to access jobs after completing their schooling career in South Africa and that the main challenge might be the South African school curriculum.

1.9. Clarification of Concepts

Youth—According to the South African state, youth refers to anyone between the ages of 14 and 35 (National Youth Policy, 2019). For this study, youth will be used to refer to anyone between the ages of 18 and 35, representing the youth context in South Africa. The period of youth is significant because it is the threshold to adulthood (Wyn & White, 1996).

Post-Matriculant - A post-matriculant is a student who has already sat the National Senior Certificate examinations (NSC) and passed.

Social Inclusion—a system promoting social inclusion—enables individuals or communities to fully engage in society (Witcher, 2013). In other words, social inclusion describes the opposite effects of social exclusion.

Curriculum—A curriculum may be a formal document; however, many aspects include elements of the informal learning process (Moodley, 2013). A curriculum delivers knowledge, skills, and values worth learning in schools (DBE, 2021). It aims to ensure that children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives (DBE, 2021). In this regard, the curriculum promotes knowledge in local contexts while being sensitive to global imperatives.

Employment – According to Sanyal, (2024), employment in terms of social development refers to the economic activity of individuals who contribute their labour to producing goods or services, thereby earning a livelihood and contributing to society's overall well-being.

Emotional Health—Emotional health is a state of positive psychological well-being that allows one to function in society and meet the demands of daily life. Mental health determines how people think, feel, and behave throughout their lives (Peterson, 2019).

Career - A career is the conscious judgment of a future job. It is progressive in constantly changing skills, abilities, qualifications, and the value of remuneration associated with the employee's activities (Itzhakov, 2020). A person's life outside of work significantly impacts a career; it is part of a career (Itzhakov, 2020).

1.10. Chapter layout of the study

Chapter 1: Background and introduction to the study: This chapter presents the background and rationale for conducting the study; it further outlines the problem statement, the aim of the study, the objectives of the study, the research questions, and the research limitations and clarifies essential terms.

Chapter 2: Literature Review: This chapter presents the literature considered for the study. The chapter examines the South African curriculum and all the revised curriculum frameworks

post-Apartheid, education in South Africa, unemployment in South Africa, and youth economic participation.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework: This chapter presents the theoretical structure guiding this study. It further outlines the policy and legislation governing education and the youth in South Africa and profiles theories of social exclusion and human development.

Chapter 4: Methodology and research design of the study: This chapter outlines the research design and methodology chosen for the study, introduces the data collection instruments used to undertake the study, and describes the data analysis techniques used to evaluate the study's findings. It also gives an overview of methods used to verify and ensure reflexivity on the study's findings.

Chapter 5: Research findings, data analysis, and interpretation of results: This chapter presents and interprets the study's research findings. It reviews the findings analysed for the study and displays them through conversational excerpts and quotes from the participants.

Chapter 6: Summary, conclusion, and Recommendations of the Study: This chapter presents the recommendations and conclusions based on the study's findings.

1.11. Conclusion

In this chapter, the statement of the problem, problem context, and rationale were discussed. Concepts were clarified, and research objectives were explained. Finally, this chapter explored all the primary ethical considerations relative to the current research.

Chapter 2

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter will assess the literature relevant to this study as the researcher attempts to explore post-matriculants' experiences about accessing jobs using the case study of Du Noon Township in Cape Town. The aspects under discussion will include a global and national review of education, employment, and youth participation in society. It will also include South African curriculums and educational programmes. The chapter also presents the theoretical agenda and policy frameworks that underpin the current study.

2.2. Review of Literature

2.2.1 Global Review of Literature

Globally, access to quality education remains a significant challenge. According to UNESCO (2022), approximately 258 million children and youth are out of school, primarily due to socio-economic barriers, conflict, and gender inequality. Education is a crucial factor in preparing individuals for the labour market. The World Bank (2021) emphasizes that a quality education enhances employability, especially for the youth; hence, equitable access to education is essential for economic growth and poverty reduction. In positing that quality education is vital to effective educational systems, merely increasing enrollment rates is insufficient (OECD, 2021). Education quality, acquisition of necessary skills, quality teachers' training, curriculum relevance, and resource availability must also improve for education to operate optimally. Further, it is suggested that youth with higher education qualifications tend to have better job prospects and higher salaries (OECD, 2021).

According to Herbert et al. (2020), traditional employment patterns are being challenged, whereby employees no longer have to come into a dedicated space to work. He argues that it is imposed on Higher Education institutions for graduates to transition more effectively from education to employment (Herbert et al., 2020). Furthermore, it is suggested that educational institutions also focus on developing employability skills such as problem-solving, teamwork,

and communication. Similarly, Binkley et al. (2012) emphasize the importance of 21st-century skills that prepare students for the complexities of the modern workforce.

However, the transition from education to employment is not straightforward because many socioeconomic factors influence this transition (Binkley et al., 2012). For example, marginalized youth often face barriers such as inadequate access to quality education and lack of career guidance, which significantly affect their job readiness. The socio-economic context plays a critical role in educational outcomes and accessing employment. Internationally, Duncan et al. (2010) outline the importance of addressing these socio-economic challenges to improve education outcomes. They argue that interventions targeting the broader social environment of students - such as community resources, mental health services, and family support, are essential in bridging the gap between education and employment (Duncan et al., 2010).

Globally, youth unemployment rates are alarmingly high, three times higher than adults (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2020). Factors contributing to this phenomenon include economic instability, skills mismatch, and inadequate job creation. In many developing countries, including South Africa, the issue is exacerbated by historical injustices and systemic inequalities that limit access to quality education and employment (ILO, 2020). Furthermore, curricula are essential in developing skills relevant to the labour market. A country needs to adopt a curriculum closely linked to current trends in the labour market and aims to remain relevant. The curriculum must help equip students with the needs and skills required by employers (OECD, 2021). For example, in rapidly changing industries such as Engineering, Science, and Technology, curricula should be regularly updated to suit global trends, as a skillset in these industries is shown to increase employability.

Furthermore, ILO (2020) states that unemployment leads to mental health issues among youth. The stress associated with job searching can lead to mental health problems as graduates may experience feelings of inadequacy or depression due to prolonged unemployment.

In South Africa, Bhorat et al. (2017) found that many youth lack the basic skills employers require. The same is true in other countries where educational curricula do not align with labor market needs, leading to a skills gap. In rapidly changing fields like technology, regularly updated curricula can better prepare students for emerging roles and trends.

2.2.2. Africa Review of Literature

Many African countries have inherited curriculums from their colonial past, aligned with subjects prioritized in the colonial context. Decolonizing curricula tailored to African culture and values has been a contentious issue. Many African countries continue to face challenges such as inadequate funding, lack of teaching materials, and insufficient teacher training, which hinder effective curriculum delivery (UNESCO, 2022). Furthermore, rural and marginalized communities have less access to quality education, resulting in disparities in learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2022). This highlights the need for curricula reform to address population needs while considering all circumstances. This leads to a more inclusive education system as it caters to the needs of many diverse populations and communities.

Education plays a pivotal role in ensuring employment readiness, and in Africa, it is considered a fundamental driver of this, especially amid rising youth unemployment rates. Mlatsheni and Leibbrandt (2020) emphasize that many African education systems face challenges in curriculum relevance, often producing graduates who lack the practical skills needed in the labour market. This disconnect contributes to high unemployment rates, particularly among educated youth. Quality education continues to be a significant challenge for many African graduates. UNESCO (2022) reports that socio-economic factors, including poverty and geographic disparities, significantly limit access to education. For instance, girls often encounter obstacles such as early marriage due to cultural pressures, resulting in lower enrollment and retention rates in schools (World Bank, 2021).

Additionally, African countries grapple with inadequate infrastructure, scarce educational resources, and insufficient teacher training, leading to poor education outcomes (Atinga & Dabor, 2023). These shortcomings significantly impact students' readiness for the job market. To address these challenges, Nkosi et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of vocational education and training (VET) in enhancing youth employability by equipping them with practical skills that align with local labour market demands. However, they note that VET programs frequently lack recognition and support, undermining their effectiveness and overall success (Nkosi et al., 2021).

Eagerly, some African countries are reforming curricula to align more closely with rapidly changing industries and labour market trends. They align more closely with international

education standards to improve education outcomes and youth employability (NEPAD, 2018). Furthermore, soft skills are recognized as being equally important as academic knowledge and have, therefore, been integrated into the curricula of many African countries (NEPAD, 2018). It is suggested that having relevant knowledge and skills improves employability and adaptability to current labour market trends.

Aditchie (2013) suggests a constant internal conflict that many young Africans face, which includes balancing the expectations of their families and communities with their sense of self. She argues that many African graduates move abroad hoping for better opportunities but still struggle to fit in abroad and back home. This highlights the pressures placed on young Africans to succeed despite very often unsupportive system (Aditchie, 2013).

Further to Aditchie's sentiments, Bulawayo (2013) shares the same about migration in Africa for better opportunities. In Africa, migration for better opportunities is a common practice to achieve a better life (Bulawayo, 2013). She uses the example of a Zimbabwean who emigrates to the U.S. for a better life; however, she faces new challenges where the economic and social barriers can be just as daunting. Unfortunately, this is the reality faced by many African students who seek opportunities abroad, only to find that migration does not necessarily solve their problems (Bulawayo, 2013).

According to Molefe and Fadare (2022), employability is significantly affected by socio-economic factors such as poverty, youth unemployment, and family background as determinants of educational attainment and job readiness. Furthermore, African youth face challenges that impede their access to quality education and job opportunities (Molefe & Fadare, 2022). As a result of these challenges, many young people turn to informal labour markets for employment, underscoring the need for educational systems and institutions to provide students with academic knowledge and practical skills (Chikoko et al., 2023).

African youth often experience discouragement and disillusionment when their hard-earned degrees do not lead to guaranteed employment (Adichie, 2013). Despite their education, they feel frustrated as they struggle to find jobs that align with their ambitions. African youth are faced with complex and multi-faceted struggles as they transition from education to the workforce because unemployment and underemployment affect even those with university degrees. Furthermore, corruption and nepotism create additional barriers (Ngozi, 2013).

Migration may offer a temporary escape, but it often comes with challenges, leading to disillusionment when the dreams of success fail to materialize (Bulawayo, 2013).

Mugisha and Baharoglu (2023) suggest that African governments should prioritize education funding, especially for marginalized communities. There should be heightened investments in teacher training, infrastructure, and curriculum reform, all of which are vital for ensuring that educational systems meet the needs of the labour market. Positively, countries like Kenya and South Africa have significantly reformed their curriculum to be more relevant to the labour market. South Africa's Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) focuses on critical thinking and problem-solving skills (DBE, 2011). The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) emphasizes skills development and learner-centered education in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2017). Furthermore, ongoing research and targeted interventions are crucial for improving youth employability and fostering sustainable economic development across Africa.

2.2.3 South Africa Review of Literature

In South Africa, the development and execution of policies often present significant challenges within the public sector. The South African government developed a schooling curriculum pertinent to entering tertiary education and achieving the National Senior Certificate. Globally, developed and developing countries have re-evaluated their schooling and higher education curricula and have adapted them to align with the international standards of the 21st Century (Nel & Kistener, 2009). Previously, pupils in Grade 12 could pass their assigned subjects at three different grade levels: higher grade, standard grade, and lower grade (Nel & Kistener, 2009). Currently, the latest curriculum offers 29 subjects at one level, without any distinction between lower, standard, and higher grade levels (Nel & Kistener, 2009).

The National Senior Certificate requires Grade 10, 11, and 12 learners to take four compulsory subjects: two South African languages, Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy, and Life Orientation (Nel & Kistener, 2009). To obtain university exemption, a learner must score between 50 - 59% in any four of the prescribed school subjects selected for university acceptance (DoE, 2005). This means that learners must achieve the minimum standard necessary to continue their academic journey at a registered tertiary institution in South Africa.

According to Blignaut (2021), schools and universities exert significant effort and influence in shaping a society, which comes with much responsibility. However, for the most part, education institutions merely see their role as imparting narrow skills and knowledge that prepare students to be part of a workforce in a market economy. The role of education institutions is far more valuable as it contributes to the functioning of critical citizens in a democratic society (Blignaut, 2021).

2.2.4. South African Basic Schooling Curriculum

Curriculum change is not new to South Africa or an uncommon practice. Curriculum change occurs internationally and reflects the constant changes experienced by society at any given time. According to Provenzo (Morgan, 2001), the field of education is constantly changing with new curricula, new technologies, and new teaching and learning methods. These changes ultimately define how we teach and learn. Nevertheless, implementing any new curriculum implies the need for educator training, new resources, changes in policy, and an unexpectedly increased workload for all teachers.

After 1994, the South African curriculum required urgent reform as it was contaminated with Apartheid ideologies and principles. South Africa envisioned the prospectus that promotes and upholds the values of the Constitution, which encourages equality, diversity, and inclusion that all citizens can be proud of. Post-Apartheid, South Africans believed that education is pivotal in developing a society and country. Therefore, the Curriculum 2005 was introduced.

2.2.5. Curriculum 2005 in South Africa

The Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was the change that education planned. Unlike the previous curriculum, this was a progressive and outcomes-based curriculum. It intended to erase all the values and beliefs of the Apartheid era and inspire values of inclusion, equity, and opportunity. C2005 attempted to address social inequalities linked to educational differences and situate South Africa on the competitive path of global economic participation. C2005 was designed to encourage learners to solve problems, think critically when making decisions, work effectively in teams and groups, and manage themselves responsibly and effectively (Mail & Guardian, 2008). Additionally, this curriculum intends to develop critical analysis skills, practical communication skills, using science and technology effectively in the environment

without harming others, and an understanding that the world is a set of related systems that do not exist in isolation (Mail & Guardian, 2008).

Furthermore, C2005 is further defined as a planned process fortified by redress, equity, and social development elements. To realise the latter, C2005 employs progressive pedagogy methodologies, whereby teachers are facilitators, learners control their learning, and the classroom adopts a more cooperative learning approach (Moodley, 2013).

Although C2005 was believed to transform and improve the education system in South Africa, this has largely not been the case. It is suggested that teachers experience many challenges in implementing this curriculum. C2005 encouraged group teaching and learner-led teaching. However, teachers were challenged with implementing experiential methods of learning and teaching because of the increased class sizes, increased classroom administration, and the introduction of new policies and regulations (Mail & Guardian, 2008). This method of learning and teaching is not possible with large class sizes. Instead, teachers delivered the curriculum content with a whole class teaching approach as it was easier to manage the class this way. Furthermore, there was a severe lack of resources to implement C2005 successfully, so independent inquiry and concrete, practical lessons were impossible.

Assumingly, C2005 was introduced when South Africa became a democracy and is intended to offer a better life for all. Education is the key to success in life, and schools in South Africa are places where young people develop the skills and competence to participate successfully in society's economic arena.

2.2.6. The Revised National Curriculum Statement

The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) perceives education as a tool that could root the South African values and principles enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa (Msila, 2007). Non-racism, equality, democracy, and reconciliation are among the fundamental values and principles of the South African education system (Msila, 2007). There are contrary requirements expected from learners that emphasize the need to be academically equipped to potentially improve the economy and be educated for individual enrichment and effective citizenship.

Furthermore, the RNCS states that learners and educators are to assume new roles within the education sector, specifically the classroom. This new curriculum regards competent, qualified, and caring educators as critical contributors to education in South Africa. Educators are to assume various roles during the implementation of this curriculum. Educators must be mediators, interpreters, and designers of Learning Programmes, scholars, community members, managers, administrators, researchers, assessors, citizens, and Learning Area Specialists (DoE, 2002). All these roles are crucial for successfully creating new identities in learners.

This curriculum emphasizes South African values and principles, essential for personal growth and creating a new nation's identity built on values very different from those underpinning Apartheid education (DoE, 2002). This curriculum envisages a learner who is inspired by this objective and acts in the interest of society based on respect for democracy, equality, and social justice. Therefore, the curriculum seeks to create a lifelong learner who is confident, independent, numerate, literate, and can successfully participate in society (Msila, 2007).

In 2001, the Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, and his Review Committee consulted with teachers, parents, and other education stakeholders to assess and evaluate the C2005 curriculum and whether it was producing the desired outcomes and the citizens of South Africa's needs (Moodley, 2013). Many deductions were made during this process, and recommendations were put forth. These factors will be discussed later.

The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) included eight Learning Areas: Languages, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Technology, Social Sciences, Life Orientation, and Economic and Management Sciences (DoE, 2009). Further, the RNCS outlines principles of outcomes-based education such as social justice, inclusivity, human rights, and caring for the environment (Moodley, 2013). The school allows young people to be socially included, experience societal equality, and access myriad opportunities.

2.2.7. Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

2012, the Department of Basic Education introduced the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The CAPS curriculum was implemented to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools. The content and assessments were clearly stated and outlined to ensure

all teachers and learners understood the expected inputs and outcomes. According to Themane and Mamabolo (2011), CAPS seeks to provide a coherent and systematic content of knowledge to satisfy the specific aims of the curriculum. Curriculum policy and guideline documents address transition concerns between the grades and phases, particularly continuous assessment and learning and teaching support materials (textbooks).

It is important to note that the CAPS curriculum is not entirely new but merely a more refined NCS curriculum for Grades R – 12. It may be considered an improved version as it intends to redress all the challenges that teachers and learners may have experienced while implementing the RNCS curriculum. The CAPS curriculum is currently being implemented in the Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase, and Grades 10 and 11 at a national level (Moodley, 2013).

The new curriculum focuses strongly on skills development, which could lead to a lack of focus on content. Factual knowledge is often transmitted with limited insight (Nel & Kistener, 2009).

2.2.8. Education in South Africa

In critically discussing the education system in South Africa and how the youth is represented and supported in this regard, there seems to be a mutual agreement and consensus on the state of South Africa's education system. According to Statistics SA (2020), 14.2% of Black Africans, 13% of Coloureds, and 33.9% of White South Africans have post-secondary education. On average, 17.8% of South Africans have attained post-secondary education in South Africa (Stats SA, 2020). There seems to be a failure of progress in the education system, and it is suggested that there is a substantial lack of willingness to make the necessary changes. After nearly three decades after the end of Apartheid, our education system still harbours inequality of race, sex, and gender. It encourages racial privileges that adopt accessibility models that perpetuate discrimination in the South African schooling system (Branson et al., 2012). Most black children continue to receive an education that condemns them to the underclass of South African society, where poverty and unemployment are the norm, not the exception (Spaull, 2013).

Branson et al. (2012) argue that more and better education is being demanded of the South African education system to become more egalitarian in the labour market and in general. Social exclusion can be considered the most significant barrier to achieving quality education.

Presently, inequalities are highlighted in the internal processes of admission policies of schools, living close to the school, lack of academic and psychological support to those learners who have not had a solid foundation in early childhood development, language barriers, and the accessibility to well-resourced schools (Branson et al., 2012).

According to Kubeka and Rama (2020), youth is aged from 15 to 34 years; however, the United Nations defines 'youth' as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 (United Nations, 2021). It can thus be argued that due to the wide gap in South Africa's age cohort, interventions, and policies become difficult to implement because of the more significant number of persons that must be accounted for. An age cohort in line with international practice might yield a more successful distribution of resources and may concentrate on interventions best suited to the youth of South Africa.

Kubeka and Rama (2020) highlight that the cross-scopes of race and socioeconomic status were intimately linked to exclusion from elite educational spaces. Elite schools are excellently resourced with libraries, science labs, computer labs, art classes, music and drama facilities, and ongoing academic and social support. This is juxtaposed with local township schools being under-resourced, classes being overcrowded, and no specialist teachers or professionals on-site, so the quality of education offered is dramatically compromised (Kubeka & Rama, 2020). This substandard education does not develop learners' capabilities or expand their economic opportunities but instead denies them dignified employment and undermines their sense of self-worth (Spaull, 2013). In short, poor school performance in South Africa reinforces social inequality. It leads to a situation where children inherit the social status of their parents, irrespective of their motivation or ability (Spaull, 2013).

Geographically, youth are excluded from accessing elite schools because of the lack of urban infrastructure in rural areas that allows access to the city (Kubeka & Rama, 2020). This will allow enrolment opportunities to elite schools, increase access to jobs, and provide families with access to better healthcare facilities. All these opportunities allow for a better quality of life.

While the low-level equilibrium that South Africa finds itself in has its roots in the apartheid regime of institutionalized inequality, this fact does not absolve the current administration from its responsibility to provide quality education to every South African child (Spaull, 2013).

2.2.9. Unemployment in South Africa

South Africa is constantly faced with increased poverty levels every year. The persistently high youth unemployment has always been one of the most pressing socioeconomic problems in South Africa (Scarlato et al., 2019). Unemployment is on the rise, and racial incidence highlights the fact that this problem mainly affects African workers. Sekwati and Dagume (2023) state that unemployment represents the number of people in the workforce who want to work but do not have jobs. It is generally stated as a percentage and calculated by dividing the number of people who are unemployed by the total workforce (Sekwati & Dagume, 2023). There are several causes of unemployment, which can be cyclical, structural, or frictional. These include recession, undeveloped labour market, unpredicted natural disasters, and pandemics such as COVID-19. COVID-19 may have contributed to long-term unemployment as an acute problem because the longer people are out of work, the more problematic it is to return to professional activity (Korniienko et al., 2020).

According to Statistics SA (2023), South Africa's unemployment rate in the third quarter of 2023 was recorded at 31,9 % and is among the highest in the world. The greatest challenge for the government is to create job opportunities for the youth aged between 21 – and 30 years. It is also suggested that there must be an increase in the number of women in the labour market, but various factors prevent this. Youth aged 15 – 24 are most vulnerable in the economic arena, as the 2023 unemployment rate for this age group is at a staggering 43.4% in the third quarter of 2023 (Statistics SA, 2023).

Further, the graduate unemployment rate is still lower than those with other educational levels, meaning that education is still the key to the youth's employment prospects in South Africa's labour market (Statistics SA, 2023). The increasing unemployment rate among young people threatens their prospects and opportunities. Some of the challenges unemployed youth face in South Africa range from below-standard primary education, lack of career guidance, limited access to information, high costs of work-seeking, low job growth, and exposure to crime and violence (Baldry et al., 2019).

Furthermore, race, age, gender, geographical location, and schooling all serve as critical attributes in explaining the unemployment rate in South Africa. The high levels of unemployment become overwhelmingly concerning for the youth in South Africa and are mainly attributed to failing post-secondary, Further Education and Training (FET), and tertiary

education. The failure of both schooling systems, particularly FET, is essential for policymaking in South Africa (Bhorat, n.d.).

Cloete (2015) affirms that youth unemployment affects many aspects of a person's life, including overall health and well-being. She goes on to recognise that unemployment does affect mental health when they experience a decrease in overall life satisfaction, general well-being, and self-esteem, symptoms of depression for those who have been unemployed for extended periods. Above that, unemployment has mental effects that include increased anxiety, absent self-confidence, fatalism, alcoholism, apathy, suicide, and stress-related psychosomatic disorders such as headaches, stomach ulcers, bronchitis, and heat-related disease (Cloete, 2015).

In addition to factors of unemployment, the general lack of skills and employability among South Africa's youth is one of the problematic consequences of the poor quality of education received – predominantly by black and coloured learners – in South Africa's primary and secondary schooling systems (Spaull, 2013). According to Fajaryati, et al. (2020), the school curriculum must support students with knowledge, soft skills, and hard skills relevant to the job market to be more productive and can be employed in the industry. Some of the skills that are in high demand include communication skills, collaboration, problem-solving, and critical thinking ability (Fajaryati, et al., 2020). Moreover, due to the widespread failure of the sector education and training authorities (SETAs), the poor quality of many FET colleges, stringent entry requirements and capacity constraints at universities, opportunities for remedial training or further formal skills acquisition after leaving secondary school in South Africa remains limited (Spaull, 2013).

2.2.10. Youth Participation

In society, the youth have been described as passive recipients of services offered by the government. They have also been labelled as problematic and victims of poverty. Checkoway (2020) asserts that when adults view youth in this critical manner, they, the youth, internalize the assumption and allow it to weaken their roles as young people in society. In other words, they believe they cannot be agents of social change. Generally, young people struggle to find balance and continually face challenges.

However, youth participation strengthens personal and social development, provides expertise for youth programmes, and promotes a more democratic society (Checkoway, 2020). When youth participate in society, they exercise their rights as citizens and contribute to a more democratic society. Participation in society also encourages advancing their skills and knowledge in various areas. Youth participation becomes even more favourable when it produces successful outcomes because of the youth's efforts to create real societal change.

Chapter 3

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Social Exclusion Theory

Social Exclusion refers to what happens when people suffer from a combination of linked problems such as low income, poor skills, unemployment, bad health, poor housing, and high crime environments (Erickson, 2001). Being an integral member of society means access to education, healthcare, safety and security, and housing; however, social exclusion happens when individuals are pushed to the peripheries of society, in which case they can no longer access the resources required for a better-quality life. The accessibility to all these resources provides an increased opportunity in society.

However, Sen (2001) advocates that poverty is not a choice, yet unemployed people are excluded from society due to the loss of freedom because of joblessness. Thus, social exclusion is seen as a potential consequence of several risk factors without that consequence being suggested (Erickson, 2001). Without accessibility, people can no longer achieve the opportunities they would if they were part of the core of society. Being excluded can sometimes be a deprivation, which can be of intrinsic importance. For example, Sen (2001) suggests that being unable to relate to others and participate in the community's life can directly impoverish a person's life as it is a loss on its own, in addition to whatever further deprivation it may indirectly generate. This is a case of the constitutive relevance of social exclusion.

Considering this theory, it can be argued that education is essential for helping people exercise societal freedom. Unemployed people are deprived of economic opportunities and participation in the community (Sen, 2000). In the current research, due to the dismal structures of the education systems in South Africa, learners who do not meet the employment criteria are faced with many challenges after completing the National Senior Certificate.

3.2. Human Development Theory

According to the United Nations Development Report (2019), human development is about expanding the richness of human life rather than the richness of the economy in which humans live. Human development is focused on improving people's lives rather than assuming that economic growth will lead to the greater well-being of all. Further, McNeill (2007) argues that

human development can bridge the gap between policy and research. People are allowed more freedom to live a life they value by developing their abilities and allowing them to use them. These liberties include social cohesion, equality, political ease, and improved environmental circumstances. Concerning this research, education is the opportunity they need to access resources to live a valued life. Essentially, this approach is about choice and providing people with opportunities without the insistence of using them (UNDP, 2019).

However, even though economic growth should not be the primary goal of development, it undoubtedly contributes to advancing human development. In most instances, people's social capabilities are neglected and overlooked even though they are essential to their prosperous growth as individuals. Furthermore, this recognition of individual accomplishment contributes to the success and advancement of human development. Fundamentally, human development insists that the central aim of development policy should be to expand the opportunities for people to lead meaningful lives (Mcneill, 2007). Thus, economic growth and development should strive towards this standard.

Human development theory and social development are closely intertwined, as the growth and well-being of individuals directly influence the development of societies (Peavey et al., 2021). Human development theories provide a framework for understanding how individuals develop physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally, while social development focuses on the processes and outcomes of societal change (Peavey et al., 2021). Furthermore, human development theory provides a valuable lens for understanding the individual and societal factors contributing to social development. By studying how individuals grow and change, we can gain insights into the processes and outcomes of societal transformation.

3.3. Capabilities Approach

Understanding Sen's capabilities approach can help to recognize how challenging it might have been to find suitable education, employment, or secure training during the world crisis of COVID-19. Nussbaum (2000) describes the capabilities approach as what people can do and can be provided with, as all life deserves the dignity of human beings. Sen (2001) states that unfreedom must be removed to ensure development. Examples of sources of unfreedom are poor economic opportunities, tyranny and poverty, and systematic social deprivation. As a

result of these unfreedoms, we get people who cannot satisfy their hunger and malnourishment and need shelter, proper sanitation, and drinking water.

This study will investigate how unfreedom leads to restricted job opportunities in youth. Sen has argued in his book that development is a process of expanding the fundamental freedoms enjoyed by people, and those freedoms have determinants, including social and economic arrangements and civil and political rights (Sen, 2001).

Furthermore, it is suggested that five developmental freedoms help advance a person's general capability: political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective freedoms (Sen, 2001). These freedoms may complement each other and be interconnected, and they can help us investigate the promotion of a better life.

The capabilities theory is closely linked to the asset-based approach (ABA). The ABA strategically leverages the skills, strengths, and resources within a community (Elias, 2001). Therefore, instead of dwelling on problems or deficits, ABA emphasizes building upon existing assets to create positive change. This approach effectively fosters social development by empowering communities and involving residents in decision-making. This approach has also been proven to promote sustainability as existing resources are relied on rather than external inputs (Elias, 2001). These are vital theories and approaches to address the youth's challenges and the systemic issues and inequalities within a community, specifically education and employment.

These insights have informed the study's objectives and the main research questions in the previous chapter.

3.4. Policy and Legislation

3.4.1. The National Youth Policy 2020 - 2030

The National Youth Policy 2020 – 2030 (NDP) is developed by the Department of the Presidency of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities (WYPD, 2020). This document was reviewed during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, it states that health is mainly prioritized during this period, as well as the protection of young people against the negative impacts of COVID-19. The

policy highlights five pillars: Quality Education, Skills and Second Chances, Economic transformation, Entrepreneurship, and Job creation, Physical and Mental Health Promotion, Social Cohesion, and nation-building, and Effective and responsive youth development machinery (WYPD, 2020). The most economically threatening theme is the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), which is looming in current jobs as technology replaces most tasks previously done manually by human labour (WYPD, 2020). Hence, this policy encourages youth to be updated regarding technological advances.

The NDP (2020 – 2030) aims to build and enhance youth capabilities to foster responsible and contributing members of society. To achieve youth participation, the government aims to support their social, economic, and political development needs. Furthermore, the policy emphasizes the need for youth development initiatives that support the holistic development of young people (Youth Development Agency, 2015).

It is suggested that a significant contributor to poverty, unemployment, and inequality among South African youth is the low educational attainment levels, as well as a severe mismatch between skills and labour market demand and supply (National Youth Development Agency, 2015). Furthermore, in 2011, only 31% of learners completed their National Senior Certificate. Unfortunately, due to poor-quality results from the primary school to the senior level, only a few post-matriculants pursue post-secondary education and training to acquire intermediary and professional skills (National Youth Development Agency, 2015).

3.4.2. Improving access to free and quality primary education for all

The South African government has implemented a Plan of Action to improve access to quality education for all. The Plan aims to ensure that the poorest 40% of learners in South Africa continue to experience improvements in the quality of education they receive. Much of the foundation has been laid since 1994, so it is believed to be attainable (DoE, 2003).

However, in South Africa, the quality of education varies widely. Many authors argue that the South African school system has two differently functioning sub-systems (Taylor & Yu, 2009). The first system, which is historically disadvantaged, predominantly serves black and coloured children. Schools in this system often struggle with inadequate resources and underqualified teachers, leading to low proficiency in basic skills like reading, writing, and numeracy (Essack

& Hindle, 2019). These students are left with gaps in their educational development compared to students in better-resourced schools. The second sub-system, historically advantaged, mainly includes schools that served white children during apartheid. These schools usually have better facilities, more qualified teachers, and perform closer to international educational standards (Essack & Hindle, 2019).

This disparity underscores the need for improvements in Early Childhood Development (ECD) and primary education in disadvantaged areas, as early educational setbacks tend to accumulate over time, further perpetuating inequality. Educational inequality perpetuates economic inequality because students in disadvantaged schools struggle to access high-paying jobs, hindering their ability to break the cycle of poverty in social development.

The Department of Basic Education in South Africa outlines in its policy that it remains committed to an inclusive, quality-enhanced, and widely representative schooling system (DoE, 2003). Thus, addressing deep educational inequalities is essential for improving broader social development in South Africa, creating a more equitable, healthy, and stable society.

3.4.3. Develop teachers and review curriculum to promote problem-solving, employability, entrepreneurship, and adaptation to the 4th Industrial Revolution

The NDP (2020 – 2030) proposes interventions to meet the desired levels of education and the economic needs of South Africa. The principle of the policy includes a review of the current curriculum to ensure that it meets international standards and 4IR utility that meets the economic needs of the economy. As such, the 4IR characterizes a significant change in the kinds of abilities needed to complete particular activities in the economy (Lubinga et al., 2023). Increasing the number of science and technology graduates is suggested; however, teachers must be trained to use modern technology in lessons (Ford & Botha, 2010).

In addition, it is suggested that the efforts of teachers are at low levels, which considerably influences the value of education and studying in the classroom and more excellent academic spaces (Van der Berg et al., 2011). They argue that this is perhaps even more detrimental than ineffective content knowledge and academic knowledge to teach the curriculum. Educators are finding difficulty in integrating ICT competently into education due to inadequate resources and a lack of guidance (Ramorola, 2013). To enhance teaching and learning in education,

digital skills are required to ensure that education staff are abreast with technological change, which is vital in the 4IR (Lubinga et al., 2023). Therefore, professional and skilled expertise must change as 4IR does to address the prospects and difficulties of the digital shift (Lee et al., 2018)

However, considering the shift to a more technological education system, the NDP strongly advocates for a smooth transition to a 4IR economy. According to Fajaryati et al. (2020), employability skills are indispensable during the fourth industrial revolution and globalization, as approximately 75 million youth in developing nations are unemployed. Therefore, it is suggested that all new technology be modified to the South African environment and context to enhance the available skills in the country further rather than follow global trends (Ford & Botha, 2010). Education in the 4IR age calls for educators and students who have received ICT preparation and are equipped with those skills to further education and training, as the digital revolution is essential to the expansion and enhancement of an institution (Nwosu et al., 2023). Ultimately, because of low levels of higher education success, there is a gap in South Africa's digital and technological knowledge to become more competent and skilled in this arena (Lubinga et al., 2023).

3.5. Conclusion

As this chapter has outlined, the South African schooling system's current context is bleak. The suggested interventions in the National Youth Development Policy 2020 - 2030 require a complete overhaul of the education system. Even though successful progress has been made post-Apartheid, almost three decades later, learners are still subjected to learning in mud schools, unsafe school environments, poor-quality education, dilapidating infrastructure, and severe lack of resources.

Moving towards a 4IR education system and economic arena requires much more groundwork. Unfortunately, South Africa still struggles to meet the basic requirements for an equal, quality, and sustainable schooling system. South Africa aims to comply with international education standards; however, the socioeconomic context must foremost be considered.

Chapter 4

4. Methodology

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research methodology used in this research study and show how the outcome will be obtained. Research methodology refers to a specific procedure or technique the researcher will use to identify, select, put through, and analyse the information about the topic (Wilkinson, 2000). The methodology section in any research enables the reader to critically evaluate how valid and reliable a study is overall (Sileyew, 2019). Two main questions in the research methodology section should be answered: how the data was collected and analysed (Wilkinson, 2000). This chapter also outlines how the participants were chosen, the process of data collection, and the consideration of ethical issues throughout the research study.

4.2. Research Design

An exploratory research design and qualitative research approach were chosen as the most appropriate method for this research study because they revealed the participants' perceptions based on lived experiences (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). Qualitative methods favour naturalistic observations and interviews. Qualitative research emphasizes subjective means and questions the existence of objective reality. This design is open-ended with its findings, requires instant decision-making, and is capable of flexibility (Padgett, 2017). More than anything, it aims to understand the case study being researched and not use the research outcome to generalize (Hammersley, 2015). This approach was functional considering that this research includes humans as subjects, and it hoped to explore the lived experiences of youth once they have completed their National Senior Certificate in a public school in Cape Town.

4.3. Population and Sampling

The population is the total set from which the individual or units of the research project are selected (De Vos et al., 2005). For this study, the population was 15 South African citizens from Cape Town who graduated with a National Senior Certificate from a South African public school.

4.4. Sampling Technique

The study employed purposive non-probability sampling. This technique is based mainly on the researcher's judgement, in that a selected sample contains the most characteristics and is representative of the population (De Vos et al., 2002). Relative to this study, this sampling method was central in recruiting individuals to participate because the research objective is purposive.

4.5. Sample Characteristics

A sample refers to a portion of the total set of objects, events, or people that involve the study's focus (De Vos et al., 2005). When it comes to size, the sample is usually smaller than the population chosen. This study's sample was drawn from 15 interviewed National Senior Certificate graduates in Du Noon, Cape Town. Inclusionary criteria refer to the characteristics that participants must possess to be included in the study. In this case, participants needed to be South Africans aged between 18 and 25 and speak English.

Exclusionary criteria refer to the characteristics that disqualify participants from being included in the study. In this case, participants who were still in school were excluded. Inclusionary criteria determine who can participate, while exclusionary criteria determine who cannot. Factors that were not considered include race, gender, and employment status.

4.6. Sampling Procedure

The sampling is purposive, and the researcher ensured that the recruitment of participants was consistent with the findings in previous research. The choice for purposive sampling was to align with the improved partnering of the sample to the aims and objectives of the research, thus improving the study's accuracy and the trustworthiness of the data and results (Campbell et al., 2020). A sample of 15 participants was recruited in Du Noon, Cape Town. The researcher went to the Du Noon public library and distributed information sheets that discussed the study's objectives to elicit interest in the research. The researcher asked potential participants if they had a few moments to discuss the study and its objectives. The researcher and interested participants exchanged contact details, and arrangements were made for interviews in a study cubicle in the library. The participants signed an Informed Consent Form, and the researcher facilitated this process.

4.7. Data Collection Approach

In this research, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were done to gather data.

4.7.1. Data Collection Method

Semi-structured interviews are a dialogue between the researcher and the participant, driven by a flexible interview with follow-up questions and comments (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). This method enables the researcher to gather data about the participants' feelings and beliefs and more information that could be useful for the research upon discovery (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The current interviews involved unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few and intended to prompt views and opinions from the participants regarding the research topic (Creswell, 2009). Face-to-face interviews are the best method because the participants can be directly observed. The semi-structured interview schedule allowed for a flexible conversation while obtaining data.

4.7.2. Data Collection Tool

In qualitative research design, interviews are the most common tool to use as they enable the researcher to comprehensively understand the participants' perceptions and beliefs on the research topic (Francis, 2012). The interview schedule was developed using the research objectives and themes stated in Chapter 1. Using the interview, the researcher gathered a more intensive understanding of the lived experiences of the youth who graduated with a National Senior Certificate at a public school in Cape Town. The interview schedule prioritized open-ended and non-judgemental questions to encourage free expression and eliminate defensive or sensitive feelings (Greef, 2011).

4.7.3. Data Recording

A recording device was used with the participant's permission during the interview. When the participant did not feel comfortable with the interview recording, a suggestion was made that the recorder would change the participant's voice, and no identifiable information would be recorded. Greef (2011) suggests that using a recording device allows the researcher to pay closer attention to the aspects discussed and whether further exploration will be needed. Interviews also allow a complete account of participants' responses (Greef, 2011). Interviews were recorded using an iPhone 6. During the interview, the researcher identified any facial

expressions, body language, or emotional cues in writing that aided in contextualizing the participants' responses.

4.7.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis aims to ensure that the data is classified using as many categories as possible to attempt to understand and describe patterns and themes from the respondents' perspectives (Creswell, 2014). When analysing the data, I used Tech's (1990 as cited in Creswell, 2014), eight steps in the coding process are listed below:

1. I read all the transcripts thoroughly to get some ideas and make notes.
2. I selected one of the most interesting interview transcripts and noted the underlying meaning.
3. All topics were grouped according to their similarities.
4. Topic abbreviations were created, and codes will be written next to suitable sections. I will then be able to identify any new codes. The transcripts were highlighted in different colours to indicate which were similar in the respondents' responses.
5. Suitable and descriptive words for the topics were used and turned into categories. Those categories were reduced by grouping related categories. Because the respondents provided similar responses, other themes may have emerged.
6. Finally, alphabet abbreviations were used for each category as codes.
7. Collect all data from each category in a single place and analyse it preliminarily.
8. The codes were compared to the transcripts to provide a deeper understanding.

4.8. Main Ethical Considerations

4.8.1. Avoidance of Harm: Creswell (2014) states that a researcher should avoid collecting harmful information and foresee the possibility of disclosing sensitive and harmful information during data collection. It must be ensured that any individual participating in a research study will not be involved in any situation causing harm (Hennink et al., 2011). The researcher must protect participants. I explained the research process and my expertise to the participants in this study. They were aware of the study and allowed to withdraw from the interviews for any reasons that may threaten their psychology. Questions that invoke harm were avoided.

4.8.2. Informed Consent: Informed consent entails giving participants all the information they require to decide whether to participate in the study (Wiles, 2012). To ensure informed consent in this study, the researcher contacted potential participants and scheduled a meeting to discuss

the study and invite them to participate if they were interested. Upon their confirmation of interest, the researcher distributed the consent forms to them before the interview. Participants showed their voluntary agreement to participate by signing the consent forms. Before each interview, participants were allowed to review the consent forms in case they had changed their decision to participate and withdraw. This was followed by requesting participants' consent to audio record the interviews.

4.8.3. Deception of Respondents: Participants are never to be misled or wrongly informed of the research aims. Deception includes deliberate misleading, deception by omission, and failure to fully disclose information about the research (Mcleod, 2015). The researcher in this study gave participants full disclosure of research aims and objectives to avoid deception.

4.8.4. Privacy: Any individual who participates in the research has a reasonable expectation that privacy will be guaranteed. No identifying information about the participant – written or any other communication – will be revealed (Hennink et al., 2011). As the researcher, I ensured the participants that all their identifying information would be private. All information disclosed and discussed will not be revealed to anyone. The interview occurred in a study cubicle at the Du Noon public library. This cubicle was booked before the interviews. Participants were given assurance that the space used for the interview was safe, secure, and private. The researcher also asked the participants to ensure the same privacy on their side.

4.8.5. Anonymity: Anonymity refers to the fact that no one will be able to identify the participant afterward (Oliver, 2010). Anonymity involves using pseudonyms to identify participants and hide their real identities (Coffelt, 2017). In the context of this study, the researcher kept participants anonymous. The researcher ensured that the information the participants provided was not linked in any way to their names by replacing their names with participant numbers.

4.8.6. Confidentiality: Confidentiality in research implies that the researcher must keep all participants' information private and avoid connecting any ideas or comments to participants' real identities (Kamanzi & Romania, 2019; Oliver, 2010). Using pseudonyms also helped disconnect the information that participants contributed to them (Wiles, 2012). Interviews were transcribed, and only the researcher could access the recordings in a safe place. I have adhered to the POPIA, which states that responsible parties must ensure that personal information is kept secure to maintain confidentiality and integrity and to prevent data breaches (Protection

of Personal Information Act, No. 4 of 2013, 2013: Sections 19-22). As a result, I will report any data breaches to the Information Regulator.

4.8.6. Voluntary Participation: The researcher should not force participants to sign the informed consent form when collecting data for a study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Participation in a study should be voluntary, and the researcher should clarify in the consent form instructions that participants can choose not to participate (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the current study, participation was voluntary, and participants would provide their consent. Participants were reminded that they were allowed to withdraw from the research at any time without any consequence. However, should the researcher withdraw from the research, all their identifying information must be removed from all records.

4.8.7. Debriefing Respondents: The researcher must discuss the findings with the participants as soon as possible after the research process. The participant must be given a general idea of the research problem and how their input has contributed to the findings. This allows participants to leave without any misconceptions or anxiety about the study. All questions from the participants must be answered honestly and in full to ease any concerns they might have. Full disclosure of the surveys was made available to the participants to discuss misconceptions, alleviate harmful statements, or better understand the research objectives.

4.8.8. Publication of Findings: The final research report must be clear, accurate, objective, unambiguous, and contain all information (De Vos et al., 2011). All participants will be objectively informed of the research findings without offering too much detail that might affect confidentiality. This serves as a form of recognition and gratitude to the community for participating in the research study (De Vos et al., 2011).

4.8.9. Cooperation with Contributors: No financial contributors have been involved in this research, as the researcher worked independently. There are no obligations to share information with funders.

4.9. Conclusion

This chapter discusses the current research methodology, an exploratory research design, and the qualitative research approach, which is the most proper method for this research study since they exposed the participants' perceptions based on lived experiences. The population for the

study was 15 South African citizens from Cape Town who graduated with a National Senior Certificate from a South African public school. The study employed purposive non-probability sampling. The 15 interviewed National Senior Certificate graduates were South Africans aged between 18 and 25 and able to speak English. The participants signed an Informed Consent Form, and the researcher facilitated this process.

In this chapter, it has been indicated that semi-structured face-to-face interviews were done to gather data using semi-structured interviews to allow for a flexible conversation while collecting data. The interview schedule prioritized open-ended and non-judgemental questions to encourage free expression and eliminate defensive or sensitive feelings. Interviews were recorded using an iPhone 6. The data analysis used Tech's eight steps in the coding process. The primary ethical considerations covered in this chapter were avoidance of harm, informed consent, deception of respondents, privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and debriefing with respondents.

Chapter 5

5. Findings of the study

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the findings of the study. The interviews generated themes, categories, and sub-categories based on the study's objectives. As discussed in the previous chapter, the process and procedures were used to create data relevant to the study. Respondents in this research were expected to have experience in the research topic being studied to give informed and critical views on the phenomena.

5.2. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 5.1:

Respondent	Age	Gender	Race	Current City/Province	Highest Grade Passed	Tertiary Education	Current Work Status
1	27	Female	Black	Western Cape	12	Current – Undergraduate Degree	Employed
2	25	Female	Black	Western Cape	12	None	Unemployed
3	22	Female	Coloured	Western Cape	12	Current – College	Unemployed
4	25	Female	Mixed	Western Cape	12	Current – Online College	Unemployed
5	19	Male	Black	Western Cape	12	None	Unemployed
6	22	Male	Black	Western Cape	12	Current – College	Employed
7	22	Female	Coloured	Western Cape	12	None	Employed
8	18	Male	Coloured	Western Cape	12	None	Unemployed
9	27	Female	Black	Western Cape	12	Current – Undergraduate Degree	Employed
10	21	Male	Coloured	Western Cape	12	None	Unemployed
11	29	Female	Coloured	Western Cape	12	Diploma	Employed
12	25	Female	Mixed	Western Cape	12	Current – Online College	Unemployed
13	19	Male	Black	Western Cape	12	None	Unemployed
14	20	Male	Coloured	Western Cape	12	Current – College	Unemployed
15	26	Female	Coloured	Western Cape	12	Diploma	Employed

The respondents consisted of nine females and six males. Their ages ranged from 18 to 29 years. The group included seven coloured respondents, six black respondents, and two mixed-race respondents. All of them passed grade 12 in the South African schooling system. All the respondents currently reside in the Western Cape. Half of the respondents are currently studying to complete a tertiary education; two completed tertiary education, while the rest had not pursued a tertiary education. Most of the respondents are unemployed, while six are unemployed.

5.3 Framework for Analysis

This research delves into the multifaceted schooling experiences in South Africa, focusing on key themes that emerged from the findings. The study explores the impact of societal pressure, emotional health, tertiary education, lack of skills, and governmental support on students' educational journeys. The findings highlight the challenges faced by South African students, including the strain of academic pressure on mental health, the influence of societal expectations on career choices, and the difficulties in transitioning to tertiary education. Emotional health issues such as anxiety and depression are prevalent among students, further impacting their academic performance and overall well-being.

Furthermore, the findings also shed light on graduates' significant lack of skills, hindering their employability. Governmental support is recognized as a critical factor in addressing these challenges, with recommendations for increased funding, targeted employment programs, and policies to address educational inequality. By understanding these key themes, policymakers and educators can work towards improving the educational experiences of South African students and fostering a more supportive and equitable learning environment.

Table 5.2:

Themes	Categories	Subcategories
4.4.1 Experiences of Schooling in South Africa	4.4.1.1. General Wellness	
	4.4.1.2. Societal Pressure	4.4.1.2.2. Tertiary Education
4.4.2. Emotional Health		
4.4.3. Recommendations to easily transition from Matric to Job Market	4.4.3.1. Improved Governmental Support	4.4.3.1.1. Lack of Skills

5.4. Empirical Findings and Discussions

5.4.1. Experiences of schooling in South Africa

All the respondents shared positive experiences while completing their schooling in South Africa. All the respondents are grateful for their experience, primarily due to their teachers. Most respondents confirm that they had only positive experiences at high school and that the support received from their teachers was beneficial to their success. Lei, Cui, and Chui (2018) argue that students spend most of their time at school with their teachers, which is why teacher support is essential to their academic outcomes. Furthermore, many empirical studies have shown that the socioemotional support offered by the teachers was significantly correlated with positive academic and schooling emotions and outcomes (Lei et al., 2018).

5.4.1.1. General Wellness

Most of the respondents reported that they had general feelings of support, encouragement, and appreciation. They were happy to be a part of a schooling system that showed care, support, and assistance whenever needed. Almost all the respondents shared that it made their schooling journey better by knowing that they have support when needed, as the following respondents affirm:

“Yes, they were very supportive to me. Some even offered to give me extra classes on Saturdays or Sundays even if it’s just for 1 hour or things like that, just to improve my grades ... ya”. (Respondent 4, female, 25)

“I believe they tried their best to improve my grades and I’m actually very grateful for that.” (Respondent 14, male, 20)

“They were definitely supportive as they saw me grow throughout my High School, so they were very supportive about it and always wanted the best for me.” (Respondent 3, female, 22)

There was a greater sense of wellness amongst students in their matriculating year. These sentiments tie back to the Human Development Theory in that people are more likely to perform well and accomplish their goals when they feel valued and supported by society (Mcneill, 2007). They remember eliciting feelings of compassion, support, and encouragement when facing the challenge of completing the matric year. Moreover, because they felt supported entirely, they had improved levels of well-being and were able to manage stress better. This sense of well-being is not only true for Matriculating but is also assumed that the likelihood of finding employment after matric is higher.

This is important because, as Cloete (2015) affirms, youth failure affects many aspects of a person’s life, including overall health and well-being. Failure in education or employment affects mental health when they experience a decrease in overall life satisfaction, general well-being, and self-esteem (Cloete, 2015). Furthermore, the International Labour Organization (2020) also argues that stress associated with job searching can lead to mental health problems as graduates may experience feelings of inadequacy or depression due to prolonged unemployment. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge people’s capabilities and values to grow and prosper as individuals and participate successfully within society.

5.4.1.2. Societal Pressure

Most respondents shared that completing the matric year was stressful as people wanted to see what was next after matric. The pressure on students in matric in South Africa is multifaceted. Matriculating from the South African schooling system is crucial in students' academic journey as it determines their future career and academic opportunities. In the South African context,

in marginalized communities, finding a job after Matriculating is essential as that income will contribute to the household.

There is a heightened expectation for matriculants to pass well, coupled with the belief that good matric credentials secure better jobs. Employers often add to matriculants' pressure to pass well as they prefer to hire those who have matric, especially those who passed very well, and not students who have not completed their matric education, as the following respondents state:

“Yes, there was pressure because I applied to universities and didn’t get into some of them and so the second option was obviously getting a job. Ya, so there was quite a bit of pressure around it because you obviously can’t just do anything. Always a pressure in the household.” (Respondent 15, female, 26)

“Yes, there was pressure to work because it’s only her (sister) who’s working, who’s providing, so I felt so much pressure to pass and find a job. Even now because she is the only one who’s providing.” (Respondent 7, female, 22)

“Firstly, it’s starting on when you about to Matriculate, you are thinking now of ... I was 18 years and now it’s already in my mind that I must matriculate when I was 17. So, I got that pressure. That was the pressure that the community was putting on me first. Now, I must go to university, things are different, and people are different. All things are done differently.” (Respondent 10, male, 21)

In most South African communities, education is of solid cultural importance for social mobility and future economic success. Families are invested in their children’s education, anticipating that they pass matric to access brighter prospects. A successful matric pass is often a prerequisite for admission into university. So many students who do not achieve this feel immense stress and pressure in moving on from their matric year as they become unsure of their future opportunities. The South African youth are viewed as passive economic participants who believe themselves to be victims of poverty (Checkoway, 2020). Because of

such notions, society pressures the youth to look for jobs and become more active participants in the economy and society to prove to society that they are not passive economic participants of society (Checkoway, 2020).

Aditchie (2013) argues the same sentiments: Young African graduates are constantly faced with familial demands and expectations to succeed and be successful in their communities. Much pressure is placed on African youth to succeed despite an often-unsupportive system (Aditchie, 2013).

5.4.1.2.2. Tertiary Education

Many respondents are currently engaged in tertiary education and working towards completion thereof. Almost all the respondents declared a great need to further their education to better their lives. They shared a strong desire and sense of urgency to pursue a tertiary education to have an improved standard of life for themselves and their families, as they say:

“I passed my Matric and I went to study at CPUT for Hospitality Management and I got a diploma on that. Now, I started studying teaching at UNISA and I am in my first year.” (Respondent 9, female, 27)

“Yes, I am currently studying Business. A Business Administration and Management degree.” (Respondent 3, female, 22)

“The only reason I decided to go and study Education now is because it was my second option, and my mother can’t afford R45k to do Drama and they don’t give out bursaries. I’ve always wanted to become an actress. I’m just doing this to save enough money ... then I’ll pursue my passion which is acting.” (Respondent 4, female, 25)

Many post-matriculants aspire to study further, hoping to get better job opportunities after graduating. However, many post-matriculants cannot do so due to financial challenges and the need to earn income to sustain the household. Furthermore, vocational training is not an alternative to university education. Nkosi et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of vocational education and training (VET) in enhancing youth employability by equipping them with practical skills that align with local labour market demands. However, this becomes

challenging due to inadequate infrastructure, scarce educational resources, and insufficient teacher training (Atinga & Dabor, 2023). Further to this, many graduates in marginalized communities are finding it difficult to study further because of challenges such as poverty, low levels of education, and familial circumstances. Unfortunately, VET programs lack recognition and support, undermining their effectiveness and success (Nkosi et al., 2021).

In contrast to this view, Bhorat (n.d.) argues that because of South Africa's widening inequality gap, especially in education, the level of education holds differently for different institutions. So, even though students pursue a tertiary education, a university will award a degree, while a Further Education and Training (FET) college will award a certificate or diploma (Bhorat, n.d.). This is important when entering the labour market because a university degree holds higher employment prospects than a certificate or diploma.

5.4.2. Emotional Health

Most respondents shared that they have never had any problems with their physical health during their matric year. Almost all the respondents said they were struggling emotionally towards the end of their matric year. The following respondents had this to say:

“Definitely anxiety and stress. In Matric, you just want to make it, and there’s so much pressure around you to make it more than any other grade. I feel like the stress and anxiety of passing is still with me today. So, whenever I’m doing something, I obviously feel the need to achieve it and I put a lot of stress on myself which causes anxiety.” (Respondent 12, female, 25)

“I was depressed. I had lots of anxiety. I wanted to commit suicide because I never lived with my mother. I used to live with my aunty, my mother’s baby sister. And then my father not being in the picture, and I’ve always wanted to have that father and daughter bond which I never had and ya, my mother not always being there for me.” (Respondent 11, female, 29)

“Ya, I was so stressed because everything was just overwhelming. Lots of work and studying. I don’t know but I feel so sad when I see people that I went to school with succeeding and me I’m still here. So, it makes me feel

so sad, but I'm not jealous for them, I'm happy for them." (Respondent 2, female, 25)

Most of the respondents were stressed out at the thought of their matric year ending and unsure of what their future holds. More specifically, they felt pressured to perform and pass well because the quality of the matric pass is suggested to be crucial to future academic or employment prospects (Bhorat, n.d.).

In addition, people's economic and social circumstances directly affect their social and emotional well-being. Thus, when economic pressure is high, caregivers are at risk of being emotionally distressed, which is indicated by feelings of anxiety and depression (Cloete, 2015). This sentiment is shared by Checkoway (2020), who states that when youth are faced with challenges at the critical age of 18, their emotional state is compromised, and they believe that they are insufficient, incapable, and unable.

5.4.3. Voices of the participants about what should be done to address the challenges

Most respondents agreed that the government should be more proactive in assisting matriculants with transitioning from school into employment. They shared that they were primarily unprepared and unskilled for employment after having matriculated, as can be witnessed by the following respondents:

"I feel like the government should incorporate more practical skills into High School, especially the Matric year and I don't think it should be theory-based. The amount of work that a Matriculant must do, lessen it. Also, we are not equipped with the skills that most workplaces ask for. So, maybe equipping the Matriculants with some skills needed so that it will be a bit easier for them to find a job." (Respondent 12, female, 25)

"I think the government should hire people with Matric. Maybe put a programme in place so it will be easier to find a job." (Respondent 2, female, 25)

"I'd say making education free because fees are expensive. Some of us don't have parents to take care of us and pay for these things. If everything was free, then everyone would've become successful. We must pay for

education, and we don't have money. There's a lot of crime out there because these kids don't have education. Make education free so we can have a better life and live the way we want to live." (Respondent 4, female, 25)

Moreso, there seems to be a disconnect and inconsistency between the school and university curriculum expectations. This was mainly expressed around concerns about schools' lack of curriculum support. Students must complete the entire academic curriculum regardless of their strengths and academic abilities, which are highly influenced and affected by contextual factors – economically, financially, and socially. According to Kubeka and Rama (2020), Elite schools are excellently resourced with libraries, science labs, computer labs, art classes, music and drama facilities, and ongoing academic and social support. This is juxtaposed with local township schools being under-resourced, classes being overcrowded, and no specialist teachers or professionals on-site, so the value of education offered is dramatically compromised.

Most students lack the skills to successfully participate in the labour market when completing the matric year due to insufficient or low academic merit. Substandard education does not properly recognize and develop students' capabilities to intensify their financial prospects but instead denies them proper employment and demoralizes their sense of self-worth (Spaull, 2013).

Consequently, the transition was challenging. Many respondents indicated a need for additional training and development to improve their employability, as exemplified by the following quotes:

"I think it would be learning skills, like practical skills, communication skills, actual skills, and problem-solving skills. I think it was very theory based, and there wasn't a lot of practical things happening, which is needed in the world of today." (Respondent 3, female, 22)

"We have a very fast growing and changing economy and I think that the school should've focused more on the present rather than the past. It would've been a bit easier to navigate after Matric. I was completely lost because I wasn't taught it in High School." (Respondent 13, male, 19).

As mentioned before, one of the foremost reasons for youth unemployment is lack of experience, particularly for their first job, because schools offer limited practical skills

development to successfully contribute to the economy (NDP, 2019). Furthermore, it is suggested that teachers are not adequately trained to deliver content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge to teach the curriculum (Atinga & Dabor, 2023). Educators struggle to integrate ICT efficiently into their lessons due to inadequate resources and training (Atinga & Dabor, 2023). It is suggested that students are inadequately trained because teachers are not abreast of the teaching and learning pedagogies that are essential to be economically successful in the 4IR (Lubinga et al., 2023).

5.4.3.1. Improved Governmental Support

In general, all the respondents reported a lack of opportunity. There was a lack of employment, education, and funding opportunities, to mention a few. Most respondents expressed that the government must do more to make the transition easier and smoother. Currently, matriculants are expected to upskill privately in addition to just having completed the entire school curriculum, as the following respondents state:

“I think the amount of work that a Matriculant has to do lessens it, and we are not equipped with those skills that most workplaces ask for. So, maybe equipping the Matriculants with some skills needed so that it will be a bit easier for them to find a job.” (Respondent 14, male, 20)

“I think the government must start with the curriculum first in High School. If you want to be a Chef, they must show you those skills instead of teaching you Physics and life Sciences, and at the end of the day, you want to be a Chef. We are doing all these unnecessary modules that we don't need. This must be the focus.” (Respondent 5, male, 19)

“It was very frustrating to go for training before I could get a job and I had to pay for that on my own. I was like, why must I go for extra learning straight after Matric? I literally just finished school! I was super angry.”
(Respondent 15, female, 26)

Many of the respondents are expressing confusion about skills matching and career choice. The NDP (2019) acknowledges that youth unemployment is often due to a lack of experience, particularly for their first job because schools offer little to no career guidance. It is suggested that if students were more clearly guided, they would gather stronger skills and ample information about the job they want to enter to participate successfully in the economy.

Employers are reluctant to hire post-matriculants who require upskilling because it is expensive (Surender et al., 2010). As expected, doing more training after matric discourages youth from seeking employment because there are too many labour constraints or fewer job opportunities (Miyajima, 2023).

5.4.3.1.1. Lack of Skills

Almost all the respondents reported that once they have completed their matric year, they become stressed out at the fact that there are restricted employment prospects available for them, as youth, in South Africa. The following respondents in agreement state:

“In most cases, when I do apply for a job, they first look at my Maths and Life Sciences to see, okay, is this person going to be capable of doing whatsoever, coz most of the time they give you a Maths test and ya I end up not getting chosen. So, my first job was a promoter for pots and pans when I was 16 and I just did it to support my parents.”

(Respondent 4, female, 25)

“Ya, I never understood Maths because my, Maths teacher I can say, that one, he will come to class then let us just say open the exercise at maybe page what what and then just leave us just like that. He will only help the smart kids. He was my teacher in high school, so I didn't understand Maths since the start.” (Respondent 13, Male, 19).

“At schools, there are career days to motivate students but there, we didn't have that, so it was my first time to see it here in Cape Town. At Eastern Cape, the school I was going to didn't have those programmes, like career day. We were only studying and had extra classes. We didn't get the support or that motivation from students who are studying at universities and colleges and stuff. We also didn't get any information about it.” (Respondent 2, female, 25).

According to Fajaryati, et al. (2020), the school curriculum must support students with knowledge, soft skills, and hard skills that apply to the employment market so that they are

more productive and can be employed in the industry. Some of the respondents who were not able to finish their schooling up to grade 12, were highly stressed and discouraged as their present academic qualifications did not allow for decent employment. Some of the skills that are in high demand include communication skills, collaboration, problem-resolution, and critical reasoning ability (Fajaryati, et al., 2020).

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter discusses the findings and analyses the interview transcriptions based on the main objectives of this study. It unfolds in themes, categories, and subcategories of the global ideas extracted from all transcriptions. The findings highlight numerous stories of individuals who were influenced by socioeconomic factors and the structures of the South African curriculum, leading them to face challenges. However, these experiences also underscore the potential for positive change. There were successful stories of participants who were able to start their tertiary studies at some point after matriculating. The next chapter will present the conclusion of the study as well as recommendations thereof.

Chapter 6

6. Conclusions, Policy Implications and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This study explored the limitations and restrictions to entering the job market that post-matriculants experience after completing their final year of school. This chapter will outline a summary of the study, discuss the conclusions, and make any recommendations for future research. It will also present the main assumptions and objectives of the study. Recommendations will be made to the Department of Basic Education.

6.2 Conclusion

It is important to note that reflexivity is the ability to formulate an integrated understanding of one's cognitive world, especially understanding one's influence or role in a set of human relations as argued by De Vos, et al., (2011). Essentially, this research study stems from the effects of the Apartheid era in South Africa. Apartheid has segregated people and created racial groups and classes within South Africa. It has created irreparable damage to the lives of many. The segregation of people, classes, and demographic contexts has allowed many communities to be challenged with chronic poverty. Post-Apartheid, in 1994, there was strong motivation and eagerness from the new South African government to radically change the school curriculum that encourages equity, values, and opportunity for all.

The researcher has not experienced Apartheid and therefore heavily relies on the experiences of those who did, including family members. However, since starting her schooling career in South Africa, she has formed opinions and critical reflections, thereof. The researcher closely identifies with the problem statement presented in this study because even though she has completed the curriculum to Grade 12, there was a severe lack of career direction and opportunity that the Senior Certificate could account for. Therefore, she had to delve into opportunities offered in other industries that were not of interest to her, just to be employed. In

less than five years, she went back to study to seek opportunities in her desired industry in which she was successful.

This demonstrates the problem that many graduates face annually, which ultimately extends their entry into the economy and prolongs their ability to become self-sustainable. The researcher shows great interest in understanding how South African policies and legislation and their implementation continually fail the people. The researcher advocates for youth empowerment, quality education, and participation within society and seeks to better understand how to develop and guide the youth to increase the quality of life for all South African citizens.

Newly graduated matriculants in South Africa face significant challenges in integrating into the economy due to their lack of skills and workplace readiness. This study highlights the barriers they encounter during their schooling and the limitations of the education system that restrict their economic prospects. Most importantly, the curriculum shapes students into productive members of society and the workforce.

For education to truly foster social and economic transformation, the curriculum must be designed to empower learners with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the modern economy. An effective education system should also promote social change, addressing the lingering inequalities of the post-apartheid era. Potentially, drives positive social, political, and economic development, but the current state of South Africa's system leaves society divided and unequal. Therefore, the transformation of the curriculum is essential to promote social justice and equality, ensuring that all students, regardless of background, can access meaningful opportunities for growth and success.

In addressing the problem of post-matriculants facing significant barriers to accessing quality tertiary education and employment in South Africa, this study contributes to the scientific understanding of the challenges encountered by youth in marginalized communities, specifically in Du Noon. By analysing the socio-economic factors that influence educational

outcomes and employment readiness, this research adds depth to existing literature and highlights the unique context of the township.

The findings underscore the pressing need for actionable strategies to improve educational and employment conditions and call for systemic change in educational policy and resource allocation, which is critical for enhancing the prospects of young people in these areas. By identifying the barriers that hinder post-matriculants, such as inadequate preparation for the labour market and socio-economic constraints, this study informs academic discourse and provides valuable insights for policymakers and community leaders. Through this exploration, the study enhances our understanding of the complexities surrounding education and employment readiness, offering a foundation for future research and policy development.

The challenges faced by newly graduated matriculants in South Africa are significant barriers to their successful integration into the economy. This study reveals that many graduates struggle with a lack of skills and workplace readiness, compounded by systemic issues within the education system that limit their economic prospects. The findings underscore the critical role that curriculum plays in shaping students into productive members of society and the workforce.

For education to effectively promote social and economic transformation, it must empower learners with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in today's labour market. An education system that fosters social change is essential to address the persistent inequalities rooted in the country's past. A reformed curriculum can drive positive social, political, and economic development, but current shortcomings leave many South Africans without equitable opportunities for success.

This study significantly contributes to the understanding of the barriers encountered by post-matriculants, particularly in marginalized communities like Du Noon. By examining the socio-economic factors influencing educational outcomes and employment readiness, the research offers valuable insights into the unique context of these areas. The urgent need for actionable

strategies to enhance educational and employment conditions is evident, calling for systemic changes in policy and resource allocation.

In addition, this research highlights the importance of targeted interventions, including improved career guidance, vocational training, and support systems for post-matriculants. By addressing the gaps in preparedness for the labour market and mitigating socio-economic constraints, we can empower youth to achieve better educational and employment outcomes.

The implications of this study extend beyond academic discourse; they serve as a call to action for policymakers and community leaders to prioritize the interests of young people. Ultimately, by fostering a more inclusive and supportive educational environment, we can create pathways for growth and success that benefit all South African citizens.

6.2.1. Objective 1 was to explore experiences about accessing jobs after basic schooling and education in Cape Town.

- The respondents revealed that the completion of matric was imperative to their future tertiary education. Most respondents confirmed that their matric results were not of a good standard to be accepted at many tertiary education institutions. Their academic performance did not meet the entry requirements of tertiary institutions. Nevertheless, obtaining a matric certificate remained essential, as all employers required it before considering candidates for employment.
- Many respondents revealed that even though their academic pass rate was not up to standard, they expressed feelings of gratitude and positivity towards the completion of the matric year and obtaining their matric certificate.

6.2.2 Objective 2 was to explore how post-matriculants' lives and choices were impacted regarding education, employment, and emotional health.

- Many respondents revealed that they felt extremely stressed and anxious throughout their matric year. They were constantly worried about achieving good grades and keeping abreast of all tasks, tests, and assignments. Many respondents were disappointed at the fact that they could no longer participate in many social activities.

The respondents expressed that these things were important to them at this stage in their lives. However, obtaining the matric certificate was essential in establishing a successful future in education and employment.

- Most respondents also expressed the pressure felt by their families, communities, and society to successfully pass the matric year. They felt the need to pass for the approval and honour of their family and community as most respondents were the first children to reach this academic level.

6.2.3. Objective 3 was to explore factors that can be attributed to either finding it easier or finding it difficult to access jobs.

Many respondents revealed that the type of tertiary education they wished to pursue was affected in that they were not able to study what they wanted to. There was pressure to be accepted into any faculty due to low passing grades and financial constraints. They believed that if they matriculated, their choices and opportunities would be vaster.

- A large percentage of the respondents revealed that it was difficult to find employment post-matriculating. Access to employment was limited to youth with high academic results. The private sector was selective and only accepted post-matriculants with specific grades. For this purpose, career guidance at the high school level is crucial for helping students understand their options post-matric, whether it be further education or employment. Schools can collaborate with industries to provide learners with information on career paths that are in demand, ensuring they make informed decisions about their futures (DBE, 2002).
- Internships and learnership programs are beneficial in equipping students with practical experience, making them more employable and attractive to potential employers.
- Expanding access to FET colleges to focus on practical skills development in fields such as hospitality, engineering, and manufacturing, where there are skills shortages in the South African economy.

- Digital skills training is crucial for matriculants in the global digital economy. It is recommended that the private sector collaborate with educational institutions to offer digital and technology-based courses in preparation for emerging job markets.
- Post-matriculants must be trained in soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving which are crucial for employability and functioning in a challenging workplace environment.
- Most respondents indicated that their physical health remained good and was not impacted during their matric and post-matric years. However, a significant portion reported that their mental and emotional well-being suffered during this period due to the stress and pressure associated with obtaining the matric certificate.

6.3 Policy Implications for the Study

The study advocates for an amendment of the current curriculum policy to enhance the education and quality of life for youth. Consequently, it calls on all stakeholders to prioritize the interests of young people and to create improved opportunities that enable them to reach their aspirations. It is recommended that government officials and policymakers in reading research findings like this one, can become more aware of the transition from school to employment and whether these outcomes are favourable and sustainable for social and economic development and proper policy amendments can be done. In this regard, research findings such as the current one can influence policy formulation, implementation, and decision-making in South Africa.

6.4. Recommendations

One limitation of this study is the small sample size, which is confined to a single township in Cape Town; as a result, the findings may not be generalizable to the broader South African context. For future research, the researcher recommends conducting more extensive studies, potentially at the PhD level or through research institutions, that encompass samples from various regions across South Africa. Such research would provide a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by post-matriculants in securing employment.

6.4.1. Recommendations to the Department of Social Development

- The Department of Social Development should explore providing a stipend or allowance for post-matriculants who cannot meet their basic daily needs. This financial support would create greater opportunities for these individuals to pursue further education or enter the job market. With a stipend, they could afford necessities such as transportation to interviews, printing résumés, and accessing internet services. Many post-matriculants face unemployment or cannot continue their studies due to financial constraints, and such an allowance could help alleviate these barriers, empowering them to take meaningful steps toward their future.
- Career guidance from the onset is crucial in helping students understand the job market and the expectations thereof. The Social Development Department can ease the transition by integrating career guidance and counselling into the school curriculum so that students are prepared beforehand.
- The Department of Social Development can implement and facilitate the collaboration between the private sector, education sector, and government sector to create job opportunities by placing post-matriculants in entry-level employment positions to ease the transition from education to employment.
- Integrating soft and life skills into the curriculum through social development programs. This will make students more adaptable to workplace environments and teach them about financial literacy, workplace etiquette, and the realities of employment and adulthood.
- Implementing social development programs to improve inequality in education can significantly impact students' ability to transition into employment. This involves addressing differences in education infrastructure, teacher quality, and resources between urban and rural schools.

6.4.3. Recommendations to the Department of Basic Education and Higher Education

- Post-matriculants are eager to pursue a tertiary education, but cannot, due to a lack of academic ability, financial constraints, and opportunity in South Africa. It is suggested that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) take proactive steps to revise the existing curriculum to better align with South Africa's unique historical and economic context. The current curriculum is predominantly theoretical and lacks specialized skills training, that is urgently needed to meet the demands of the job market. There should be more emphasis on skills training and developing competencies and interests.
- It is recommended that the DOE collaborates with other government faculties to create a plethora of specializations over many campuses. This assumes that post-matriculants will have many opportunities to use their strengths, abilities, and interests to be successful in the job market. Many students are not academically inclined so having them complete a curriculum in what they are interested and competent in, strengthens their capabilities, skill set, and access to employment.
- A greater awareness can be made around further education post-matric, bursaries offered to study, and other opportunities that may be available to them. Post-matriculants are unable to seek all these opportunities from elsewhere because of the lack of resources. However, the government can assist by making these important institutions more accessible to them.
- The DOE should consider adding financial management and financial education to the South African schooling curriculum. Many individuals, particularly young adolescents, find it challenging to manage their finances, and saving often takes a back seat as they live pay cheque to pay cheque. It is suggested that teaching this will encourage a different financial management model.
- Post-matriculants face many challenges in finding employment, largely due to the limited opportunities for those without high academic results. They become susceptible to emotional and psychological trauma as they focus on their future, their survival in the economy, and their families. The private sector's selectivity emphasizes the need for targeted career guidance at the high school level to better prepare students for both educational and career pathways that align with market demands.

6.4.3. Recommendations to Bursary Institutions

- It is recommended that this work wilfully with the DOE and suggest an annual visit to high schools across South Africa to inform and educate matriculants about available bursaries and tertiary education opportunities. There are too few opportunities available for matric learners to study further. Many post-matriculants expressed interest in wanting to study further but financially were not able to. Thus, the availability and awareness of bursaries and how to access them would create more avenues for future educational prospects.

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